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## Contents

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### REGULAR PAPERS

- |   |      |
|---|------|
| Approaching Synforms (Similar Lexical Forms) in an EAP Context<br><i>Sukru Nural</i>  | 1753 |
| Setting the Standards for the Foreign Language Speaking Tasks of the New Baccalaureate General Test<br><i>M "Camino Bueno-Alastuey, Jes ús Garc íu Laborda, Ana Isabel Mu ñoz Alc ón, and Gloria Luque Agullo</i> | 1763 |
| Can Greek Learners Acquire the Overt Subject Property of English? A Pilot Study<br><i>Alexandra I. Prentza</i>  | 1770 |
| Grammatical Errors of Bilingual 1 Francophone Learners of English in the University of Yaounde I<br><i>St éphane C æste Piewo Sokeng</i>  | 1778 |
| The Peculiarities of the Political Vocabulary in French and Georgian Languages<br><i>Ketevan Djachy and Mariam Pareishvili</i>  | 1786 |
| The Use of Consciousness-raising Tasks in Promoting the Correct Use of the Verb "Be" among Students in Vocational Colleges<br><i>Sirhajwan Idek, Lee Lai Fong, Gurnam Kaur Sidhu, and Teoh Sian Hoon</i>          | 1792 |
| Lower-order and Higher-order Reading Questions in Secondary and University Level EFL Textbooks in Jordan<br><i>Nasser M. Freahat and Oqlah M. Smadi</i>   | 1804 |
| Foreign Language Learning Recounts by Two Muslim Religious Scholars: A Narrative Education Discourse Analysis<br><i>Antar S. Abdellah</i>   | 1814 |
| Salinger's Depiction of Trauma in <i>The Catcher in the Rye</i><br><i>Wan Roselezam Wan Yahya and Ruzbeh Babaei</i>   | 1825 |
| "The End Is in the Beginning": The Riddle and Interpretation of Ellison's <i>Invisible Man</i><br><i>Yanwei Hu</i>  | 1829 |
| Measuring the Lexical Richness of Productive Vocabulary in Iranian EFL University Students' Writing Performance<br><i>Nazli Azodi, Fatemeh Karimi, and Ramin Vaezi</i>  | 1837 |
-

Investigating the Employment Profile of Graduate Students of Persian and English Literature <i>Behrooz Marzban, Maliheh Yazdfazeli, and Mina Ghodrati</i>	1850
A Feasible Study on Cooperative Learning in Large Class College English Teaching <i>Hua Nan</i>	1862
Needs Analysis: An Effective Way in Business English Curriculum Design <i>Juan Li</i>	1869
Micro-strategies of Post-method Language Teaching Developed for Iranian EFL Context <i>Parviz Birjandi and Mohammad Hashamdar</i>	1875
English-Chinese News Headlines Translation from a Skopostheorie Perspective <i>Xuedong Shi</i>	1881
On the Characteristics and Translation Method of the Chinese Verb “Jinxing” <i>Zhiliang Liu and Lidan Liu</i>	1886
On the Relationship between Learning Style and the Use of Pictures in Comprehension of Idioms among Iranian EFL Learners <i>Fatemeh Ghanavati Nasab and Akbar Hesabi</i>	1892
An Application of the Interpretive Theory to the Press Conference Interpreting <i>Yang Li</i>	1898
Similarities and Differences between Fansub Translation and Traditional Paper-based Translation <i>Fang Wang</i>	1904
A Unique Approach of Memory Narrative Therapy in Diasporic Contexts: An Analysis of <i>The Bonesetter's Daughter</i> and <i>The Kitchen God's Wife</i> by Amy Tan <i>Naeimeh Tabatabaei Lotfi</i>	1912
Research on College English Autonomous Learning Strategies Based on the Digital Instructional Platform <i>Wanli Zhao</i>	1918
Study on the Intercultural Education in College English Teaching <i>Zhijuan Sui</i>	1924
Construction and Validation of EFL Learners' Attitudes toward English Pronunciation (LATEP): A Structural Equation Modeling Approach <i>Samaneh Seyedabadi, Azar Hosseini Fatemi, and Reza Pishghadam</i>	1929
A Case Study on the Effect of Chinese Negative Transfer on English Writing <i>Meng Guo, Jingxia Liu, and Pingting Chen</i>	1941
Cooperative Learning: An Effective Approach to College English Learning <i>You Lv</i>	1948
A Corpus Based Study of the Relationship among the Iranian EFL Students' Gender, Language Proficiency, and Cross-cultural Knowledge of Apologizing and Requesting <i>Javad Bijari, Ali Gholami Mehrdad, and Lotfollah Karimi</i>	1954
Comparison of Individual Classifiers and Collective Classifiers between Chinese and English <i>Yeli Shi</i>	1961
Fuzzy Language Translation in the Psychological Description and Its Reflections <i>Yunli Zhao</i>	1966
Skill Acquisition Theory and Its Important Concepts in SLA <i>Masumeh Taie</i>	1971

# Approaching Synforms (Similar Lexical Forms) in an EAP Context

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**Abstract**—The paper is concerned with the phenomenon of synforms which is defined as form similarity between words, pairs, or groups of words in terms of sound, script or morphology (Laufer, 2005). Synformy has been researched within the context of language acquisition and lexical errors. However, it has not been investigated in the context of naturalistic classroom environment. The data presented in this paper were collected in an EAP teacher's classroom. Results suggest that it is important for language teachers to raise their awareness of synforms because their unpredictable nature may negatively affect the way in which teachers treat lexical items. The factors shaping the teacher's instructional decisions about synforms predominantly relate to students and lexical items. The implications and challenges of treating synforms during classroom instruction are also discussed.

**Index Terms**—vocabulary, synform, lexical difficulty, teacher cognition, lexis-related episodes

## I. INTRODUCTION

Lexis has been examined from different perspectives such as language awareness, form-focused instruction and classroom interaction (Andrews and McNeill, 2005; Basturkmen *et.al.* 2004; Dobinson, 2001). Specific curricular areas such as grammar, reading and writing have already been examined from the teachers' perspective. Particularly spelling and reading comprehension instruction, both of which constitute the major parts of literacy, has been extensively studied with a focus on L2 (English, French, Spanish) language teachers' beliefs and practices in various educational settings in the USA ranging from primary to high schools (Sturtevant and Linek, 2003; Collie Graden, 1996; Moje, 1996; Richardson, *et.al.* 1991). Lexis emerged as the most oft-cited language form in the form-focused instruction literature (Basturkmen, *et. al.* 2004; Ellis, *et.al.* 2001) where word meaning, spelling and pronunciation are investigated in their own right, that is independently from one another. Yet lexis teaching as a whole has not yet been adequately researched from the viewpoint of teacher cognition (Borg, 2009a; 2009b; 2003). As Borg (2009a:4) writes, 'very little is known about teachers' beliefs and knowledge in relation to the teaching of L2 vocabulary, listening and speaking which merit research attention'. Particularly it is the teacher-related factors about lexis instruction within naturally-occurring classroom environments that remain to be investigated.

The present paper highlights a particular problem called synformy concerning the teaching of lexis from an EAP teacher's perspective – her attitude towards students' confusion due to words with a similar form during classroom interaction. Synformy is the phenomenon of form similarity between words, word pairs or groups of words in terms of sound, script or morphology (Laufer, 2005). This definition highlights that synformy is related to similarity in phonological (i.e. similar-sounding) and orthographical (i.e. similar-looking) forms. They should not be viewed as independent of each other because some synforms that come up during classroom instruction are already in coursebooks (i.e. orthographical) and some are in teachers' or students' talk (i.e. phonological). Therefore both phonological and orthographical similarity might equally be a source of confusion for university-level students in EFL settings like Turkey. English seems to embody a more inconsistent relationship between orthography (script or grapheme) and phonology (sound or phoneme) when compared to other languages such as Turkish and Spanish. Despite extensive research into word recognition with a reference to synformy in experimental settings, little is known about its role in the formal classroom instruction. Research into synforms has not been transferred to language teaching procedures or strategies and as a result teachers have not yet been provided with principled guidance as to handling synforms that become part of classroom interaction.

Schmitt (2008) pointed out that "the form element is not given adequate importance despite the fact that there is a large body of research showing that L2 learners find the word form more problematic" (p. 335). Form may require an explicit or direct focus and thus teachers need to go beyond semantic aspects of lexis. The personal theories of teaching they hold might contribute to a better understanding of the phenomenon of synformy as it emerges in actual language classrooms. It should be acknowledged that the personal theories an experienced teacher investigated in the current study are by no means the 'whole story' of teaching and learning but this important part of the picture should not be neglected (Sturtevant and Linek, 2003). Rather than merely discussing whether synforms should be taught or not, this paper provides empirical data in the form of focus-on-lexis episodes which show why an EAP teacher dealt with them the way Tulip did. This classroom-based study is not confined to investigating lexical instruction in the context of a particular language skill; nor does it concentrate only on a dedicated vocabulary-only class. Lexical items identified in

the syllabus were distributed across the skills areas in the EAP programme where the study took place. The main research question to be investigated is: How does an EAP teacher approach synforms in her classroom? Findings from this study, which is part of a larger study that examines experienced Turkish EAP teachers' beliefs and practices about lexis teaching, lay the groundwork for other similar studies on synform'.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. Dealing with Synformy as Lexis in the Language Classroom

Laufer (1997) suggests that vocabulary acquisition is influenced by interlexical and intralexical variables. The former is related to the interaction between the new L2 lexical items and already familiar/known L1 words while the latter is concerned with L2 lexical items alone. Interlexical (i.e. cross-linguistic) factors fall under two subcategories:

A. *Cognates*: similarity of form of L1 (Turkish) and L2 (English) words, *hayli- highly* respectively.

B. *False cognates*: meaning relations between words in L1 and L2, *otantik- authentic* respectively.

These subcategories imply that cognates can be seen as a matter of continuum as they vary in degree. Although both types of cognates are characterised by similarity (i.e. similar forms), a cognate is a helpful clue as to word meaning while a false cognate is yet another source of confusion. By and large, it can be argued that difficulty is attributed to the similarity within L2 lexical items as far as intralexical factors are concerned. Laufer (1997:154) classifies the following difficulty-inducing intralexical factors:

1. Presence of foreign phonemes
2. Irregularity in pronunciation
3. Variable stress
4. Incongruency in sound-script relationship (consider e.g. the letter 'o' in *love, chose, woman, women*)
5. Inflexional complexity (e.g. a *criterion > criteria*)
6. Derivational complexity (e.g. *authentic* vs. *inauthentic*, and not *\*unauthentic*)
7. Deceptive morphological transparency (e.g. *disagree, dislike* vs. *discourse*)
8. Similarity of lexical forms (e.g. *historical/historic, affect/effect, industrial/industrious*)
9. Specificity (the word can only be used in specific contexts)
10. Register restrictions,
11. Idiomaticity
12. One form with several Meanings: homographs

The phenomenon of synformy is conceptualised within the framework of word learnability. Synform is a major sub-component of deceptive transparency which is a factor of difficulty which accounts for interlingual and intralingual clues in detecting the meaning of words. Laufer (1988) argues that similarity is often associated with the number of syllables (e.g. *economic-economical*), syllabic position (e.g. *industrial-industrious*), syntactic class (e.g. *assumption-consumption*) and shared phoneme (e.g. *competence-competition*). Based on the premise that there is an underlying systematicity in the way people confuse words, Laufer states that there are certain patterns of synformic confusion which take place in the form of substitution (e.g. *prize- price*), omission (e.g. *economical – economic*) and addition (*cute – acute*) in a lexical item's vowel, consonant, prefix or suffix. Systematicity entails a certain degree of generalisation despite some exceptions. Systematicity is in agreement with the 'generalisation' perspective adopted by Hanna *et.al.* (1971) who recognise that English spelling has an underlying logic, and therefore, words sharing similar features need to be dealt with in language classrooms.

Regarding lexical errors caused by interlanguage interferences, Laufer (1991: 192) notes that synform errors would score more highly on the gravity scale and that the teacher is likely to seek appropriate teaching treatment to help learners overcome confusion of synforms. It is likely that such associations result in communication breakdown. The problem, then, is that synforms may give learners a false sense of confidence in their lexical knowledge unless they are brought to learners' attention. As Laufer (1991) puts it, synform errors could be disruptive because they reflect a sense of mismatch between the message the learner tries to get across and the meaning the listener/reader decodes. Laufer also draws attention to the difference between the organisation of L1 lexical items and that of L2 lexical items in the memory. Since the lexicon contains items that correspond to phonological structure in working memory, association is made between phonologically related items despite their semantic distinctions (e.g. *cute - acute*). Laufer's position stands in stark contrast to the L1 = L2 acquisition hypothesis which predicts that the way in which L1 and L2 are acquired is similar. The assumption that L2 learners are heavily reliant on phonological links between lexical items is backed up by second-language-classroom research into the influence of phonological memory. For example, Hummel and French (2010: 381) concluded that learners depend on phonological-loop processing in order to develop efficient word recognition and word retrieval skills in oral input-rich contexts. They describe phonological loop as a sub-component of working memory which is responsible for the temporary maintenance of acoustic or speech-based material. However, this does not necessarily mean that all language learners respond in similar ways to this oral input provided by their teacher, material or peer during classroom instruction. It should be noted that synformy is not only related to phonological similarity but it is also to orthographic similarity which might be a source of confusion for university-level students in EFL settings, who are perhaps more likely to encounter new words in written form. In investigating the factors making a particular word difficult to learn in a bilingual class setting (Brunei), Henry and



Metussin's (1999:19) analysis of student translation errors (English-to-Malay) suggested that association was the most common type of error followed by part of speech and synform respectively. This implies that 'association' cannot be relegated to meaning alone, but rather it can be linked to lexical form which characterises synformy. Taken together, research findings highlight that synforms are a shared source of difficulty for language learners irrespective of their L1.

Issues such as the students' understanding of lexical difficulty, the consistency between the teachers' and students' views and teachers' awareness of vocabulary difficulty has also attracted a great deal of attention from applied linguists. In their research on the Japanese high school EFL teachers' perceptions about learner difficulty in vocabulary learning, Smith and Tajino (2003) found that teachers' perceptions of learner difficulty in vocabulary learning are mostly affected by intralexical factors (% 39.0) as opposed to cross-linguistic factors (% 13.4). According to their report, although teachers agree on which words were the most difficult, their explanations of their decisions about lexical difficulty do vary considerably. A more recent study of McNeill (2005:111) identified the most frequently cited aspects perceived to be difficult by teachers which include derived words, polysemy and transparency (i.e. synformy). It is worth emphasising that the latter is also the case with the students involved in the study of Bensoussan and Laufer (1984).

The apparent characteristic shared by the above-mentioned studies is that most of them investigate lexical difficulty by having participants preview a reading text and underline the easy/hard words therein. Classroom-based studies could also provide further insight into the subtleties of this particular difficulty-inducing factor in lexis learning and teaching. This is not to underestimate the importance of examining the issue of synformy in the written mode (e.g. coursebook), though. Laufer classified synforms into different categories (see attachment) and validated synform errors through written tests and left the decision to the teachers' judgement whether to deal with synforms. As McNeill (2005: 122) cautions, what remains to be established is whether teachers' awareness of synformy leads to more effective teaching. This lends support to the proposal that the notion of language awareness should also include learner language awareness, in addition to teachers' knowledge of and competence in L2, as outlined by Andrews' (2001) model of TLA (teacher language awareness). However, it is beyond the scope of the paper to investigate whether the students' views are congruent with that of teachers.

Laufer (2005) cautions against teaching synforms in tandem and recommends that teachers can have students practise synforms after all members of the pair have been encountered individually. She further suggests that teaching words with formal similarities (*affect-effect*) and semantic similarities (*buy-sell*) can be counter-productive because they are likely to become cross-associated in the learner's mind. Her recommendation is grounded in cognitive load argument which suggests that 'pupils have to spend twice as much mental effort trying to remember which of the pair fills a particular lexical slot' (Nation, 1990). However, in terms of teachers' practices, focus on form is considered as a behavioural phenomenon (Basturkmen, *et.al.* 2004: 264). That is why the difficulty level of a word is not limited to language variables alone; rather they also depend on factors including teachers' and students' own previous language knowledge, content knowledge and interests (McNeill, 2005: 123). Awareness of students' previous learning and their abilities is a prerequisite to identifying vocabulary problems as they arise during classroom instruction. As Barcroft (2004) puts, the issue appears to be not *whether* but *when* to place the focus on word form and word meaning. There may be some occasions in which teachers give quick explanations as to the difference between two or more similar lexical items for practical reasons such as completing an immediate task, satisfying learners' curiosity and correcting errors in writing. One way of examining these dimensions is to explore teachers' views and personal theories which are considered to have a crucial role in shaping their classroom practices. The present study examines this aspect and explores how an EAP teacher dealt with the lexis instructional instances related to synforms.

### B. Teachers' Personal Theories

A wide recognition of the crucial role of lexis in language learning and teaching leads various authors to come up with sets of principles offered throughout the literature (Laufer, *et.al.* 2005; Folse, 2004; Hunt and Beglar, 2002; Barcroft, 2002; Sokmen, 1997). However, the suggested principles cannot be readily implemented for several reasons. Firstly, anecdotal evidence suggests that they are not practically focused enough to allow EAP teachers who are often required to make instant decisions in real time. Secondly, the majority of those principles are slightly biased towards listening and reading skills; particularly, 'reading' is overrepresented while writing and speaking is underrepresented. Thirdly, some principles say what teachers should not do (hence don'ts): 'Do not teach several new synforms together (i.e. similar lexical forms like *cancel/conceal*); 'Do not count on guessing strategies to replace vocabulary knowledge'. While a teacher might prefer to teach confusing words that may sound similar but have different meanings during writing activity so that students use lexical items more accurately, the same teacher might avoid doing so during a pre-listening activity to enable students to understand the general idea of a given listening material. It is likely that teachers do not simply adopt such expert principles, but interpret them according to their respective theories of teaching, sense of plausibility (Prabhu, 1990) and classroom contingencies alike.

Commentaries on teachers' theories underlying their particular practice are based on not only a combination of what was observed what the teacher said about the observed classroom events, what the teacher said beyond and independent of these events. The dynamics operating at the micro-level are associated with immediate antecedent and planned classroom events such as the teachers' plan for the lesson, students' queries, responses and errors. These micro-events are particularly the case with lexis teaching for which teachers need to make instant decisions on whether they need to give immediate or delayed or sometimes no instructional intervention on a particular lexical item generated by students.

This is partly because of the interrelated and multi-layered nature of belief systems. Perhaps that is why Basturkmen *et.al.* (2004) do not attempt to determine *whether* teacher practices represent their beliefs; instead, they emphasise that what needs to be investigated is the *extent* to which teachers' beliefs are reflected in their practices. Nevertheless, investigating such relationship necessitates a closer analysis of actual instances of practice (Breen, *et.al.* 2001). Those instances are operationalised as focus-on-lexis episodes (FonLE) which are to be elaborated in Data Analysis section of the paper.

### III. METHODOLOGY

#### A. Context

The study took place in a university-based School of Languages in Turkey. Since existing coursebooks with notional-functional syllabus could not fully address the academic needs of students, teachers on the foundation programme at this School devised an explicit syllabus on the basis of the Academic Word List (Coxhead, 2000). They constitute a syllabus of approximately 3,000 words to be presented over the course of one academic year within the program.

#### B. The Case

The participant is an EAP teacher, as mentioned earlier, who is referred to as Tulip (a pseudonym) throughout the paper for anonymity's sake, teaches 20 intermediate level adult learners aged 18-20. Tulip has majored in English Language Teaching Education in one of the English-medium Turkish university. Tulip has 10 years of teaching experience, she has been teaching for about 4 years in the institution mentioned earlier and 6 years elsewhere. Her classes are by no means 'vocabulary lesson' in their own right, but they are based on integrated four language skills of reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

#### C. Data Collection

Data were collected from a teacher's lexis teaching practices of 10 hours of classroom observation. The two types of evidence presented throughout the paper include the naturally occurring FonLE taken from the transcripts of lessons observed and the teacher's decisions about the episodes elicited through stimulated recall interviews. As Seedhouse (1997: 343) puts it, 'close examination of classroom transcripts may reveal just how skilful teachers can be at finding practical solutions to thorny theoretical problems'. The strength of using the transcripts lies in their potential to capture the complexity of the classroom interaction in which teachers and learners are involved in different ways, yet the episodes are by no means comprehensive. The data concerning teacher's decisions were collected using stimulated-recall interviews following each observed lesson. It is worth noting that stimulated recall interviews served to initiate a discussion of teachers' beliefs about their practices and the underlying influences rather than necessarily the recall of simultaneous thought processes (Borg, 2006: 219). Teachers were shown a clip of teachers reflecting on classroom events. This would give them an idea about what a stimulated recall session involves. The role of the researcher is to make sense of teachers' decisions and practices rather than judge or evaluate them.

#### D. Data Analysis

The interview data became the focus of analysis and observational data in the form of transcripts which highlight the teaching episode the participant commented on. Following a similar categorisation technique used in Basturkmen, *et al.* (2004), data analysis begins with identifying the characteristics and themes of FonLE in which lexical items are topicalised. The term 'topicalisation', coined by Slimani (1991), denotes initiation of lexical items that are mentioned, repeated, focused upon and had speaking turns taken around them. The topicalisations are usually in the form of initiation, elicitation, explanation or feedback about lexical items. They could include single or several exchanges between the teacher and student(s). These instances of topicalisations regarding lexical items are considered within a larger unit called FonLE, which, alongside teacher comments, provide empirical grounding for the issue of synform within formal language instruction. As long as teachers themselves comment on the items in one way or another, those items are considered as a part of 'teaching', be they lengthy or short. The attention that needs to be paid to a word before it is considered to have been taught varies in degree, that is, a teaching episode can involve single or multiple turns. There are occasions where teachers focus on the form, meaning and use of the words in not only conversational but also in didactic fashion.

It may be difficult to identify the starting point and ending point of FonLE due to the simultaneous nature of classroom interaction. Nevertheless, some expressions in classroom talk such as 'what's the synonym of this word?' and 'Is this a word you know?' can help identify the starting points. If a related but unplanned lexical item comes up while the primary focus is still on another item, this will be analysed in connection with the last lexical item taught. A situation of this kind may occur in the introduction of a theme around which a number of lexical items cluster. The endpoint occurred when the topic changed back to a focus on a different lexical item independent from the pre-targeted one. Apart from describing what lexical items they teach how and why they teach the way they do, they will be asked to confirm or disconfirm the hunches or predictions the researcher tentatively makes *during* observation.

### IV. FINDINGS

The current study found that the teacher whose personal theories and classroom practices under investigation, articulated her personal theories underlying not only her approach to lexis teaching as a whole but also its particular aspect, 'synforms', the major focus of the paper. The findings to be presented in this section should be read within the context of the following illustrative account:

"...[W]e don't really have enough time to prepare thoroughly enough for lessons, a lot of my teaching is mapped out roughly before class and happens in a rather spontaneous way. I think it would be great if I had the time to think about how I can explain problematic items. I often do identify these items, but don't actually think about how I'll explain them. I like to resort to eliciting as much from students as possible, but that works better with well-thought out questions, so if I am not to introduce the item myself I need to think of questions that students can answer on their way to discover the meaning."

The above account highlights that Tulip drew her previous teaching experience as she provided an anecdotal justification for her attitude towards the treatment of similar lexical items. The teacher acknowledged the problematic nature of synforms and concomitant challenges it might pose to learners, saying that:

"Students are making the sounds, erm... phonological associations .... they are coming with the associations and the meaning is similar they say they must be similar in meaning as well. Or they have one meaning in mind and they cannot find the exact word and they go for the words that sound similar".

Her belief in the necessity of responding to students' confusion in one way or another can be understood in her expression '...we cannot ignore them [similar-sounding words]'. Tulip expressed a preference to deal with those lexical items having shared meaning (i.e. semantically related words) on occasions the students or the teacher elect to attend to form even though no error in the production of the form occurred (i.e. pre-emptively). Tulip tended to present word meanings by making use of word formation techniques using the whiteboard, an indicator of the extent to which she drew students' attention to lexical items. When it comes to synforms, however, her treatment is rather distinct from her regular teaching of non-synforms. She was observed to have focused mainly on the meanings of synforms at the expense of their meaning or pronunciation even though the term synform is a form-related issue. Tulip did not provide students with explanations based on the morphology of synforms, for example, a feature inducing more difficulty than its semantic features. There are, although rare, instances in the classroom transcripts where both orthographical and semantic aspects were equally involved in students' confusion. These instructional segments were not included in the present paper on the grounds that word pairs (e.g. *deviate/divert*) do not meet the criteria set out by Laufer (1991).

Tulip recognised the students' misconception that there is always a relationship between lexical items in terms of formal and semantic features. Her personal theories of teaching with respect to the way she approach synforms seem to be shaped by factors related to students and the nature of lexical items. Student-related factors refer to their specific lexical queries and their deficient responses (i.e. responses that cannot be made after being elicited by the teacher). Those deficient responses are not necessarily lexical errors strictest sense of the word but they derive from poor retrieval of L2 word forms. These factors emerged in her reflection on Episode 1:

"I think if it came from the students themselves if the students come up with such associations we cannot ignore that. But I don't think we should be saying these words sound similar let's have a look at them. They should be taught if they are initiated by the students themselves."

**EPISODE 1:** [Students are expected to identify T/F Statements after listening to a recorded lecture about the characteristics of a good team]

Competent/competitive [**Category 2:** synforms with the same root, but different suffixes]

T: All of them [team members] should be competent...	1
What was the meaning of <b>competent</b> by the way?	2
If you are competent ... (5 sec wait time) what does that mean?	3
<b>S1:</b> <i>rekabetci</i> (meaning <i>competitive</i> )	4
T: <b>ahh no that is competitive.</b> A competent person is somebody	5
(5 second wait time).	6
I didn't expect it would be the word you don't know. Did not we	7
have this word before?	8
<b>S2:</b> huh... <i>telafi</i> (meaning <i>compensation</i> )	9
T: ( <b>laughing</b> ) <b>that is compensation.</b> A competent person is a	10
person who is good at what they are doing so if he is a manager	11
a competent manager is a good manager a good-skilled manager.	12
Or whatever you are doing is competent in tennis for example that	13
means you are a good tennis player....This means everybody in the team	14
needs to be good at what they are doing. OK...so it was false.	15
T: Question 4	16
<b>S3:</b> true	17
T: good	18

It should be noted, though, that Tulip did not always act upon her usual personal theory of teaching. Episode 3 is a case in point. In this particular episode, she focused on the difference between affect and effect which runs counter to her theory 'don't teach synforms together'. When asked why Tulip adopted a somewhat different approach she recalled her prior teaching experience:

"I wouldn't normally teach them together these confusing words ... I remember I once taught students erm... it wasn't something that they had come up with it was not really part of the context. The two words sounded similar they

looked similar then I said by the way this word sound similar and looked similar....but it has a completely different meaning and ... throughout the course they confused the two. They confused and they made me think...but I believe that it's sometimes necessary to show the students the difference between them. This might hopefully enable them not to make the same mistake twice in the future....yeah..."

In the above account, Tulip made an explicit reference to her previous teaching experience which affects her behaviour she displayed in Episode 2. The lexical items such as affect/effect are notoriously and frequently confusing for many students due to their similar sound and script pattern. Perhaps that is why she requested clarification ('what did you say?' line 6) and checked students' understanding ('Is it clear Cagla?' line 15).

**EPISODE 2:** Post-Listening: Categorising words as negative/positive/neutral.

**Affect/effect:** [Category 6: Includes synforms identical in all phonemes except for one vowel/diphthong in the same position]

**T:** Look at the words in the box to check if you remember them. 1

There might be some words which you should first check their meaning first. 2

**Affective?** 3

**S:** neutral 4

**T:** what is the meaning of **affective** here? Often it's actually confused with 5

another word. [Writing on the board: *affective / effective*] 6

**S:** emotional 7

**T:** Alper what did you say? 8

**S:** emotional 9

**T:** we learnt this before, didn't we? *affective*... erm factors, about your feelings 10

**Effective** means how well you do something, but *affective* is emotional ... *affective* 11

is not very clear, Cagla [asking a student to check if the student has problem with it] 12

**S:** *verimli*? 13

**T:** is it *verimli*? (meaning *efficient*) [Aside] is it **efficient** I wonder. They are close 14

aren't they? *Effective* and *efficient* are close they seem to be about *verimli* 15

(meaning *efficient*), what is *effective*? If you plan is an *effective* plan for example 16

it is a plan that work well so is... *'etkili*' (meaning *effective*) is good or *'ise yarar*' 17

(meaning *useful*). Is it clear Cagla? 18

Tulip's reference to the frequency (how many times a synform causes problem for students) and the recency (when the teacher presented either of synforms) is evident in her following account implies that she takes into consideration time-related issues:

"I think I would draw their attention to similar words if they *constantly* cause difficulty to learners...also I would teach these words if I have *recently* taught them in previous units"

In line with the principle of 'integrate new words with old', or connecting previous and new knowledge, Tulip's reference to temporal aspects of classroom teaching also shows the extent to which she monitors Ss' and her own input throughout the course. Reflecting on Episode 3, she said, 'I encourage them that they shouldn't be translating everything from English to Turkish. Not direct explicit translation because it makes things much more complicated'.

**EPISODE 3:** [Post-Reading: Teacher read out a sentence on the worksheet for the students to fill in the blank].

**Contradictory- controversial** [Category 4: synforms with the same root, but different suffixes]

**S:** **controversial** 1

**T:** not controversial but you are very close 2

**S:** contrast? 3

**T:** contrasting, OK this is **contrasting** you can say good [praise] it is **contradictory** ok 4

**S2:** *celiski* 5

**T:** yeah, newspapers one thing the other side says something completely different. 6

The information contrast each other that's good. 7

**S1:** *celiski* [repeating the word silently] 8

During Episode 3, Tulip did not provide the answer straight away, rather she tended to withhold the word necessary for sentence completion saying 'but you are very close' (line 2). Again her justification is based on the factors related to students themselves:

The target word was contradictory. Maybe because it is confusing hmmm... [sighs] I don't know I don't have a real rational for that. It is not like I introduced words out of the blue. They are the words that come from the students. So they wanted to fill in the blank with the word contrast. Either they are not sure about the meaning of the word or that it has the meaning of contrast. As they share the first 5 letters in common it makes sense to focus on the meaning of the words.

There are some occasions when Tulip withheld correct answers and made use of elicitation and clarification requests using expression like 'say that again' (see Episode 4: line 9). She again referred to students' characteristics in her account as follows:

"It is my gut feeling here that helped me more than anything and the student's facial expressions and gestures as I can remember her trying to say what she was saying now. Gulcin [student] can take risks. When she is stuck, either me or her friends help her out but somehow she can express herself. To me, this is something good and positive".

<b>Episode 4:</b> [SPEAKING: Students are sharing their ethical views about various topics listed in the coursebook]	
<b>Criteria/creation</b> [Category 4: synforms with the same root, but different suffixes]	
T: [Reading out another dilemma]: As an engineer, to ignore a dangerous situation you have accidentally created.	1
You built something maybe without realizing it is dangerous, is it OK to turn a blind eye to it not see it ignore it	2
S: no they are responsible for the human life	3
T: ok so you wouldn't do that you think the engineers have to tell the people about the possible dangers trying to fix it maybe ...	4
S: They are not doing right but the creations ... erm ... they have made have to be safe I think	5
T: hae	6
S: unless there are not <b>creations</b>	7
T: say that again	8
S: unless they are not creations because everybody do and create something there are some ... erm [murmuring some Turkish words, thinking of a word to complete her sentence]	9
T: himmm...	10
S: it has to be in some shape to be a creation	11
T: it has to fulfill some sort of <b>criteria</b> to be creations, basically you are saying if there is a dangerous situation they should take on the responsibility is that the general feeling?	12
Ss: yes, exactly.	13
	14
	15
	16

Episode 5 occurred in a reading comprehension activity during which students were expected to answer questions about a news story taken from CNN.com. Tulip herself initiated the word 'pertinent' asking 'is this a word you know? Line1). Regarding this episode she commented:

It was the beginning of the sentence [erm...correction] word. They use...they use the sound to help them and guess the meaning of the word. The sound and the appearance of the word... Not the sound erm...sorry the letters themselves...how the word looks like. They guessed the word because of -per I imagine. They looked at the word pertinent and it just sounds like permanent.

<b>EPISODE 5:</b> [READING: Students are expected to answer comprehension questions]	
<b>Pertinent – Permanent</b> [Category 4: synforms with the same root, but different suffixes]	
T: Here it means pertinent ... Is this a word you know?	1
S: <u>devamli</u> (permanent in Turkish)	2
T: not <u>devamli</u> , that's permanent ha ha. Per-ti-nent	3
S: (thinking...trying to remember, looking it up)	4
S: <u>alakali</u> (pertinent in Turkish)	5
T: <u>alakali</u> , <u>ilgili</u> . Think of it as essential, very important, crucial	6

## V. DISCUSSION

In the light of classroom observations and their personal theories underlying their classroom practices, the study examined how an EAP teacher approach the particular lexis-related phenomenon called 'synforms'. Synform pairs appeared in a wide range of activities including vocabulary revision: Episode 3, reading: Episode 5, listening comprehension: Episode 1 and 4, and discussion: Episode 2, which are carried out at different stages of lessons. There was no writing activity during which the teacher dealt with synforms, though. This is not surprising because teachers give feedback to students' compositions outside the classroom hours, namely during their appointed tutorial hours. It also turned out in terms of categories of synforms, Episodes predominantly belong to type 4, that is synforms with the same root, but different suffixes, which supports Tulip's assumption that students tend to 'use the sound to help them and guess the meaning of the word'.

The teacher, Tulip, acknowledged the confusion caused by synforms during formal instruction. She accordingly tended to give students further explanations from time to time particularly when she dealt with students' deficient responses (i.e. responses that cannot be made after being elicited by the teacher). The way she dealt with synforms is mostly governed by students' emergent reactions in general and misunderstanding of different kinds, emphasising the importance of providing learning opportunities for students during classroom interactions, as advocated by Allwright and Bailey (1991). This also confirms the results of a form-focused instruction study (Zhao and Bitchener, 2007:444) which suggest that teachers were more active than learners in responding to learners' errors because of the large number of reactive form-focus episodes in teacher-learner interactions. Tullip appeared to be responsive to students' synformic confusions when they were involved in different types of activities ranging from reading comprehension questions to listening T-F statements to consolidating vocabulary. Reactivity on the part of the teacher looked as if it is quite biased towards one particular (individual) member of the synform pair which varies depending on its relevance to the content of the activity dealt with. The fact that some of the synform errors could be induced by the tasks, to some extent, reinforces Henry and Metussin's (1999) findings suggesting the crucial role of the nature of tasks in students' errors. In the case of Tulip, the connection between the message of the activity and the lexical items is emphasised. Her reactive treatment of a synform seems to be influenced by factors (i.e. personality, attitude and context) proposed by Andrews (2001). For example, Tulip's alertness (especially in the case of identifying learners' wrong answers, not necessarily erroneous linguistic or lexical errors), her willingness to deal with lexical forms/meanings and time constraint account for the approach Tulip adopts towards dealing with synforms. In his framework, however, Andrews has made no mention of the role of teachers' L1 knowledge. This component is particularly important for Turkish language which

has a sound-script congruence and even vowel harmony. Vowel harmony is defined by Crystal (1992) as 'a type of assimilation which takes place when vowels come to share certain features with contrastive vowels elsewhere in a word or phrase'. Through such L1 knowledge teachers need to be alert to students' input so that they can detect the sources of errors committed by learners during classroom interaction.

Tulip attempts to limit the potential sources of learner confusion in the input by urging her students to avoid translating whatever they hear and read. This shows the extent to which she is aware of the inhibitory role of L1 problem coupled by some students' unsolicited use of L1. An alternative explanation could be that the teacher's reactive, albeit partial, attitude towards synforms depend heavily on constraints related to lesson planning, as can be inferred from the teacher's illustrative account in Findings section where she referred to her 'rough' lesson planning due to her tight schedule. One way of addressing this problem, according to Henry and Metussin (1999), is that sensitise teachers to become aware of the likely problems synforms may bring about by keeping them apart in the syllabus. Laufer-Dvorkin (1991: 194) suggests that 'if the synform of a new word was learnt *at an early stage*, it is very desirable that the class should be *reminded* of it and the contrast between the synforms should be pointed out' (emphasis mine). This highlights the extent to which teachers should ideally bring synforms to students' attention. As the word 'remind' implies, only limited focus on those items that may have been previously taught was considered to suffice, rather than extensive elaboration on two or more members of synforms. Indeed, synforms do not lend themselves to be readily identified especially when they occur during teacher-student interaction which is interactive and dynamic. Such unpredictability might be coupled with the students' L1 utterances. It is sometimes inevitable that students' guesses or approximations, for example, might involve semantic or phonological (or both) association between L2 lexical items. Combined effect of intrinsic deceptiveness of synforms and the difficulty to determine students' intention might account for the way in which the teacher treated synforms.

The teacher's avoidance of treating numerous words together (by comparing them) can be justified on the grounds that this may lead to what I call the 'word-within-word' (WWW) phenomenon. The phenomenon refers to an occasion in which several other words are explained by the teacher although they are not directly relevant to the target lexical item they intend to teach in the first instance. This corresponds to the issue of maintaining the flow of communicative activity about which teachers have most of their inconsistencies between their beliefs and practices (Basturkmen, *et.al.* 2004; Ellis *et.al.* 2001). The present study also corroborates Osam and Balbay's (2004) research which suggests that both experienced and inexperienced teachers makes instant decisions to such an extent that they depart from their lesson plans. It turned out that most of the WWW instances occur especially when the teacher elicited words from her students. Students' utterances following her elicitations seemed to change the direction of the lesson, which is an indicative of her responsiveness. This finding supports Hatch and Brown's (1995) conclusion that elaboration on form or meaning might disrupt the flow of classroom. Such obtrusive semantic elaboration is something which is considered to exert negatively on lexical input processing (Barcroft, 2004). After all, the forms initiated by the teachers themselves do not necessarily constitute potential rather than actual gaps in the students' knowledge (Ellis, *et.al.* 2002:431).

## VI. IMPLICATIONS

In order for teachers to direct students' attention on formal properties of lexical items they need to be aware of both interlexical and intralexical factors that play crucial role in vocabulary learning and teaching. Lexical items may have incomplete representations and thus various associative traces in the students' mind shaped by their personal life experiences and language learning experience. Without raising students' awareness about synform pairs (either individually or in tandem) they may go unnoticed. Therefore, in addition to oral/verbal input, teachers should also encourage repetition and rehearsal supported by written/visual input where appropriate to compensate for such partial representation (Hummel and French, 2010:383). During the initial stages of learning new words for effective vocabulary instruction it is recommended that teachers limit semantic elaboration (a situation in which one focuses extensively on meaning-related properties of a word due to its inhibitory or negative influence on the ability to encode the formal properties of new L2 words) (Barcroft, 2004:205). Activities such as generating a series of words related in meaning to a target word and answering questions may decrease learners' ability to learn new word forms on the grounds that memory for L2 words depended more on memory of word form (p.206).

## VII. CONCLUSION

The study suggested the participant teacher seemed to base her instructional decisions on a number of factors such as student, words, and time. These conditions acknowledge that teachers in different contexts employ different strategies and resources available to them. In fact, lexis teaching is 'more than just introducing new words, it also includes nurturing partially known vocabulary along to the point where learners can use it at will' (Schmitt, 2000: 157). The issue is not whether to teach synforms or not, but the time when the way how they should be responded by the teacher. It is therefore necessary for language teachers to be responsive to student-generated queries about lexical items, particularly synformy. Future research could investigate both teachers' and students' attitude towards the same lexical phenomenon based on the quantitative aspects such as frequency of focus on lexis episodes and percentage of feedback

moves. The present study might serve as a stimulus for debate as to whether the phenomenon of synformy should receive a special teaching type and, if yes, what kind of pedagogical options are conducive to its treatment.

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# Setting the Standards for the Foreign Language Speaking Tasks of the New Baccalaureate General Test

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**Abstract**—One of the most significant aspects of the Spanish new educational reform is the Baccalaureate General Test which is intended to replace the former University Entrance Examination. The new test will include an oral part, which needs to be created, based on current research on the field (Bueno-Alastuey & Luque, 2010), and tested with students from different regions in Spain to confirm its validity. This paper describes the preparation and first results of a pilot study using some proposed tasks. The speaking tasks were based on the ones currently used in the Cambridge Preliminary English Test but conveniently adapted to the Spanish context as suggested by some studies (Amengual-Pizarro & Mendez García, 2010). This paper shows the perceived strengths and weaknesses of those tasks and the test based on current testing literature on construct definition (Bachman & Palmer, 1996) and validation (Weir, 2005; Fulcher, 2010; Ekbatani, 2011). Results showed that the test corresponds better to classroom practice and favors both washback and language development at a lower cost.

**Index Terms**—Spain Baccalaureate General Test, speaking competence testing, pilot speaking test, oral test validation

## I. INTRODUCTION

One of the most significant aspects of the Spanish new educational reform has been the introduction of the Baccalaureate General Test, which will replace the former University Entrance Examination. Apart from the fact that this test is to be carried out in a different setting (the high school where each student is enrolled instead of at the university), another major change is that the test will include an oral component to test receptive and productive oral communicative competence. The different setting may help to reduce the anxiety this kind of high-stakes tests produce because the setting will be more familiar and, thus, less threatening, and it will imply a reduced number of students taking the test at the same time in the same place. Both facts will probably provide a more supportive environment for the students. However, the inclusion of an oral competence part will greatly increase anxiety as oral skills are the ones that cause more anxiety in Spanish students.

Previous research has put forward proposals for the tasks to be included in the oral part of the test (Bueno-Alastuey & Luque, 2012; Amengual & Mendez, 2012), but literature on pilot studies about the implementation of such proposed test remains limited (Martin-Monje, 2012) and more research should be done on the implementation of such tasks in real environments.

In this paper, we report on an experience using the proposed tasks in four different provinces in Spain with the aim of illustrating the validity of such proposal both in terms of students' results and in terms of the strengths and the constraints found in those settings. The creation and evaluation of the test is part of a wider project, the OPENPAU project (Spanish Ministry of Education, 2011-2014, FFI2011-22442), whose aim is to put forward a solid proposal to facilitate the implementation of the oral part of the exam. The analysis done in this paper is based on a wide range of factors such as testing procedures, teachers' attitudes, and test organization and delivery (i.e. pen & paper or computer based).

First, a rationale for the tasks chosen and the results of previous experiences trialling speaking tasks will be provided. Second, the organization and the methodology for this research will be explained. And finally, the key strengths and difficulties found in the four settings will be addressed and some conclusions will be drawn.

## II. LITERATURE BACKGROUND

Several authors (Bueno-Alastuey & Luque, 2012; Amengual & Mendez, 2012) have proposed the characteristics which tasks should display to test students' productive oral performance "in appropriate, contextualized, communicative language use" (Bachman, 1990, p. 84) in the Spanish context. These studies have proposed the inclusion of two tasks, an individual monologue task and a pair or group interaction task, so that both individual production and interaction as facets of oral communicative competence are tested, and thus the authenticity, reliability, and construct and content validity of the test are improved. The inclusion of prompts to "help candidates contextualize and elicit the required responses in the target language" (Amengual & Méndez, 2012, p. 117) has also been recommended.

The inclusion of both a monologue and a group based task was also based on the fact that even though group speaking tests have become prevalent (Cheng, Rogers, & Hu, 2004), some recent research (Bahrani, 2011; Martín-Monje, 2012) has illustrated the possibility of getting positive results without any synchronous interaction in computer-based pilot studies. Furthermore, pair and group tests may not always benefit students' performance (Saito, & Miriam, 2004), as aspects like personality (Tsou, 2005), anxiety (Mohammadi, Biria, Koosha, & Shahsavari, 2013) competitiveness, discourse co-construction (Zhang, 2008; Sabet, Tahriri & Pasand, 2013), motivation, learning styles (Tuan, 2011), scales (Hudson, 2005), sex (Azkarai & Mayo, 2012), channel, tester, raters and many others have a powerful effect on the final assessment. Besides, interaction may not be the only way to trigger the candidate's performance and, consequently, both types of tasks seem to be necessary.

Analysis of teachers' surveys regarding the kind of tasks students at this level perform orally in their classes also pointed in the same direction (García Laborda & Fernández Álvarez, 2012) and, thus including an individual task to evaluate oral communicative competence in monologue, and a pair task to test it in interaction increases the face-validity of the test and its practicality.

Although these two tasks have been proposed and they are included in some high-stakes international proficiency tests such as the Cambridge tests, there is no research which has analyzed students' results, the organization and implementation of such test, and its feasibility in Spain.

As some research has pointed out that tasks and cultural variables may affect performance (Fulcher & Marquez, 2003), it is not enough to propose the construct and type of exercises of the test but it is also necessary to try it in experimental conditions to make sure that this test is appropriate for students in different parts of a particular setting, in this case in different regions of Spain (Weir, 2005).

## III. METHODOLOGY

### A. The Project

The OPENPAU project (see Fig.1) is currently being carried out by two groups: a computer centred sub-group (02), and a large sub-group (01) of a number of subjects grouped in much smaller groupings that include content researchers, specialists in measurement and research, the test coordinators and guest researchers. Both groups work on different aspects of the test. On the one hand, sub-group sub-group 01 works on research methodology, the construct of the test, the tasks and their analysis based on pragmatics, discourse analysis etc., their application to the students, and washback. On the other hand, subgroup 02 focuses on the technological aspects of the project, the testing platform design and its implementation and the process control.

This paper is part of the work of sub-group 01 and it is an experimental trialling of a first version of the test prior to being included in the testing platform.

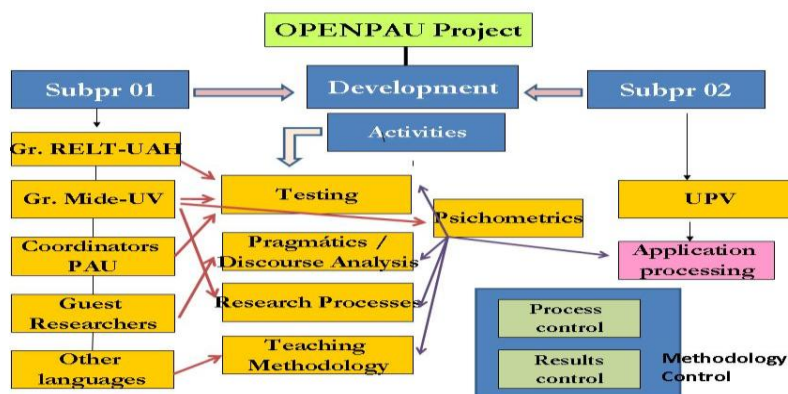


Figure 1. Coordination of the OPEPAU project

### B. Context

Although the Baccalaureate General Test is expected to be very similar in all Spanish regions, the current teaching and learning processes taking place in those locations' high schools are varied, and those different realities should be

considered for the piloting phase to study whether different teaching contexts and realities affect the results students obtain in the test.

Although lately classroom time devoted to speaking tasks seems to have increased in all regions, probably due to the fact that the oral component of the exam was going to be included in the new Baccalaureate General Test in the year 2013, the amount of time allotted to speaking tasks in high schools differs depending on the region. For instance, the region of Madrid (the capital city) may have up to seven hours a week of English language instruction and four of those hours are devoted to speaking, while in other regions such as Navarre students receive four hours of instruction per week with no specific weekly time assigned to speaking. However, it is very difficult to establish how much time is devoted to speaking and listening in each of the regions, and even in two different schools in the same region as generally there is no record of the time devoted to any of the skills weekly. Consequently, no specific general differences can be assumed between specific regions.

To overrule the possible limiting effect of studying only a specific context, four provinces were selected for our pilot study to represent as much variety as possible. Therefore, we selected a small community in the north of Spain, Navarre, a big community in the south of Spain, Andalusia, and two provinces in the middle of Spain, Castile - Leon and Castile - La Mancha, which includes the capital of Spain.

### C. Participants

The participants were 168 students either studying the last year of secondary high school (so a few months before having to take the University Entrance exam) or the first year of a university degree (having just done the University Entrance examination the previous year). 28 students were studying in Navarre, 38 in Andalusia, 62 in Castile-Leon and 40 in Castile-La Mancha.

### D. Instrument

As it has been mentioned, the pilot speaking test considered the usefulness criteria established by Bachman and Palmer (1996), and included the type of tasks recommended by previous studies to fulfill the criteria of validity, reliability, authenticity, wash-back effect and practicality (Bueno-Alastuey & Luque, 2012).

It included 3 parts. The first part was an introductory conversation between examiner and test takers. The test takers were asked to provide personal information about themselves (likes, dislikes, hobbies etc.), their experiences learning English and some background information about previous exams taken and abroad experiences. It included questions such as (1):

(1) *What did you do this morning/yesterday?*

*What do you do in your free time?*

This part of the test was used to try to break the ice and to give the students the opportunity to relax.

The second part consisted of a monologue based on a description of two pictures (different for each test taker). It included questions such as (2) :

(2) *Describe what you see in the picture.*

*Would you like to be in this picture doing this activity?*

*What are the advantages and disadvantages of each activity?*

Finally, the third task was a discussion in pairs about their personal preferences between two given situations. It included questions such as (3) :

(3) *Describe your ideal place to live / Which do you prefer? The city or the country? Why?*

*Describe where you live now.*

### E. Data Collection and Analysis

The students did the interviews in a room with different examiners. All the interactions were recorded. The monologues and interactions were judged according to the levels illustrated in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (A1, A2, B1, B2, C1 and C2), where level A1 corresponds to beginner, A2 to pre-intermediate, B1 to Intermediate, B2 to Upper-Intermediate, C1 to Advance and C2 to Proficient. All levels are described according to competence in the four skills and sociolinguistic competence, and those competences should be tested communicatively and based on performance (Council of Europe, 2001).

The analysis was based on students' results in the test and on a categorization of the main strengths and weaknesses of the tasks proposed together with students' difficulties while doing the tests. The categorization was based on examiners reports about the procedure and the tests.

## IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### A. Navarre

The conversations were scored based on four factors: fluency, accuracy, interaction and coherence. From the 28 students who took the test, 25 were considered to have a level B1 or above, 2 a level A2 and 1 a level A1. Agreement between raters was high and the reliability of the test and the scores was further supported by the fact that the teachers of the students confirmed their students had performed as expected.

The main strengths of the speaking test were three. First, the fact the students carried it out in their own schools with known peers so they were familiar with the context and with their interlocutor. Secondly, as their regular teacher was also present, the anxiety this kind of tests provokes was minimised by the familiar environment and interlocutors. Thirdly, the fact that the tasks included a monologue, in which students showed their competency level, as well as a dialogue, in which they could help and be helped by prompts by their peers, could also offer a more realistic picture of their communicative oral competence.

The main difficulties of this kind of test were the pressure of being recorded and the fact that it had to be carried out outside regular classroom hours and this meant that only volunteers were tested. This might mean that students with lower speaking proficiency levels did not volunteer and so the group might not be representative of the real amount of students with at least a B1 level of English.

Students performed well in the two kinds of tasks proposed (monologue and pair interaction) and they seemed to be familiar with both types of tasks.

Consequently, we can conclude that monologues, descriptions of pictures and discussions with visual support are the most common type of tasks practiced in classrooms. This finding coincides with previous research stating teachers' preferences for this kind of tasks for oral development and testing (Martínez, Sevilla & Gimeno, 2009). Regarding level, students performed at a B1 level of spoken competence as described in the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001).

### *B. Andalusia*

Students results in the pilot test ranged from an A2 level to a B1 or beyond, with some exceptional cases of an apparent A1, perhaps because of attrition or fossilization phenomena which would be solved with short periods of intensive instruction (Muñoz, 2012).

The strengths of the test were the design of the tasks as students scored better in direct questions and after speaking for several minutes. Consequently, the inclusion of several tasks and one of them with direct questions was considered valid. Another strength was the fact that the tasks included visual or verbal support, so students' anxiety level decreased, and communication became more effective. In fact, students tended to do better at fluency than at accuracy, but their communication skills lowered when interacting with someone else. Explicit teaching of common vocabulary and communication strategies together with frequent practice at interaction would likely improve competence levels.

The difficulties students experienced in the test included feelings of embarrassment because of self-perceived lack of communicative skills due to lack of practice in their English classes, where they seemed to have had more practice in answering than in interacting. Secondly, they also showed lack of vocabulary for everyday communication. Thirdly, a frequent lack in the use of those communication strategies that deal with simplification or elaboration phenomena was observed, supporting previous research findings (Manchón, 2008). Furthermore, formulaic language, self-monitoring or use of adequate fillers (Bygate, 2001), which would promote students' oral skills, was not noticed either.

An explaining factor for the lack of communicative skills perceived in the piloting test can be the teaching method that seemed to have been used in their high schools English lessons. With a very high average number of students per classroom, not sufficient opportunities for oral practice or interaction seemed to have been provided. Besides, as the traditional Baccalaureate General Test only tests reading, grammar and vocabulary, the washback effect has been a basically teacher-directed methodology focussing on writing and reading skills in their learning context.

### *C. Castile & Leon*

62 students took the test in Castile-Leon. Overall, the speaking test designed proved to be suitable –with slight adjustments– to determine whether a high school senior student had a minimum speaking skill of Intermediate B1 (threshold level) before entering university. The results of the students ranged from A1 (7 students), A2 (23), B1 (28) and B2 (5), thus the majority of students were in the A2 - B1 range, which confirms previous findings regarding the level of first year university students in Spain (Bueno-Alastuey & Ballarín, 2011).

Regarding the students' performance, the task where they did more poorly was the third (i.e. the dialogue in pairs). In many cases, students found it difficult to make up a conversation and talked individually in turns instead. This fact resulted in a low grading of the "interaction" aspect of speaking.

The strengths of the test can be classified in three major groups: materials used, the procedure itself and the instructor's assessment. Regarding the materials used, the fact that the pictures were in colour was considered a benefit because all details were easier to be distinguished and the students were given the opportunity to describe the photos in a more complete and accurate way, provided they had enough vocabulary to do it. The fact that the examiner had a bank of questions for the first and second part of the test was also considered positive. Lastly, the introduction of two types of tasks (a monologue and pair interaction) made the testing of communicative competence more complete.

Regarding the procedure itself, it was an advantage that the students had to do the test in pairs with familiar partners. This fact is important, especially among Spanish students, considering the unconscious barriers which prevent them from speaking in a foreign language. Research has also confirmed that acquaintance with speaking partners has a positive effect on speaking performance (O'Sullivan, 2002).

Regarding the assessment, having an assessment rubric with four aspects - fluency, accuracy, interaction and coherence - allowed the examiners to score speaking proficiency on the same terms.

The difficulties found while carrying out the oral tests were also related to the materials used and the assessment. In the first case, the examiner's bank of questions for the first and second parts should be a bit more ample to guarantee the variety of topics which students can talk about in order to prevent repetition. As for the third task, a sketch or simple drawing could be more suitable to pose the facts and different options the students should discuss before making a decision. The description of the pictures could be optimized if students were asked to describe the people as well as the setting or the actions.

As far as the assessment is concerned, a more detailed rubric introducing aspects such as linguistic repertoire, vocabulary, or pronunciation would help the examining teachers to calibrate the student's real speaking skill in a more accurate way.

#### *D. Madrid & Castile La Mancha*

In Madrid, the most striking finding was the great difference between those who had had 4 hours of instruction and those who had had extensions, which means 7 hours of instruction. While some of the students evidenced an adequate B2 competence, others could hardly achieve an A2. Most students underscored and were ranked in between A1 and A2 despite having had a large number of years of English language instruction.

The strengths of the test were the kind of tasks. They were adequate for the purpose of finding about students' general competence and included monologues and dialogues, thus, measuring interaction. Students showed more proficiency on communicative/interactional tasks than on descriptive or teacher-student tasks. Consequently, the design of the Baccalaureate General Test should aim at interaction.

The weakness noticed was the limited use of Cognitive Academic Language Performance skills. Since the use of English by university students should be related to both their personal relationships and academic work, the almost complete absence of part of this knowledge was considered a major issue. In reference to the tasks, tasks oriented towards professional and technical communication should be incorporated.

### V. CONCLUSIONS

After analysing the findings of a pilot test for the proposed future speaking section of the Baccalaureate General Test in four geographically dispersed settings in Spain, the following conclusions about the strengths and shortcomings of these proposed tasks could be drawn and the following modifications put forward to improve the test design and implementation.

The construct of the test can be considered valid regarding the type of tasks and the materials used according to recommendations from previous research in the field (Bueno-Alastuey & Luque, 2012). Regarding the procedure, the pairing of students familiar to each other and the presence of the teacher were reported as favourable for students to show their competence. The fact that students had to show both their competence in a monologue and in dialogues, thus their interactional competence, was also judged as positive and reliable. Finally, using a rubric to evaluate oral performance also increased the consistency of examiners' scores.

The level of students, ranging between A2 and B1 in most regions, seemed to be enough to pass this kind of oral test, although some examiners pointed out negative feelings of embarrassment and inadequacy in some students and lack of communicative competence strategies to deal with communication more successfully. These negative factors could be overcome by an increase in the time devoted to the speaking skill in class and by explicit instruction of communicative competence strategies in high school classrooms. In some regions students performed better at interaction, and in others in monologues, so both kinds of tasks should be included to get a more reliable and valid score of speaking competence.

The main reported shortcomings of the test were related to the limited quantity of questions, according to some of the examiners, in the first part, and to the modest quantity of visual support. Consequently, some of the raters suggested more questions in the first part, more visual support in the second part and some guide and visual support, for example graphs, in the discussion part of the test. A more detailed rubric including more aspects such as linguistic repertoire, vocabulary and pronunciation were also demanded together with a broader band of scores.

As a conclusion we must point out that the aforementioned recommendations should be included in further tests and then piloted to measure satisfaction. Further research should also be initiated on the implementation of a speaking test using technological tools so as to improve the economy in terms of time of the speaking section of the future Baccalaureate General Test.

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# Can Greek Learners Acquire the Overt Subject Property of English? A Pilot Study

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**Abstract**—This paper reports the results of the pilot part of a wider study exploring the second language (L2) grammars of beginner, intermediate and advanced Greek learners of English. The experiment considers the acceptability of structures with null and postverbal subjects, as well as the acceptability of permutations inducing *that-t* violations in L2 English. The results have suggested that there is a developmental trend with increasing proficiency with the more proficient groups exhibiting improved performance. However, it was found that L2 performance does not reach native standards, since the advanced group fared significantly less successfully than the English control group in all the structures tested. This data lends empirical support to recent theoretical proposals that cross-linguistic differences between L1 and L2 in the form of syntactic feature mismatch can cause prolonged learnability problems which are difficult, if not impossible, to overcome.

**Index Terms**—second language acquisition, null subjects, postverbal subjects, *that-t* violations, syntactic features

## I. INTRODUCTION

Researchers within the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) have always attempted to address the question of whether adult L2 performance can be native-like and, if this is not feasible, what are the possible reasons. Recently, within minimalism (Chomsky, 1995; 2001), learner unsuccessful performance has been associated with a difference between L1 and L2 syntactic features. In very simple terms, researches endorsing the above view propose that in areas where L1 and L2 differ with respect to syntactic features, i.e. in areas where there is syntactic mismatch between L1 and L2, adult L2 learners are expected to encounter insuperable acquisitional problems. Due to maturational constraints, L2 syntactic features are not available to adult learners, i.e. adult learners cannot use them to analyze the L2 input (Tsimpli & Mastropavlou, 2007). Thus, ultimate attainment of the targeted structures is assumed to be impossible (see for earlier accounts Beck, 1998; Hawkins & Chan, 1997; Tsimpli & Roussou, 1991 and for more recent accounts Hawkins & Hattori, 2006; Tsimpli & Dimitrakopoulou, 2007 (the *Interpretability Hypothesis*). For studies supporting these accounts see Prentza, 2010, 2014; 2014; Prentza & Tsimpli, 2013a, b). Note crucially that semantic features like [referentiality] on nouns and pronouns which contribute to the semantic interpretation of syntactic expressions are, by assumption, not subjected to a critical period and are thus more readily available to adult learners (Prentza, 2010; Prentza & Tsimpli, 2013a; Tsimpli & Mastropavlou, 2007).

L1 Greek and L2 English differ in the syntactic properties which are considered to follow from the fact that Greek is a null-subject language (NSL) but English is not. The properties traditionally related with the positive setting of the Null Subject Parameter (Rizzi, 1982; 1986) instantiated by Greek are the availability of null and postverbal configurations as well as the absence of *that-t* violations. With this given, the study presented here, which constitutes the pilot part of a wider experiment (see Prentza, 2010; Prentza and Tsimpli 2013a), aims to test the hypothesis that syntactic divergence, as this is defined by syntactic feature mismatch, will lead to L2 performance which will deviate from the native norm at all times.

This paper is organized as follows: Section 2 provides the theoretical framework of the study. It analyzes the relevant differences between L1 Greek and L2 English, provides an overview of previous L2 findings and outlines the predictions formulated for this study. Section 3 presents the experiment and the obtained data and finally, Section 4 discusses the results and their implications.

## II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### A. Syntactic Differences between L1 Greek and L2 English

Research in theoretical linguistics within the generative framework has proposed that the syntactic differences between languages like Greek and languages like English are related to the nature of verbal agreement morphology in the former: Greek exhibits rich agreement inflection on the verb comprising a full person/number paradigm in all tenses, while English does not. From that follows the availability of null and postverbal subjects (see originally Taraldsen, 1979; Rizzi, 1982 and more recently, Alexiadou & Anagnostopoulou, 1998; Barbosa, 1995; 2000; 2009; Kato, 1999; Platzack, 2004; Roussou and Tsimpli, 2006; Spyropoulos & Philippaki-Warbuton, 2001 among others). More recently the lack



of *that-t* violations in languages like Greek (i.e. the possibility of extracting the subject across an overt complementizer like *that*) has also been related to the nature of subject-verb agreement in Greek (see Roussou, 2002; Tsimpli & Dimitrakopoulou, 2007). Hence, much recent linguistic theory attributes the aforementioned differences in the Null Subject Parameter properties to a divergence in the abstract syntactic features of verbal agreement of the languages involved. Let us now present in more detail the properties under question.

Greek being a NSL, allows null referential (i.e. lexical) subjects in both matrix and subordinate clauses on the one hand, and, requires null expletive subjects in the same structures on the other, as the gloss (1) illustrates. Moreover, it exhibits subject verb inversion irrespective of predicate type (see examples in 2) and allows subject extraction out of a complement clause in the presence of the lexical complementizer *oti* ('that') (see examples in 3). English by contrast, requires that the subject (referential or expletive) is overtly realised, disallows postverbal subject permutations<sup>1</sup> and permits subject extraction only in the case that the lexical complementizer *that* is absent or, otherwise, violations of the *that-t* filter, i.e. *that-t* violations are induced. Notice however that object extraction across an overt complementizer is a licit option in English:

- (1) \_ Ipan *oti*\_tha xionisi (null referential & expletive subject)  
 Said.3PL that will snow.3SG  
 \*(they) said that \*(it) will snow  
 'They said that it will rain'
- (2) a. Eftase/Jelase i Anna (unaccusative/unergative)  
 arrived.3SG /Laughed.3SG the.NOM Anna.NOM  
 \*Arrived/ Laughed Anna  
 'Anna arrived/laughed'
- (2) b. Etimase (to proino) o Pertos (to proino) (transitive)  
 prepared.3SG (the.ACC breakfast.ACC) the.NOM Peter.NOM (the.ACC breakfast.ACC)  
 \*Prepared the (breakfast) Peter (the breakfast)  
 'Peter prepared breakfast'
- (3) a. Pjos ipes *oti* arostise? (subject extraction)  
 Who. NOM said. 2SG that got sick. 3SG  
 \*Who did you say that got sick?  
 'Who did you say got sick?'
- (3) b. Pjon ipes *oti* ide i Anna to proi? (object extraction)  
 Who.ACC said.3SG that saw.3SG the.NOM Anna.NOM in.ACC the.ACC morning. ACC?  
 Whom did you say (that) Anna saw in the morning?

The above constitute the structures that were used in the design of the tests items of the current experiment.

## B. Previous L2 Findings

The acquisition of the properties related to the Null Subject Parameter has been the focus of much research. Both earlier and more recent studies report that syntactic divergence between L1 and L2 with respect to the aforementioned syntactic options leads to unsuccessful L2 performance. This is manifested by L1 influence in interlanguage systems in the form of transfer of the L1 syntactic properties. Due to that, in the acquisition of a NSL, speakers of NSLs appear to be more successful than speakers of non-null-subject languages (NNSLs). Conversely, speakers of NNSLs fare better in the acquisition of another NNSL than speakers of NSLs. In this section we will review L2 studies pertaining to the second case (i.e. L1 NSL, L2 NNSL), since this is related to our experiment. Earlier studies will be discussed first and more recent ones will follow.

White (1985) tested Spanish beginner, intermediate and advanced learners of English in structures involving null and postverbal subjects, as well as *that-t* violations<sup>2</sup>. The beginner group was found to accept a significant proportion of ungrammatical null subjects (64.7%), but there was a gradual improvement in the intermediate and advanced level, with the groups allowing null subjects in 41.7% and 30.5% of the cases respectively. L2 groups were found to perform more accurately with respect to postverbal items<sup>3</sup>. Regarding *that-t* violations, Spanish learners performed rather poorly irrespective of proficiency level. In her 1986 study, White also included Italian learners in her L2 groups. The results indicated that the Spanish and Italian learners were unsuccessful in identifying the ungrammaticality of null subject sentences and of *that-t* violations: they accepted illicit null subjects in 39% of the cases and *that-t* violations in 58% of the times. However, in postverbal subject structures, both groups were very accurate rejecting verb-subject (VS) L2 illicit orders at a rate of 91%. Tsimpli and Roussou (1991) investigated the status of the NSP in the L2 grammars of

<sup>1</sup> English allows postverbal subject permutations only in specific registers: in *there*-existential structures, in cases of locative inversion (see Culicover & Winkler, 2008) and in quotative inversion (see Collins, 1997; Collins & Branigan, 1997).

(1) There appeared a horrific sight (there-existential)  
 (2) On the corner stood a tall man. (locative inversion)  
 (3) 'I am hungry' said Mary (quotative inversion)

<sup>2</sup> White (1985) also included French learners of Spanish in her study, but for the purposes of the present discussion we will restrict our attention to the Spanish groups.

<sup>3</sup> Although White (1985) reports some problems with an ungrammatical 'There-Verb-Subject' item (for similar results see Prentza & Tsimpli, 2013a)

intermediate and post-intermediate Greek learners of English. Greek learners were found to be quite accurate in rejecting null and postverbal subject structures. Notice however, that Greek learners accepted ungrammatical null expletive subjects in 80% of the times. This is related to the distinct acquisitional routes of expletive and referential subject also evinced in previous L2 studies. To mention some representative examples, Phinney's results (1987) showed a clear difference in the acquisition of English referential and expletive subjects by Spanish L2 learners. Expletive subjects were omitted more than referential ones: high-beginner and low-intermediate Spanish learners of English omitted expletive pronouns in 76% and 56% of the obligatory contexts respectively, whereas they omitted referential pronouns only in 13% and 6% of the cases respectively. In a later study Al-Kasey & Pérez-Leroux (1998) reported that lower proficiency learners encountered problems with null expletive subject comprehension, but more advanced learners exhibited improved performance without however achieving accuracy rates comparable with those of the English controls. In particular, elementary and intermediate learners were inaccurate in 23.19% and in 24.02% of the cases respectively choosing an L2 illicit referential reading for the expletive *it* rather than a generic interpretation<sup>4</sup>. The advanced group on the other hand, exhibited non-target performance in 8.33% of the times improving towards the native norm, yet remaining distinguishable from the control group. Within feature oriented accounts, such results are ascribed to the fact that expletive subjects unlike referential ones lack semantic characteristics like [referentiality] having only grammatical features. Returning to Tsimpli and Roussou's data on English subject extraction structures, it was reported that over 95% of Greek learners failed to reject L2 *that-t* violation sentences. Tsimpli and Roussou attributed the obtained results to the inaccessibility of the involved grammatical features in adult L2 acquisition. Prolonged problems associated with English subject extraction structures were also attested in the interlanguage of advanced Greek learners in a later study conducted by Tsimpli (1997). The results showed that Greek intermediate learners achieved the lowest accuracy rates in *that-t* items, as expected, due to the involvement of syntactic features that differ between L1 and L2.

Turning next to more recent studies, Tsimpli & Dimitrakopoulou (2007) tested intermediate and advanced Greek learners of English and, in line with findings from previous studies, also found L1 effects on subject extraction items even at advanced stages of development. This was manifested through the following findings: First, the lack of significant development of learner accuracy in ungrammatical subject interrogatives (INT: 63.9%, ADV: 68.4%) and, second, the significantly less accurate performance of advanced learners compared to the English control group in rejecting *that-t* violations (ADV: 68.4%, NS: 96.7%). Tsimpli and Dimitrakopoulou ascribe their data to the unavailability of syntactic features in adult L2 acquisition. This, according to the researchers leads to a transfer of the L1 syntactic options in L2 even in advanced stages of development and causes persistent learnability problems. Finally, Lozano and Mendikoetxea (2010) examined learner corpora of Spanish upper-intermediate L2 learners of English against native English corpora in an attempt to examine L2 postverbal production. The analysis of the native and non-native corpora showed that Spanish learners produced significantly more ungrammatical postverbal structures as opposed to English natives who were accurate at all times (65.5 % vs. 0%).

### C. Predictions

Endorsing the proposals of formal features deficit accounts, namely that cross-linguistic differences in the form of syntactic divergence can cause prolonged learnability problems, the predictions formulated for this work are the following:

A) *Development of L2 grammars*: it is expected that more proficient L2 learners will be more successful than less proficient ones in rejecting ungrammatical English null, postverbal and *that-t* structures and in producing grammatical overt preverbal subject structures and licit subject extraction structures.

B) *End-state of L2 grammars*: due to the involvement of formal syntactic features which results to a syntactic mismatch between L1 and L2 in the targeted areas it is expected that ADV L2 learners will not acquire the English syntactic properties related to the realization (i.e. obligatorily overt), distribution (i.e. obligatorily preverbal) and properties (non-extraction across *that*) of the English subject.

## III. THE EXPERIMENT

### A. Participants and Materials

The subjects of the study consisted of four groups: three groups of Greek learners ( $n=30$ ) and a control group of English native speakers (NS) ( $n=10$ ). According to their scores in the Oxford Placement Test (OPT) (Allan, 1992)<sup>5</sup>, learners were divided into three proficiency levels: the beginner group (BEG) ( $n=10$ ), the intermediate group (INT)

<sup>4</sup> (4) a. P. likes this blue kite. This is fun to fly (referential interpretation)  
b. P likes this blue kite. (\*It) is fun to fly (generic interpretation)  
(Al-Kasey and Pérez-Leroux, 1998: 169)

<sup>5</sup> The subjects who scored between 85 and 134 formed the BEG group, the subjects who scored between 135-150 formed the INT group and those scoring 170 < formed the ADV group. The participants scoring between 151-169 who would normally be categorized as post-intermediate learners were excluded from the study, as one of its aims was to test for developmental L2 differences and, to this end, the INT-ADV contrast was considered more useful.

( $n=10$ ), and the advanced group (ADV) ( $n=10$ )<sup>6</sup>. All learner groups had been exposed to English in a classroom setting. The beginner group had been studying English for an average of 4.5 years, the intermediate for 6 years and the advanced for 8 years. All informants were naive to the purpose of the experiment and participation to the study was voluntary and unpaid.

The materials used were one judgement and one production task: a Paced Grammaticality Judgement Task (PGJT) and a Cloze Test (CT).

The PGJT aimed at investigating the acceptability of ungrammatical null and postverbal subject structures as well as the acceptability of structures inducing *that-t* violations. The task consisted of 186 test items interspersed with 100 filler items<sup>7</sup> resulting in a 286-item task. Half of the test items and filler items were ungrammatical and the other half were grammatical. All the items were randomised and, due to the length of the task, were divided in two questionnaires of 143 items which were administered in two sessions. The participants saw each sentence on the screen for 5 seconds<sup>8</sup> while, at the same time, they heard it on tape<sup>9</sup>. Participants had to indicate their judgement using a 5-point scale ranging from -2 (certainly ungrammatical) to +2 (certainly grammatical) while 0 encoded the *not sure* option (White et al., 1998). For the purposes of the current study<sup>10</sup>, the 5 categories of the -2 to +2 scale were conflated into the categories of *target*, *non-target* and *not sure*. More specifically, for a sentence judged by the control group as ungrammatical (-1 or -2) all choices made on the positive side of the scale (+1, +2) were considered as non-target performance. Accordingly, when controls judged a sentence as grammatical (+1 or +2), the choices made on the negative side of the scale (-1, -2) were taken to represent target-deviant performance. The *not sure* category encoded by the 0 choices was excluded in the analysis. Sentences in (4-6) provide examples of null, postverbal and *that-t* violation structures respectively and of their grammatical counterparts:

- (4) a. \* Has asked me a very difficult question. (null referential subject)  
This time tomorrow I will be flying to Athens.  
b. \*In London rains a lot all the time. (null expletive subject)  
It seems that Susan did not get the job she wanted.  
(5) \*Serves an English butler dinner at their house. (postverbal subject)  
The client arrived on time for the appointment.  
(6) \*Which film did you say that was very boring? (*that-t* violation)  
Who did you say is visiting us next week?

Turning next to the CT, it aimed to test the production rates of English overt subjects structures and of grammatical subject extraction structures (i.e. free of *that-t* violations). The test consisted of 26 test and 25 filler items and had to be completed in 20 minutes. Participants were instructed to use only one word for each gap in the cases they thought it was necessary. Therefore, a zero gap was allowed, since in subject extraction structures, this would be the target answer. Sentences in (7-8) offer examples of the item types of the CT (targeted responses in *italics*):

- (7) a. ...*He*...had followed a study plan..... (referential subject)  
b. In recent years.....*there*.....has been a change in our attitude towards the environment.  
(expletive subject)  
(8) Who did you say.....-.....called you? (subject extraction)

Table 1 summarizes the item types in each of the tests used.

TABLE 1.  
PGJT & CT ITEM TYPES

Tests	Item Types	Tokens
PGJT	Null subjects	20 <sup>a</sup>
	Postverbal subjects	53
	<i>that-t</i>	10
	<i>Total:</i>	83
CT	Null subjects	22 <sup>b</sup>
	<i>that-t</i>	4
	<i>Total:</i>	26

a: the test also included 83 grammatical counterparts of these items

b: half of the items were expletive and half referential

Participant responses in both tests were coded as target and non-target and were submitted to statistical analysis. Pearson's Chi-Square tests were used to test for independence between the variables of Group (NS, ADV, INT, BEG) and Response. Additionally, a qualitative analysis was performed on the null subject acceptance and production rates of

<sup>6</sup> Although more subjects were tested, these numbers refer to those participants who completed all parts of the test.

<sup>7</sup> The 186 test items consisted of 166 declarative and 20 interrogative sentences (the extraction items), while the 100 filler items consisted of 40 interrogative, 30 pseudo-cleft and 30 exclamative sentences.

<sup>8</sup> This time was allocated in order to allow non-native speakers enough time to see the sentence projected on the screen and subsequently indicate their judgements on the answer sheet. The three seconds gap used in trial versions of the test did not seem enough especially for the beginner group.

<sup>9</sup> During the recording of the items care was taken so that the ungrammatical items were delivered with the same intonation as the grammatical items. For this reason, the recording was repeated and the second improved version was finally used.

<sup>10</sup> For the wider study another analysis was adopted: The five categories realised by the scale were maintained because we felt that the lack of certainty captured by the intermediate choices (+1 and -1 choices) is worth investigating (see Prentza, 2010)

both tasks examining performance in the expletive vs. in the referential items included. Methodologically, this was allowed since in both tests half of the subject items were referential and half were expletive (see also Table 1).

### B. Results

Results will be presented in three subsections, each for the type the items fall into, namely, null, postverbal and that-t structures.

**Null subjects.** The analysis yielded that in both the PGJT and the CT the variable of Group had a main effect on Response (both  $ps < 0.05$ ). This means that the advanced learners fared more successfully than intermediate ones, who in their turn were more accurate than the beginner group. As expected however, all L2 groups, and, crucially, the ADV group accepted and produced significantly more ungrammatical null subjects than the control group. In both the judgment and the production task L2 learner performance does not meet native speaker standards even at more advanced levels. Thus, according to the predictions outlined, although a developmental trend is evinced, L2 performance remains target-deviant in the rejection rates of null subjects, as well as in the production rates of overt subject permutations. Fig. 1 illustrates the relevant scores:

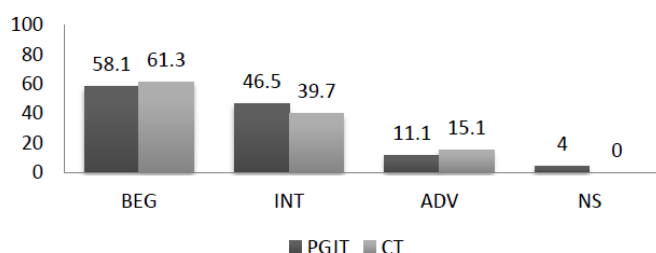


Figure 1. Non-target Performance (%)– PGJT & CT

Additionally, participant non-target performance illustrated in Fig.1 was subjected to a qualitative analysis whereby subject omission in referential and in expletive items was compared. Table 2 presents the relevant scores:

TABLE 2.  
NON-TARGET PERFORMANCE (%) IN EXPLETIVE VS. IN REFERENTIAL SUBJECTS -PGJT&CT

	PGJT		CT	
	Expletive	Referential	Expletive	Referential
NS	5	0	0	0
ADV	16	7	22	10
INT	57	40	44	35
BEG	66	48	62	60

As observed in Table 2, Greek learners but not the native controls are less successful in rejecting null expletive subjects as well as in producing overt expletive forms. The case of the ADV group is very revealing: the inaccuracy rates in the expletive items are double the relevant rates in the referential items in both the PGJT and the CT. For the INT group this contrast is realized as a rise of a mean of 34% in non-target performance in the expletive items of the tasks (PGJT: 42% rise, CT: 25% rise). The BEG group in the acceptability task exhibits a performance similar with the INT group and achieves an improvement of 28% in the referential items. In the CT however, no such improvement is evinced since beginner learners are rather inaccurate (in 6 out the 10 times) in both expletive and referential items.

**Postverbal subjects.** Turning next to postverbal subject permutations, the analysis has shown that the variable of Group significantly differentiated performance ( $p < 0.05$ ), and, thus all groups differed from one another. Learner performance appears improved in more advanced stages of proficiency, but what is important is that, as in the null subject items, the ADV group was significantly less accurate than the English control group. As hypothesized, advanced Greek learners allowed for structures involving postverbal subjects significantly more often than the native group did. Fig. 2 presents the relevant rates:

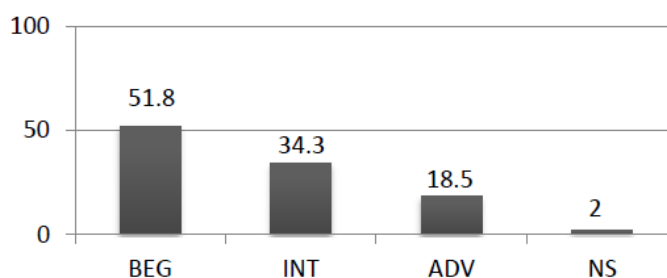


Figure 2. Non-target Performance (%) in Postverbal Items– PGJT

*That-t items.* As in the other item types, the analysis has returned a main effect of the variable of Group on Response in both the PGJT and the CT (both  $ps < 0.05$ ). As also shown by the scores on Fig. 3 below, learner performance improves with increasing proficiency; INT learners are more successful in detecting *that-t* violations and in producing grammatical English subject extraction structures than the beginner group. However, they are not as successful as the ADV group. Interestingly and in line with what predicted, the ADV group is differentiated from the control group in that it allows and produces significantly more structures inducing *that-t* violations than they do.

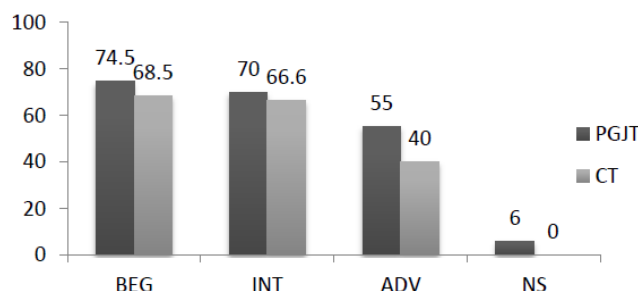


Figure 3. Non-target Performance (%) in *that-t* violation Items– PGJT & CT

Before closing the results section the following point needs to be made: as also evinced in other L2 studies, the participants of this experiment seem have overall lower accuracy rates in rejecting *that-t* violations and in producing grammatical English subject extraction structures than in rejecting postverbal and null subject configurations and in producing overt preverbal subject L2 sentences. Although an account of that matter is beyond the scope of the present paper, it could be said that findings like the above have lead researchers to argue for a dissociation of the properties purportedly related to the NSP phenomenon (see originally Licerias, 1989 and subsequently Belletti & Leonini, 2004; Newmeyer, 2005; Roberts & Holmberg, 2005; Prentza, 2010; Prentza & Tsimpli, 2013a among others).

#### IV. DISCUSSION

Data from the current experiment has suggested that the L1 properties related to null and postverbal subject structures, as well as to the possibility of extracting subjects across an overt complementizer are active in the L2 grammars of Greek learners of English even at advanced levels. Within the framework adopted in the present work, the implication is that L2 abstract syntactic features associated with verbal agreement which, as previously discussed, are assumed to differ between L1 Greek and L2 English, seem inaccessible in adult L2 acquisition. L2 learners do not appear able to use formal L2 features to analyze L2 input. Hence, they resort to a transfer of the relevant L1 features, the result being that they cannot switch off the syntactic properties associated with the Greek null subject properties. This verifies our prediction regarding end-state interlanguage systems.

As for L2 development, a clear trend was reported with more proficient learners achieving more accurate performance than less proficient ones, since the intermediate group fared better than the beginner group and worse than the advanced group in all three item types across both tasks. This confirms our hypothesis concerning the improvement of L2 performance in more advanced levels. However native-like linguistic behavior was not attested even in the advanced group which was found to be significantly less successful than the English control group in all the structures tested in both the judgment and the production task.

Overall, based on the above, it can be claimed that accounts maintaining that the unsuccessful performance of L2 learners is associated with cross-linguistic differences manifested as L1 and L2 syntactic feature mismatch are supported by this work. Within this analysis, L1 transfer in the process of L2 acquisition amounts to an incorrect application of L1 syntactic properties in structures where L1 and L2 abstract syntactic features differ. On this hypothesis, interlanguage systems may differ from L1 grammars, as they differ from L2, but, nevertheless, are possible human grammars. Recent work in L2 research has suggested that L2 grammars do not replicate learner L1 grammars in the sense that notice of L2 input leads learners to adjust L1 syntactic properties. However, L2 learners continue to rely on L1 properties in order to approximate, to the extent possible, L2 forms (see Prentza & Tsimpli, 2013a&b; Prentza, 2010, 2013, 2014; Tsimpli & Dimitrakopoulou, 2007).

Recently, within the realm of accounts arguing for the inhibitory role of L1 and L2 syntactic feature mismatch in the process of L2 acquisition, it has been proposed that hybrid L1/L2 interlanguage systems (i.e. systems which instantiate essentially L1 syntactic forms but on the surface appear to approximate the native norm) are achieved by the exploitation of semantic features (see Prentza & Tsimpli, 2013a; Tsimpli & Mastropavlou, 2007; Tsimpli & Papadopoulou, 2009). Semantic features (like [referentiality] on nouns and pronouns) make linguistic expressions with content legible to the conceptual-intentional system of human cognition. In other words, semantic features are not only relevant to the syntactic computation like syntactic features are, but also carry semantic import. The differentiation of the role of syntactic and semantic features can elucidate the nature of the constraints imposed in L2 acquisition by the unavailability of the former and has proven very fruitful in advancing linguistic theory in general.

The work presented here constitutes the pilot part of a wider study examining the acquisitional route of both formal and semantic features (for the whole study see Prentza, 2010). Although this paper largely presents only results pertaining to the possibility of acquiring formal syntactic features in L2, it is worth mentioning that the post hoc qualitative analysis of the null subject data (see Table 2) has shown that expletive null subjects which instantiate only syntactic but not semantic features appeared to be more problematic for Greek learners than referential ones. Assuming that semantic features have an alleviating role in L2 acquisition it could be said that Greek learners fare better in referential subjects because they use the semantic feature of [referentiality] to compensate for null subject overuse in Greek/English interlanguage systems (for a more detailed discussion of the issue see Prentza & Tsimpli, 2013a). Although no statistics were performed on these results, the attested tendency supports the claim that syntactic and semantic features follow distinct acquisitional paths in the process of L2 acquisition with the former being more daily available to the L2 learners than the latter.

In sum, despite the methodological limitations inherent in any research on linguistic development, the current study examined developing and end-state interlanguage systems in an attempt to evaluate the role of formal syntactic features in adult L2 acquisition. The obtained data raised questions as to whether properties related to syntactic features different in L1 and L2 are acquirable by adult L2 learners. Additionally, there have been indications in the present work that semantic features may be more easily accessible to adult L2 learners, and, for this reason, to be used as an alleviating strategy by L2 learners.

Closing, it must be noted that the consequences of theoretical proposals like the one adopted here are not limited to the advancement or improvement of language acquisition theories, but can also have a more functional dimension: they can be used to predict and explain areas of difficulty in foreign language learning and, consequently, teaching; they make an explicit proposal that in structures where there is a syntactic mismatch between L1 and L2, learners are expected to encounter prolonged problems. If in general the well-formedness of a theoretical proposal is based on its power to both predict and explain the relevant observable facts, as well as to present a unified account of the various facets of the associated phenomena, then the syntactic features deficit approach which was adopted and discussed in the present study seems to qualify as such.

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# Grammatical Errors of Bilingual 1 Francophone Learners of English in the University of Yaounde I

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**Abstract**—The paper investigates the difficulties that bilingual level 1 Francophone students in the Department of Bilingual Studies of the University of Yaounde I face in English. Data for the study is the essay of 250 students of the 2013-2014 academic year were brought out through a general essay topic they were asked to write. The essays were manually scored and the errors were classified and tabulated according to their number of frequency in the students' essays. The analysis of their compositions revealed that the informants had evidential shortfalls in English grammar. Findings show that the most salient grammatical errors which were found in the students essays included: verb tense and form, subject-verb agreement, prepositions, word order, plurality, articles, passive voice, auxiliaries and double negation. These results showed that the teaching and learning of English writing skill of secondary students in Cameroonian primary and secondary schools need more reinforcement and development.

**Index Terms**—Francophone, grammatical errors, writing

## I. INTRODUCTION

Cortés (2005) quotes Odlin (1993) who defines a language transfer as “the influence resulting from similarities and differences between the target language and any other language that has been previously (and perhaps imperfectly) acquired” (p. 240). Globalization has placed a growing importance on the study of the English language. Learners of English can be counted all over the world and so their errors. Prior researches on error analysis show that errors are indispensable since the making of errors can be regarded as an evidence that the learner is learning (Lado, 1957, Corder, 1967). Also, Candling (2001) observes that L2 learner's errors are potentially important for the understanding of the processes of language learning (p. 69). Cameroonian learners of the English language do not escape this rule. The structural differences between the numerous languages that exist in Cameroon has made it difficult for Francophones learning English as their second official language to use the language appropriately. Cameroon adopted French and English as its official languages in 1961 and is one of the most multilingual countries in Africa with over 248 home languages and lingua francas spoken in the territory. English is taught in all French-medium schools as from primary level and vice versa for French in English-medium schools. Francophones and Anglophones still have difficulties in expressing themselves in their second official language. It has even been more difficult for Francophones who, for the most part have a negative attitude towards English (Sokeng, 2011). Lado (1957) claimed that “the student who comes in contact with a foreign language will find some features of it quite easy and others extremely difficult (p.2). Those elements that are similar to his language will be simple for him, and those elements that are different will be difficult”. Similar elements in both languages may help the learner achieve a better knowledge while differences may hinder the learning process.

## II. A HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO THE FIELD OF ERROR ANALYSIS

Error analysis, a branch of applied linguistics, emerged in the sixties to demonstrate that learner errors were not only because of the learner's native language, but also reflected some universal learning strategies. This was as a reaction to the contrastive analysis theory, which considered interference as the basic process of second language learning. Richards and Schmidt (2010) define Error Analysis (EA) as the study and analysis of the errors made by second language learners (p. 201). EA may be carried out in order to identify strategies which learners use in language learning, to try to identify the causes of learner errors and obtain information on common difficulties in language learning, to act as an aid to teaching or in the preparation of teaching materials.

### A. What Is an Error?

Richards and Schmidt (2010) make a distinction between an error and a mistake. An error results from incomplete knowledge, and a mistake is made by a learner when writing or speaking and is caused by lack of attention, fatigue, carelessness, or some other aspect of performance (p. 201). Hubbard et al. (1983) say all incorrect forms produced by students are errors but it is important to make a difference between genuine errors caused by the lack of knowledge about the target language or incorrect hypotheses about it and mistakes caused by temporary lapses of memory confusion, slips of the tongue and so on (p. 134). Erdogan (2005) quotes Ellis (1997) who suggests two ways to distinguish between an error and a mistake: the first one is to check the consistency of learner's performance. If he



sometimes uses the correct form and sometimes the wrong one, it is a mistake (p. 263). However, if he always uses it incorrectly, it is then an error. The second way is to ask learner to try to correct his own deviant utterance. Where he is unable to, the deviations are errors; where he is successful, they are mistakes.

### B. Sources of Errors

We distinguish between two sources of errors: interlingual transfer and intralingual transfer:

#### a- Intralingual transfer

Richards and Schmidt (2010) define an intralingual error as one which results from faulty or partial learning of the target language, rather than from language transfer (p. 294). Intralingual errors may be caused by the influence of one target language item upon another. For example, a learner may produce *He is comes\**, based on a blend of the English structures *He is coming*, *He comes*. Shekhzadeh and Gheichi (2011: 161) say intralingual transfer is mostly caused by overgeneralization (or ignorance of rule restriction) and transfer of training (when teaching creates language rules that are not part of the L2)

#### b- Interlingual transfer

From the same source (ibid), an interlanguage error is an error which results from language transfer, that is, which is caused by a transfer of similar rules from the learner's native language. For example, the incorrect French sentence *Elle regarde les\** ("She sees them"), produced according to the word order of English, instead of the correct French sentence *Elle les regarde* (literally, "She them sees"). Interlingual errors may occur at different levels such as transfer of phonological, morphological, grammatical and lexic-semantic elements of the native language into the target language (Shekhzadeh and Gheichi, 2011).

## III. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature on error analysis by Francophone students learning English in Cameroon is vast even though most of it focuses on only specific aspects. Lebe (2001) discusses the use of English auxiliary verbs by Francophone learners of English. He reveals that the informants could use effectively the present continuous and the present perfect continuous but they faced a lot of difficulties using the future continuous, the past perfect continuous, the past continuous, the future perfect continuous and the passive voice. They could use the verb 'to do' in the present tense and past tense in declarative structures but had some problems in interrogative and negative sentences. He mentioned the course textbooks as one of the source of the errors but also students' inability to understand their lessons, poor motivation and incompetent and untrained teachers. Wochiwo (2009) goes in the same line and adds that the errors of Francophones can be attributed to the fact that there is no equivalence in French of certain tenses like the present perfect. Dayang (2005) found that some Francophone students 'underused' prepositions because of a lack of motivation on their part, whereas motivated students who used these prepositions encountered problems in their use because of the misunderstanding of their use due to poor teaching methods. Other authors investigated into some grammatical problems of Francophones learners of the English language in Cameroon like Etame (2005), Fornkwa (2013), Kameni (2004), etc....

At the international level many recent publications have been published on the errors of learners of English as a foreign language. Sarko (2008) discusses the morphophonological or syntactic transfer in the acquisition of articles by Syrian Arabic speakers. He finds that Syrian Arabic speakers transfer L1 syntactic properties into their L2 grammar. Isabelli-García and Slough (2012) goes further by distinguishing the mean rate of missed obligatory use of the definite article which are cultural, situation, structural and textual. They affirm that time spent studying the English non-generic definite article does increase accuracy rates across all these categories. Al-Badawi (2012) analyses the phonetic, morphological and syntactic errors in English of some Saudi BA students. His results reveal that most syntactic errors committed by these students can be attributed to a lack of L2 knowledge: 42.5% of the sample violated subject-verb agreement in noun phrases due to lack of knowledge of the plural system of English nouns, 57.5% failed to use the adverbial 'because' due to lack of knowledge of cause-effect adverbial clauses, 50% failed to use the indefinite article (a/an) due to lack of awareness that each noun phrase must be preceded by a determiner, and 70% erroneously substituted the indefinite article (a/an) for the definite article (the). A significant number also used certain prepositions incorrectly due to the absence of certain adverbs of place in Arabic (57.5%). A second group failed to use the correct time sequence due to lack of awareness that all the verbs in a time sequence in a sentence must carry the same tense as that of the first verb (50%). A third group failed to use (50%) or erroneously repeated (27.5%) the auxiliary 'be' due to the absence of this auxiliary in Arabic. A fourth group failed to use the restrictive relative pronoun 'who' after the noun phrase due to lack of awareness that each noun phrase that constitutes a clause in the embedded position must be followed by a relative pronoun (40%) and a last group added another noun phrase of the same category to the subject of a sentence (30%). Mungungu (2010) investigated into the writing of ESL of Namibian learners. He reveals that native speakers of Afrikaans, Silozi and Oshiwambo had difficulties with English spelling, tenses, prepositions and articles respectively.

The present paper is an analysis on the grammatical errors made by first Francophones learners of English in Cameroon, focusing on a general overview of grammar than limiting itself to specific aspects. Also, it tries to give a

global picture of the errors of Francophones who obtained the best marks (from 14/20 upwards) at the English paper at the *Baccalauréat A4* (GCE Advanced Level-Humanities) at the end of the secondary level of education.

#### IV. METHODOLOGY

This section provides information on the informants (4.1) and the techniques and data collection instruments (4.2).

##### A. Informants

The population of the study consisted of 250 first year Francophone students from the Department of bilingual studies, aged between 16 to 20 years. They were selected at random from students who registered in the 2013-2014 academic year. Out of the 250 students who participated, 147 were female and 103 were male. The participating students have been studying English as a school subject in primary and secondary school for more than 7 years. French is their first official language and English their second official language.

##### B. Data and Method of Analysis

Data is derived from students' essays on the following topic: *How did you spend your Christmas holiday?* It should be noted that a general topic was chosen because it was clear, short, simply stated, it encouraged students to write and the aim was not the answer itself but the way the informants expressed their ideas. The test was given for 2 hours and the scripts were corrected. Each error was identified and classified and a total of 908 errors were identified (see Table 1 below).

##### 1. Presentation, analysis and discussion of the data

Table 1 presents the statistical results of the grammatical errors made by the informants:

TABLE 1:  
TOTAL NUMBER OF GRAMMATICAL ERRORS

	Grammatical errors	Number of errors	Percentage %
1.	Verb Tense and Form	208	23
2.	Subject/Verb Agreement	202	22
3.	Prepositions	163	18
4.	Word Order	116	13
5.	Plurality	84	09
6.	Articles	48	05
7.	Passive Voice	45	05
8.	Auxiliaries	28	03
9.	Double Negation	14	02
	Total	908	100

As we can see on Table 1, most students make grammatical errors at the level of verb tense and form (23%), subject/verb agreement (22%), prepositions (18%), word order (13%), plurality (9%), articles (5%), passive voice (5%), auxiliaries (3%) and double negation (2%) respectively.

##### 2. Identification of the errors

In order to analyse the types of grammatical errors in students' essays, the errors were identified and categorized into different error types by the researcher. The errors were counted and rated in percentage of frequency. They were divided into two groups; interlingual errors and intralingual errors. A total of 908 errors were counted in this study (Table: 1). Since the aim of this study is on grammatical errors regardless of other writing skills, such as cohesion, idea expression and organisation, the essay scoring involved error frequency counts for grammatical errors only.

##### 3. Analysis of the various errors in the informants' essays

The main objective of this study is to analyse students' grammatical errors and to investigate the reasons behind this frequent occurrence and find a solution to minimize committing such errors. Ellis (1997) and Hubbard et al. (1996) gave practical advice and provided clear examples of how to identify and analyse learners' errors p. 16-19, p. 135). The initial step requires the selection of a corpus of language followed by the identification of errors. The errors are then classified. The next step, after giving a grammatical analysis of each error, demands an explanation of different types of errors. Thus, the students were asked to answer a general question and the scripts were corrected. Each error was identified on each script and was classified according to type of error (subject/verb agreement, passive voice, auxiliaries, verb tense and form, word order, prepositions, plurality, articles and double negation).

##### 3.1. Grammatical Errors

It cannot be argued that grammar is very important in the understanding of a second language. However, most Francophone Cameroonian learners of English as a foreign language view the study of grammar as boring and not beneficial (Sokeng, 2006, Tagne, 2011). Even though Cameroonian students' general expectations from English for Academic Purpose are very high (Tagne, 2011), they find English grammatical rules intricate and they prefer to copy notes from other students. One of the misconceptions among Francophone level 1 bilingual students is the belief that without mastering most English grammatical rules they will not be able to communicate in English.

Examples of the grammatical types of errors all drawn directly from the essay corpus (Topic: *How did you spend your Christmas holidays?*) were given below in italics along with the correct word or form immediately following each example.

#### a- Verb Tense and Form

The most common type of error made by students in the study group is Verb tense and form. The bulk of error rates in this section occurred within the error category of verbs, with 208 errors (23%). This finding reveals that the use of verb tense and their form is still a nightmare to most Francophones learning the English language. The tenses most commonly misused were the simple present tense, past tense, future tense, past perfect and the progressive. French and English verb grammar have considerable areas of overlap. A typical problem is the wrong choice of tense. There are frequent occasions when French uses a different tense to convey a particular meaning than English. Misuse of the simple present tense in the third person singular is the one mostly highlighted. Below are some examples:

- 1) When strangers come, my brother *go* to buy drinks for everybody. Me, I serve food.
- 2) Christmas *collocate* with food, fun and enjoyment. It is the period I prefer in the year.
- 3) We prayed God that he *keep* our family. We also pray for the new year.

In the above examples, the students have poorly used the simple present tense because they have not added the –s in the third person. The correct answers are: ‘goes’ for the first sentence, then ‘collocates’ and ‘keeps’.

Another difficulty faced by the informants was the use of the correct form of the past. Some used the present perfect instead of the simple past or the past progressive instead of or the present perfect progressive, etc. or they simply miss all as shown below:

- 4) I *have been spent* my own holidays in the village with my grand-mother.

In this example, the informant is trying to express an event that took place in the past with an emphasis on the fact and not the duration, in this case, the simple past was more adequate. The sentence should read: I spent my own holidays in the village with my grand-mother.

Just like in the examples that follow where the informant used the simple present instead of the past tense.

- 5) Holiday is a short period of time *make* free by the government for workers and students to be on rest....

- 6) Last holidays, I *enjoy* myself very well, I *eat* a lot. It was very good.

- 7) I *have been travelled* from Yaounde to Bafoussam on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of December and I *reach* there early. Immediately I *run* to see my best friends.

The correct answers are: ‘made’, ‘enjoyed’, ‘ate’, ‘travelled’, ‘reached’ and ‘ran’.

Other examples are:

- 8) At 2 o'clock I started *visited* my friends, we *were talked* about what we are doing at the university. One, Geography and the other French.

- 9) My holidays *had begun* well and ended bad. This is because of my grand-mother.

The sentences should read: ‘visiting’, ‘talked’, ‘began’.

#### b- Subject-Verb Agreement

Subject-verb agreement is the second most common type of error made by the students. In this case, the subject and the verb phrase in the English sentence should agree in number and person. This was the area with the highest sampling with a total of 202 attempts, which is 22%. It is clear that the students lack a basic understanding of subject-verb agreement in English grammar.

Examples of errors in Subject-Verb Agreement:

- i. plural subject does not agree with singular verb:

- 10) My holidays *was* very nice.
- 11) I know my family and my friends *waits* for me at home.
- 12) Every Sunday, people *sings* nice songs in my church.
- 13) My mother said spices *was* not enough in the chicken.
- 14) Prayers in January with the family *is* very important.

In the above examples, the plural subject does not agree with singular verb. The correct forms should read ‘were’, ‘wait’, ‘sing’, ‘were’ and ‘are’.

- ii. Singular subject does not agree with plural verb:

- 15) When my friends tell me that results, results, this *mean* that I have to go.
- 16) My father *encourage* me to always work hard in class. In the future I would like to become a minister.
- 17) The 25<sup>th</sup>, my elder sister's daughter *do* all the cooking. There is ndolè rice, chicken, etc.
- 18) My village *were* situated in the centre region. Big but only 700 people.
- 19) I had breakfast which *were* made of eggs, milk, chocolate and bread. In Yaoundé I cannot eat like that.
- 20) It *were* not easy to get to Bafia because there was a lot of traffic and the price of cars always add during holidays.

But finally I saw a bus.

Here, the singular subject does not agree with the verb in the plural form. Correction of sentences 15, 16, 17, 18, 19 and 20 are ‘means’, ‘encourages’, ‘does’, ‘was’, ‘was’ and ‘was’. In French, there is no third person singular with a –s at the end of the verb in the present tense, that probably explains why the informants systematically forget to put an –s in the third person singular in the present tense.

### c- Prepositions

Prepositions express time, space, direction, quantities, etc. We noticed while reading the writing of the students that the use of prepositions was a serious problem to them. Mbia (2007) found that 51.6% of Francophones writing the English language paper at the *Baccalauréat* could not use prepositions properly (p. 44). Since prepositions have several functions (time, space, quantities, direction, etc.), it is advisable to learn them following their contextual occurrences. 18% of our informants could not use prepositions.

Below are some of the most recurrent cases:

21) During holidays, I prefer to go *for* the village to see my grand-mother. Here there is no food the way I want. 'to' expresses a direction, a place, we go 'to' a specific place. It is supposed to be 'to'.

22) My aunt said we have to cook our fat chicken. My brother started to search the chicken and it was *in* the roof.

We use 'on' when the meaning is clearly 'on top of'. For example, *on a table*, *on a bicycle*, but we use 'in' when 'on top of' is not appropriate. For example, *in a car*, *in an airplane*.

Another difficulty was the use of prepositions at the level of phrases as shown in the following examples:

23) Each time I travel to Maroua, I am always *afraid by* the long distance. After the train it is the bus and after a taxi.

24) My family and I like *going at* church on Christmas day. We meet all our friends there and we pray God.

25) I left Yaounde to go back *in* Bertoua where my family is. I was not very sad, just a bit.

The sentences should read 'afraid of', 'going to' and 'to go back to'.

We also noted some cases of missing prepositions as seen in the following examples:

26) I was looking my phone when I realized it had disappeared. There are many thieves in 'Buca Voyages' during holidays.

27) I would like visit Kribi next year because my best friend lives there. She said it is very beautiful and there are many whites.

28) *In* the beginning of 2014, I can say that 2013 was and will be one of the best of my life.

In (26) the preposition *for* is missing as we say 'looking for', just like (like to' (27) and 'At the beginning' (28).

Mbia (2007) says this wrong use of prepositions is caused by a poor mastery of the English language since there are no standard rules to help learners use prepositions correctly (p. 44).

### d- Word order

As Choroleeva (2011) says, there are modifications to word order attributable to the influence of French, most often illustrated in the placement of adjectives after nouns in noun phrases. In French, most adjectives go after the word they modify. Such word order is not typical of English where few cliché phrases denoting diplomatic ranks feature nouns in the primary position. Most English sentences conform to the SVO word order. This means that the subject comes before the verb, which comes before the object, this pattern is the same in French but we still noticed some difficulties at the sentence level and of the correct adjective order. We counted 116 errors, that is, 13% of the total number of errors. Below are reproduced some:

29) On the 1<sup>st</sup> of January, I visited my friends *old* from secondary school. We were all happy and we talked about our schools.

In the above example, the adjective is describing the noun 'friend' so in this case it has to be in front: old friends. Here are other examples:

30) I *also have remarked* that my brothers and sisters are now independent. They grow very fast. Tomorrow they will be big men and women!!!

31) I eat *never* on Christmas day because I will be hungry on the 26<sup>th</sup>. I prefer to eat just a bit and drink a bottle of 'Top Ananas'.

The sentence (30) should read: have also remarked and sentence (31): I never eat.

In the example that follows the order of the adverb 'too much' is not proper. This is probably due to a French linguistic interference.

32) During Christmas, I have *too much* eaten and now I am fat!

The correct answer should read: have eaten too much

### e- Plurality

Plurality refers to the form of a noun that typically denotes more than one person, thing, or instance. It contrasts with singular. 9% percent, that is 84 errors were discovered in the scripts of the informants. Some examples of the most recurrent errors are reproduced below:

\* General rule: suffix -s:

33) The DJ played many *song* that I like during the ceremony. For example Lady Ponce, Majoie, DJ Benaud....

34) I bought two new *shoe*. One for December and the other for January.

35) My mother bought many *present* for the family. My father a watch, my junior brother a game and me a small radio.

The correct plural should be 'songs' (33), 'shoes' (34) and 'presents' (35).

\* After *s*, *ch*, *x*, *z* the plural is formed by adding *es*:

36) My sister asked me to remove all the *dishs* on the table.

37) I could hear music in all *church* in our quarter.

38) The gifts were in beautiful *box*.

The correct plural form should read: 'dishes' (36), 'churches' (37) and 'boxes' (38)/

\* Uncountable nouns (also called mass nouns or non-count nouns)

39) I do not usually drink much *waters* I prefer alcohol. I cannot see 'Mützig' and I drink 'Tangui'!

40) There was too much *foods* and drinks in our house. Everywhere there was something to eat and drink.

It seems from our observation that only few students master the rules applied in the formation of the plural case in English. This is a basic rule that was taught in primary school and in secondary school. (39) should read *water* and (40), food. Kouatie (2008) in her findings tries to explain that by saying that students do not attend English classes and are not, for the majority interested in learning English in secondary school (p. 65). They have a negative attitude towards the language and it affects their performance.

#### f- Articles

Articles are a sub-class of determiners. Quirk (1978) makes a distinction between specific and generic reference (p. 67). Generic reference is used to denote what is normal or typical for members of a class. A definite article is used when our hearer or reader knows exactly what we mean and indefinite articles (a, an) refer to a thing which is not specific. The latter are used with singular countable nouns but not with plural nouns. We have noticed that even though the rules behind the use of articles seem to be vast; our informants had acquired them easily since only 5% of them made some errors as can be seen below:

(1) Misuse of the article 'the'

41) I have worked hard all *the* day.

42) I danced all *the* night with my friends at Katios.

'The' is left out of the expressions 'all day' (41) and 'all night' (42) but it should be used in similar adverbial expressions for other divisions of time: all the morning, all the afternoon, all the evening, all the week.

(2) Misuse of 'a' and 'an'

43) Holiday is *a* event to unite. People should not be sad and unhappy.

44) My mother had *a* accident on a bike. The driver of the bike was not vigilant. It is always like that in Douala.

45) *An* holiday is a period when you rest. You eat, drink and sleep. I like it.

Generally, the correct choice of *a* and *an* depends on the initial sound of a word, not on the initial letter, of the word that they precede. The letter *a* should be used before all words beginning with a consonant sound except silent *h* and before words beginning with vowels that represent combined consonant and vowel sounds (university, unit). In sentence 43 it should be *an event*, in sentence 44, *an accident* and *a holiday* in sentence 45.

(3) Absence of an article

46) My father is teacher. I will like to be like him.

Here, the student is supposed to put the article: *a teacher*. This is probably due to the influence of French since the above sentence in French would be translated: '*Mon père est enseignant*'. It is thus an interlingual transfer.

47) Christmas tree is in the parlour. There are many decorations.

48) When I got out bus, they came to kiss me. My father was there, my mother and my brothers and sisters.

In these examples, the articles have been omitted. In sentence 47 the sentence should read: *The Christmas tree...* and sentence 48: *When I got out of the bus.....*

#### g- Passive voice

Passive voice was not very present in the essay write-up submitted to the informants. In the few scripts were cases of passive voice were noted, the percentage of errors was (5%). The number of the total errors found was 45. Below are reproduced few examples of the errors identified in the use of the Passive Voice:

49) Only two of my brothers *were* effective participated in the decoration of the tree.

In this example, the informant used two conjugated verbs in the same sentence where there was no need. There is a redundant auxiliary with active voice. The simple present does not use an auxiliary ('be' or 'have'). The informant may not know the correct to be applied in this context. The correct sentence should read: *Only two of my brothers participated in the decoration of the tree.*

50) The Christmas holiday *divide* into two periods: Christmas and New Year.

In this example, we observe an incorrect form of the main verb. In this sentence, the holiday period does not 'divide' anything, but it is the period itself which is divided into two distinct periods: *The Christmas holiday is divided into two periods: Christmas and New Year.*

51) The concert *was* happened the week of Christmas. It was during 'Yafe'.

Here, there is an incorrect use of the passive with an intransitive verb because it is not possible to use the passive with intransitive verbs (that is those with a direct object. This mistake is probably due to a case of language transfer. The correct form is: *The concert happened the week of Christmas.*

#### h- Auxiliaries

An auxiliary verb helps the main verb. It is also called a "helping verb". With auxiliary verbs, it is possible to write sentences in different tenses, moods, or voices. Auxiliary verbs are: *be, do, have, will, shall, would, should, can, could, may, might, must, ought*, etc. In the composition given to the informants we notice a wrong use of the following auxiliaries: *be, do, have*.

52) The food *been* cooked and it was good. I liked it.

53) Pamela *done* all the work and went to YaFe. She said it was fantastic.

54) I *have had* a beautiful dress for Christmas: blue and white.

55) They cannot imagine how I *had been* waiting for this moment. No school, no teacher, only food.

56) My uncle *been took* us to “Tchop et Yamo” where we *eat* beans and pufpuf. It was my first time.

The students seem to have over-generalised the use of auxiliary verbs. They have difficulties in expressing events that have happened in the past (near or far). In an attempt to show that events happen and happened, the learners get confused in the use of English auxiliaries. The correct forms are ‘was’ (52), ‘did’ (53), ‘had’ (54), ‘have been’ (55) and ‘took’ or ‘had taken’ or ‘had eaten’ (56).

#### i- Double negation

Tubau (2008) quotes Klima (1964) who distinguishes between two types of negation: sentential and constituent (p. 77). Sentential negation negates the sentence as a whole, while constituent negation negates just a constituent. Richards and Schmidt (2010: 390) say the main negator in English is *not*, often in its contracted form *n’t* and combined with an auxiliary, for example: *She isn’t going*. But there are other negators, like *never* or negation can also be expressed by negative pronouns, e.g.: *There was nobody there*. Or by negative affixes, e.g.: *That was really unkind!* The few cases (2%) we discovered in the compositions of the informants were mostly with the negative pronoun ‘nobody’.

Below are some examples of cases of double negation misuse by the informants:

57) My father does not want to see *nobody* in the parlour as from 10pm, neither me, neither (nor) my brother even during holidays.

58) We hadn’t *nobody* to help us cook New Year’s food.

In the above examples, a wrong negative pronoun has been added to the negative element ‘not’. Sentence 57 should be: *My father does not want to see anybody in the parlour as from 10pm, neither me, neither (nor) my brother even during holidays* and sentence 58: *We hadn’t anybody to help us cook New Year’s food*.

The results of this study have shown that the informants make a lot of different types of writing errors in general and grammatical errors in particular. The sources of these errors can be interlingual and intralingual. Great care should be taken by anyone writing or speaking English. In order to check that their writing does not contain any grammatical mistakes, learners have to carefully proofread their work and check that all the sentences are well- labelled and stated.

Another recommendation is that it is also best to check using grammar books so as to be really sure that the meaning the learner is trying to pass is clear and the grammar he is using is correct. The best way can be to say in simple ways what the learner has to say.

#### V. CONCLUSION

The study aimed at identifying, describing, categorizing, and diagnosing the type of grammatical errors made by Francophone level I, university students in the department of bilingual studies. As a result, a number of different grammatical errors were found in their English essays. These were limited to nine major errors: verb tense and form, subject/verb agreement, prepositions, word order, plurality, articles, passive voice, auxiliaries and double negation. After analysing the errors, it has been found out that the grammatical errors the students make are classified into two main types: interlingual and intralingual reasons. This result is not satisfactory because these students are supposed to be the best in English in the country because the department of bilingual studies is the only department in the faculty where a student must at least have 14/20 to be selected. Thus, the teaching of the second official language should be reinforced. It should be effective at all the levels of education. Mbangwana (2004) says “an integrated educational system which does not begin at the secondary level will hardly succeed at the higher educational level where students are already adults, with diminishing curiosity and capacity to take up linguistic challenges (p. 23). If this is done properly then the pupils during their full primary school cycle should be able to have a sound basic knowledge of the practical language to which they should have recourse after leaving school and should provide them sound linguistic basis for further studies as they move to secondary schools”.

The government should reinforce the teaching of the English language by allocating more periods for the teaching of English and by recruiting more qualified teachers to satisfy the needs of the learner. An accent should be put on basic language skills like listening, speaking, reading and writing. Teachers should be able to not only detect and describe the errors from a linguistic view, but also to understand the psychological reasons for their occurrences.

Correction of errors is as important as identification and description of them. Such research work should help teachers and the government to be aware of the most common and salient grammatical errors students make and they should be able to make use of them in the teaching process appropriately.

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# The Peculiarities of the Political Vocabulary in French and Georgian Languages

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**Abstract**—Political language represents one of the complex specialized languages considering the complexity of socio-political texts. Some scholars distinguish between “the language of politics” and “political language”, stating that the former contains the terminology and rhetoric associated with political activities employed by politicians while playing their roles in politics; it is characterized by an extreme flexibility and dynamism. As for the “political language”, it is open to all members of the linguistic community. It is related to the specific use of a common language as a means of persuasion and control. In other words, it is the language used for the purpose of manipulation. We think that these two terms are somehow interconnected. Both of them serve the purpose of manipulation. Therefore, they can be considered as partial synonyms. The article aims to discuss the French and Georgian political vocabulary in order to identify the specific characteristics of each and also to define the status of French lexical units for the purpose of their correct interpretation and expression in the Georgian language.

**Index Terms**—political terminology, realia, political language, political discourse, imprecision

## I. INTRODUCTION

Political changes that took place in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries had a significant effect on the existing communication systems and contributed to the emergence of a new terminology. In fact, language is not an unchangeable phenomenon; it permanently undergoes changes especially at the level of vocabulary. Every year new concepts and realia appear in any language, which have to be correctly transferred from one language to another, in order to keep a language alive and have a language that possesses the ability to express the modern world with all its diversity and complexity. For the purpose of denoting new political and technical realia, new words are borrowed from foreign languages.

Terminology has a long-standing tradition, as people are normally in need of denominating the realities existing around them, classifying constituent elements of these realities and establishing connection between the different concepts used by different linguistic groups. Terminology is an interdisciplinary crossroads where studies concur - a crossroads which consists of three components: theoretical, descriptive and applied components. (Cabr é 1998, p.5).

According to this definition, it refers to an independent field characterized by certain features. It is interdisciplinary. It is independent because it has its own subject matter and methods of study.

Modern political terminology is quite problematic. The term 'politics' is derived from the Latin word *politicus* (relating to the management of people), which itself is borrowed from Greek language (in Greek meaning the citizens of a state). Its use as a noun dates back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century, which originally meant 'a police officer'. Many other words originated from this word. The word 'politics' has many meanings. It denotes a power, but at the same time it implies the principle of organizing social order. As a power, politics recognizes only one rule, maintaining the power by those who possess it. (Tenzer 1991, p. 3).

Language and politics are closely connected to each other. Many researchers talk about the connection between them. Language is politics and politics is a language, since the government can not rely solely on physical and economic forces, it needs to harmonize the conduct of the classes of people exerting power. Language is not only a means of communication, but also a means of isolation. It is a means of expression, an instrument of manipulation. It is not just a tool for maintaining freedom but a tool for enslaving linguistic stereotypes as well. Finally, language is inseparable from politics, and understanding it correctly is possible only in this very context.

The extent of the power exerted by politicians is a function of the language used by these politicians and greatly depends on the professional use of this language, as a language is not only a means of exerting power, but an instrument as well. Policy makers need to know how to select the right words and expressions and make their thoughts and position understandable to the addressees. Language gains strength at the moment when people are using this power, since language does not have any power per se.

Political language is designed for political communication. We can as well talk about the possible creation of a new discipline, which is called linguistic political science. Some linguists believe that political language should be considered as a professional language – as a version of an official language. (Sheigal, 2000, p.19).



The term "language of politics" is more common. It has a conventional character, and it is used not only to express special political vocabulary, but also to study its functioning in the discourse. In fact, unlike other areas of human activity, the specificity of politics is expressed in the nature of discourse characteristic to it. Many political actions represent discourses by their nature.

There is a close connection between discourse, ideology and politics, meaning that, in general, politics is of discourse nature as well as of ideological nature, and different ideologies are widely represented in the forms of texts and discourses. Traditionally, ideology is bluntly and negatively defined as a 'false belief'. Contemporary and multidisciplinary approach describes different ideologies as axiomatic foundations for social performance shared by different groups of people. These general ideologies form the basis for groups having specific behavior, which in turn may influence individual opinions, understanding of specific events and behaviour of members of different groups; discourses as well as social practice involve members of a given group. Ideology plays its role in politics particularly it defines political system, organizations, movements, political practice and political knowledge. Hidden political ideology is typically expressed in political discourse when "own" positive qualities and negative qualities of "others" are strongly emphasized whereas "own" negative qualities and positive qualities of "others" are diminished. This kind of general strategy can be implemented at all levels of discourse (Teun Van Dijk, 2006, p.21).

Political discourse stands at the crossroads of different sciences, such as: social sciences, psychology, sociology, linguistics and even theology. Some people think that the rules and principles of the theory of communication regulate only the ability to lead a persuasive discourse. Discourse has different functions: 1. structural: discourse is the building block of any political system; 2. decisive: in this case discourse plays the central role, as power always needs persuasion, inspiration, collecting and sharing information; 3. pedagogical function; 4. therapeutic function. Political discourse is a source of ideas and tries to eliminate any doubt. It permanently strives to make all real relationships rational.

Some scholars distinguish between the "language of politics" and "Political language." "Language of politics" is a structured system of symbols constituting semiotic space for political discourse. Political discourse covers acts of discourse, political articles, official texts concerning politics, scholarly articles on political and social life (Sheigal, 2000, p.22).

While studying political vocabulary, special attention is paid to the language of publications and it is natural, as the media creates new concepts, words and expressions. That is the language of the press, which allows us to detect the smallest semantic changes in the words and stylistic nuances.

Benoît Deshayes (2011, para 2), studying words do not make politics, but they help to ... No one has ever dared to say this out loud until now. Though, we should admit: modern politicians - men and women – are true mediators in communicating messages, which also includes selecting and using discourses, deciding where and how to publicize them effectively, ensuring their availability to as many people as possible. These are exactly the matters that concern, bother and fascinate all the men and women who govern us.

The language of politics is characterized by the features such as abstraction, complexity, ambiguousness, uncertainty, relativity, polysemy, the features that are characteristic of other lexico-semantic sub-systems, as well as the features that are characteristic of a general political vocabulary. Polysemy is ideologically stipulated by political objectives and not by the context.

Specificity of the language of politics lies in its function to serve as a means of expressing substantial political ideas held and practices carried out by a government. It also outlines axiological qualities of the language of politics (explicit or implicit). It strongly influences emotions rather than intellect.

The language of politics is characterized by extreme flexibility, mobility and dynamism. It immediately reacts to any social change. Appearance of a new reality gives birth to new words and expressions. Old reality denote past events. Lexical units undergo semantic changes.

The second feature of the language of politics is semantic and stylistic openness, allowing introduction of other words belonging to social sphere in it. It should be noted that political language is broader than the notion of style. Its main area of functioning is political and social life. That is why political language has long been a focus of researchers.

## II. METHODOLOGY

The research methodologies used in this study cover the methods of philological research and comparative research. Using this methodology we try to show similarities and differences in French and Georgian journalistic discourses as well as the stylistic-semantic characteristics of French and Georgian journalistic discourses.

Since the 90s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, interest in politics has increased as a result of the political changes in our society. Researchers have been focused on political metaphors. Normally the studies of political discourse in the field of mass communication have been carried out in terms of efficiency of the influence of discursive practice.

Metaphor is a stylistic trope. It is of high significance for a text of any type: narrative, descriptive or argumentative. Metaphor enriches the text through emphasizing or diminishing the meaning of some words existing in the language.

Metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action. Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature. (Johnson & Lakoff, 1985, p.13).

According to Gilles Gauthier (Gauthier, 1994, p. 140), political discourse contains a lot of metaphorical expression. It contains the body-related metaphors (*à la tête du parti ; le bras droit du président, sur un pied d'égalité*); natural metaphors (*un vent de changement ; la vague de l'élargissement*), military metaphors (*les troupes partisans*) and metaphors from the sphere of sports (*l'équipe dirigeante*). For example:

*Bulgarie : les conservateurs en tête du scrutin - ბუღარეთი: კონსერვატორები საარჩევნო სიების თავში არიან/Bulgaria: Conservatives head the election list/.*

*Le bras droit du président brésilien Lula démissionne - ბრაზილიის პრეზიდენტის ლულის მარჯვენა ხელს გადგება /The right-hand man of Brazilian President Lula resigns/.*

Metaphors constantly undergo changes. Normally, political changes precede changes in metaphors. These changes are closely linked to the political context. Politicians tend to use stylistic means in their political discourses in order to ensure that their voters are impressed. Using stylistic tropes is one of the characteristic features of political discourse. Tropes represent the means of expression that are intended to cause emotions, impress, revive opinions expressed, convince, attract the attention of the addressees.

After "Rose Revolution" new metaphors were introduced in political discourse and in the press in Georgia. For example: *la princesse de la farine* - ფქვილის პრინცესა /The princess of flour/ (the former chairperson of the Parliament of Georgia, whose father had monopolized the business of flour); *სოროსის ბარცყი* - *oisillon de Soros* /Soros's youngling/ (the former president of Georgia, who gained his post owing to billionaire George Soros); *პოლიტიკური ვირბების რბოლა* - *la course des rats politiques* /political rat race/; *პოლიტიკური გვამი* - *un cadavre politique* /political corpse/; *ცოცხების რევოლუციის შემოქმედ* - *l'artisan de la révolution des balais* /the architect of the broomstick revolution/; *მიცვალებულ ოპოზიცია* - *l'opposition décédée* /deceased opposition/. French press also uses metaphors. For example: *Scène politique* - *პოლიტიკური სცენა* /political arena/; *carrefour intellectuel* - *ინტელექტუალური გზაჯვარედინი* /intellectual crossroads/; *les variations du climat politique* - *პოლიტიკური კლიმატის ცვლელბა* /changes in the political climate /; *débats orageux* - *ხმაურიანი დებატები* /stormy debates/.

Interest in politics has become apparent in lexicography. It should be noted that there are two types of dictionaries. First is the political dictionary, which is focused on explanation of notions rather than on explanation of words and expressions. The second type is the dictionary of politics, an explanatory dictionary, which pays special attention to the meanings of words and expressions.

Political life of the society undergoes changes and dictionaries reflect dynamic processes going on in the language but there is a chronological limit to political vocabulary. In 2006, we published the "Dictionary of French and Georgian political terms" in Georgia (Djachy, Pareshishvili, 2006). It includes 2025 words and phrases that are related to territorial, administrative and political systems, as well as diplomatic terms frequently used in the process of negotiations. The dictionary includes abbreviations that stand for some international organizations. These are very important organizations that have played significant role in international life. A list of countries with their capitals, organized in alphabetical order, is given in the appendix. We understand that the dictionary is not complete, given that new realia are introduced in French and Georgian political discourses on almost a daily basis. However, this dictionary proved to be of great help to those who are interested in learning French political vocabulary. It is especially useful for translators and interpreters.

### III. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

In order to collect and analyse political vocabulary a question needs to be answered: what is meant by this term? What are the criteria for determining what is to be included and what is not to be included in the political vocabulary?

Political vocabulary represents a set of words and formulae designed to be used not for the purpose of putting language in the service of existing reality, but for the purpose of performing a specific political function, putting existing reality in the service of language, more precisely putting existing reality in the service of politics through language. (Denquin, 1999, p.5).

The most important words are: *droite, gauche, centre, cohabitation, présidentiable, etc.* Georgian equivalents of which are: *მემარჯვენე* /right-wing/, *მემარცხენე* /left-wing/, *ცენტრი* /centre/, *კოჰაბიტაცია* /cohabitation/, *პრეზიდენტდგახადების უნარის მქონე* /presidential eligibility/. On the other hand, some of the scientific terms were introduced in everyday vocabulary. For example: *idéologie* - *იდეოლოგია* /ideology/, *charismatique* - *ქარიზმატული* /charisma/, etc.

There is a difference between political vocabulary and the vocabulary of political science.

Political science uses words that describe the real world. It describes the condition of the subjects which might be true or false. Political vocabulary serves absolutely different goals that is wording of the statement, the purpose of which is not to describe the reality, it does not have the ability to be true or false. (Denquin, 1999, p. 4).

Benoit Deshayes (2011, para 2), studying and carefully examining verbal communication of many politicians for the last ten years, managed to identify favorite expressions, topics, frequently used terms and speech habits of the politicians. For example, Nicolas Sarkozy often uses the pronoun "I", Martine Aubry speaks of "work" and social issues; Dominique Strauss-Kahn and Christine Lagarde, who constantly compete with each other for being seen as the

number one expert in economic issues, often mention "France", "nation" and "immigration" in their speeches. Ségolène Royal often talks about his childhood and family; François Bayrou mentions "democracy", "people", "state", "security", "government" and "elections" in his discourse. Statehood, security and government represent the achievements of the present authorities. François Hollande's favourite word is "deficit", Jean-François Copé is "tax"; Olivier Besancenot often mentions Nicolas Sarkozy.

According to François Sureau (1996), politics means both attracting people and governing. Governing is apparently more difficult, it is judged according to the results. Politicians prefer attracting the masses. According to a well-known formula, politicians speak cordially. Emotional vocabulary makes speeches less transparent as a result of which political misunderstanding disappears just like the misunderstanding between lovers. Emotional vocabulary enables all the politicians to speak about themselves and about their emotions. Emotion alone is not enough. It is energy leading to victory. Politicians talk about the future of Europe, markets, competition. They think people are like plants. One should talk to them in order to prevent them from withering away. This is a dialogue.

It should be noted that there exists a kind of confrontation between politicians; they often compete and criticize each other. In order to achieve success and defeat their opponent, they tend to use a variety of adjectives, assess each other from different perspectives. At times, they even do not refrain from using abusive or insulting language, while speaking about opposition party officials. For example: Ségolène Royal says the following words about François Bayrou: he reminds me of a lover who is afraid of failure (Humour et Politique, 2008).

François Loncle Dominique writes about Villepin: - *He is named after a horse participating in a horse racing though he has never run a race (Humour et Politique, 2005).*

#### IV. DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Georgian political terminology is established by politicians. They offer new terms. It should be noted that majority of these terms are formed spontaneously. The current situation is far from an ideal one. Because of lack of consultations with specialists, some foreign terms are often used, which significantly distort the Georgian language. We believe that specialists in different fields and translators and interpreters should cooperate more closely in order to coordinate their efforts and create the appropriate terminology taking into account the rules of word formation in Georgian language. This will help us build relevant vocabulary and introduce appropriate terms in different fields.

Interpreting French political terms into the Georgian language is often problematic as far as different political systems are concerned. Despite some similarities between the French and Georgian political systems, they cannot be considered as identical. These similarities might prove to be misleading. For example the terms *l'État providence-საყოველთაო კეთილდღეობის სახელმწიფო* /welfare state/ or *l'État nation-ეროვნული სახელმწიფო* /nation state/ belong to French political realia, which have no exact equivalents in the Georgian language. Accordingly, different versions of these terms exist in the Georgian language, which do not fully reflect the exact meaning of these terms, and therefore remain unclear to many uninformed Georgian readers. The French concept of *l'État-Nation-ეროვნული სახელმწიფო* /nation state/ has deep roots. Such a concept of a state is alien to Georgian culture and history. The context and socio-political differences should be taken into consideration while interpreting this concept in the Georgian language.

The major problem associated with the French and Georgian political terminology is that these terms are deeply rooted in the socio-cultural realities of these two countries. The problem is further aggravated by the connotation, which is often confusing for foreign readers. For example: *élections primaires* - *პრაიმერი* /primary election/, is new to Georgian electoral system. Primary elections allow a political party to nominate candidates for an upcoming election. Introduction of this term in the Georgian language was performed through calquing. However, the term remains unclear to the majority of Georgian readers. We believe that while using it, the term needs to be followed by an explanation.

*ხელის გადგრევისის პრინციპი* /*The principle of twisting arms / le principe de bras de fer*, is a new concept introduced in Georgian political discourse, in order to express a competition between two parties. However, its connotation remains unclear to the readers who are not familiar with the etymology of the word.

Introduction of the term *კოჰაბიტაცია* /cohabitation/ in the Georgian language was performed through transliteration, in order to convey the idea of coexistence between a head of the state and a head of government, representing different parties.

We often have to express this or that term characteristic to our political life in the French language. For example: *მცოცავი ოკუპაცია* /*creeping occupation*/ - *occupation rampante*, which signifies painful developments in our country, gradual annexation of Georgian villages by Russian soldiers and placemen of barbed wires.

We would like to single out a widely used term in Georgian political discourse; this term is: *პიარ* / *Public relations (PR)* - *Relations publiques*, which is often used in various contexts in the media and by politicians. However, its definition remains a challenge. We understand that it is a very broad concept, but its use often leave readers as well as translators baffled: *თეთრი პიარ* /*literally white PR; white propaganda or promotion*/ (*propagande blanche, une promotion* /*littéralement RP blanches*); *შავი პიარ* / *literally black PR; black propaganda or bad or derogatory propaganda*/ (*Propagande noire, une mauvaise publicité* / *littéralement RP noires*), *პიარ კამპანია* /*literally a PR*

*campaign a public relations campaign/ - une campagne des relations publiques.* Despite the fact that they often appear in the press, translating them into French remains a challenge.

Together with the change of government in Georgia, the political discourse has undergone a significant transformation. In his political discourses, the former president of Georgia used to place a great emphasis on the progress and wonderful success which took place in Georgia after the Rose Revolution. His political discourses were predominated by the issues such as the fight against the aggressors and the country's pro-Western aspirations. For example: *ჩვენ ვიბრუნებთ ჩვენს ღირსებას, ჩვენ დავამარცხებთ კრიმინალს და ბოლომდე დავამარცხებთ ძალადობას* /we regain our dignity, we tackled the crime and we will put an end to violence/ - *Nous sommes en train de retrouver notre dignité nous avons pu combattre la criminalité et nous allons finalement combattre la violence-ხალხი ხედავს, რომ საქართველო უკეთესია, ვიდრე რვა წლის წინ და ეს არის მიზეზი, რომ ვიარაღოწინ* /People see that Georgia is better than eight years ago and this is the reason to move ahead/ - *Les gens sont conscients que la Géorgie est meilleure qu'elle ne l'était il ya 8 ans, et c'est la raison principale de poursuivre le chemin trace.*

The former prime minister focused on terror and injustice that prevailed in the country, as well as on respect for human dignity and national traditions. For example : *...ყველს შევენი სინდისის კარნახს მიჰყევით და აჩვენეთ მოსწავლეებს, რომ თავისუფლება და ღირსება არის უმთავრესი ადამიანის ცხოვრებაში* /All of you should rely on your conscience and show the students that freedom and dignity are essential values in human life/ - *Je vous appelle chacun à suivre votre propre conscience et montrer aux élèves que la liberté et la dignité sont des valeurs primordiales dans la vie de l'homme. ხალხი ღნეჯა. ჩვენ ძალან დღე და ხანგრძლივი კულტურა გაგვაჩნია. ყველას ვიტანთ მოთმინებით და ასეთ სიღნეგით მივალთ არჩევნებზე* /The Georgian people are wise. Our country has a great history and a long-standing culture. We showed great patience and we will participate in the elections in the same spirit of perseverance/ - *Le peuple géorgien est sage. Notre pays a une longue histoire. Nous avons fait preuve d'une grande patience et nous irons aux élections dans le même esprit de persévérance.*

In fact, a target group should always be considered and the terms used should be tailored and adapted to the knowledge of the listeners and readers. The context should be considered in order to find the exact equivalent of the term and load a political term with maximum denotation and connotation.

In conclusion, it can be said that political vocabulary varies from country to country. Each political culture creates its own vocabulary based on its history, structures and complex parameters affecting the social life of the community. Political vocabulary is distinguished by its pragmatic meaning, and by the fact that it does not necessarily reflect the existing situation. The most important feature of the political vocabulary is its increased sensitivity to changes in the life of the state. At the same time, we should not forget the linguistic factors that affect the formation of lexical units. Though, it is an incentive that brings linguistic tools into action. Extralinguistic factors play the main role in the formation of political vocabulary, and mass media significantly contributes to the development of the political vocabulary, as it represents the immediate environment of political communication.

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3. M. Pareshishvili (2014). The comparative typology of French and Georgian journalistic discourses. Theory and Practice in Language Studies. Be at the printers

# The Use of Consciousness-raising Tasks in Promoting the Correct Use of the Verb “Be” among Students in Vocational Colleges

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**Abstract**—The study aimed to investigate the effectiveness of the classification and hypothesis-building/checking in promoting the learning of the verb “be” in three structures: affirmative, negative and interrogative. The subject comprised 56 ESL students of 17 years old in a vocational college who were assigned into an experimental group and control group. They were given a treatment of six tasks on classification technique and hypothesis-building/checking and the instruments were pre-test/post-test, questionnaire and interviews. The t-test revealed the difference of means in pre-test/post-test scores within the experimental group was significant and the mean difference in gain score was also significant when compared with the control group. The findings from the interview provided explanations how these techniques assisted the learners’ learning and the results from the questionnaire indicated positive opinions of the learners on the use of the techniques in learning the verb “be”.

**Index Terms**—consciousness-raising, verb “be”, classification, hypothesis-building/checking

## I. INTRODUCTION

Since 2011, Malaysia has gradually transformed its vocational and technical education by upgrading vocational and technical schools that were meant for Form 4 and Form 5 students (aged 16-17 years old) to vocational colleges offering four years of diploma courses for students between 16-19 years old (Ministry of Education, 2011; Mohd Fazdly, 2012). The transformation from schools to colleges involves changes in the use of English language syllabus. The syllabus was simplified in order for learners to focus more on learning the language to communicate. This includes the abolishment of the English literature component, the narrowed scope of writing formats and exam-based practices, and the reduction of level of difficulty of English exams (Ministry Education of Malaysia, 2011).

The aim of this transformation is to prepare students from vocational colleges for employment in industries and corporate world (Abdullah Zawawi & Siti Syahirah, 2011). Such transformation indicates the dire need to equip learners with a better grasp of basic grammar for them to be sufficiently proficient in the English Language and therefore, become employable, credentialed and marketable in the real-world. With the introduction of newly modified English syllabus, ongoing assessment and semester-based exam, teachers in vocational colleges need to come up with appropriate teaching methods of English Language. Hence, English teachers in vocational colleges ought to be proactive and innovative in teaching grammar. This is crucial because each vocational college is responsible for developing their own respective module for each subject including English. Teachers might have difficulty in planning and executing appropriate teaching techniques especially when they also face difficulty on how to teach grammar and what structures to be taught (Hawanum, 2004; Vethamani & Umi Kalthom; 2008; Ping, 2012). Therefore, applicable and viable pedagogical techniques in teaching grammar need to be identified and incorporated into ESL lessons in order to meet the newly transformed English language education in vocational colleges in Malaysia.

One of the most fundamental yet the most frequent grammatical structures in English is the verb “be” (British Council, 2013; Surina & Kamaruzaman, 2009; Kolln, 1994) and yet it is the most challenging form for Malaysian students to master. The verb “be” serves various roles: progressive form, passive construction, linking verbs, and tense form (Kolln, 1994) as well as its use in affirmative, negative and interrogative structures (British Council, 2013; TalkEnglish, 2005).

The prevalent issue of Malaysian ESL learners' lack of competence in using the verb "be" is apparent across primary schools, secondary schools, colleges and higher learning institutions. Arshad and Hawanum (2010) implemented a research on Standard 5 students in a Malaysian primary school by studying sentences with the verb "be" that the learners produced and they confirmed that the verb "be" in progressive and copula forms was a major error that ESL learners made. Maros, Tan and Salehuddin (2007) administered error analysis and contrastive analysis on 120 Form 1 students from six rural secondary schools in Malaysia and the result indicated that the verb "be" was one of the three most frequent errors among the students. Saadiyah and Subramanian (2009) conducted error analysis on essays written by 72 Form 4 students and discovered that the usage of the verb "be" such as "is" and "are" were some of the most common mistakes made by learners under subject-verb agreement. Manokaran, Ramalingam and Adriana (2013) conducted a study on the usage of the verb "be" in past tense form on their subjects which comprised Malaysian ESL learners from Form 4, Form 5, and college. They examined each sentence in every essay written by the learners and found that the learners were prone to making more errors in the verb "be" than using it correctly. They categorized the verb "be" errors into seven types: tense shift, agreement, missing auxiliary be, wrong verb form, addition and misformation and misordering. Even in undergraduates' projects, the verb to "be" remains as a common error. Wan Fara Adlina, Wan Mansor and Noraisah Muhari (2010) conducted an error analysis on a multimedia project produced by students from the Faculty of Computer Science, Malaysia University of Technology, Skudai for their English for Academic Communication course. The researchers identified verb to "be" as one of the major errors committed by these students. Generally, Malaysian ESL learners constantly produce errors of using the verb "be" in their writing.

This problem also prevails in ESL learners' speaking skill. Ainon, Mohamed Ismail, Engku Haliza, Isarji, Faridah and Rozina (2013) investigated errors in oral presentations of 32 Malaysian students at a higher learning institution in an English for Academic Purposes (EAP) course. They found that the students frequently omitted the verb "be" in their utterances, e.g. "Mary the president of the new company". The lack of competence in this structure has hindered learners from being proficient in using English language accurately in writing and speaking.

Malaysian ESL learners are not competent in using the verb "be" because the form is absent in their first language and this interferes with their English language learning (Surina and Kamaruzaman, 2009). Besides, their inability to distinguish various forms of the verb "be" (Siti Hamin & Mustafa, 2010; Saadiyah and Subramaniam, 2009) and the tendency to construct wrong hypothesis on grammatical rules (Arshad & Hawanum, 2010) also caused the error in its usage. Thus, Normazidah, Koo and Hazita Azman (2012) claim that Malaysian learners need to be more sensitive of the target form. Radha, Noraini and Krish (2008) state that ESL learners in Malaysia ought to adopt analytical strategies in learning linguistic features. Subramanian and Khan (2013) assert the need for Malaysian ESL students to develop good understanding of functions and meanings of target forms. Azizi, Harison, Zaidah, Ladan, and Noordin (2012) argue that ESL learners must receive sufficient exposure and practice in the language to enable them to internalize grammatical rules and reduce their errors. Therefore, it can be deduced that there is a need to help learners to attain explicit understanding of how the verb "be" is accurately used and how to identify its correct forms and functions in order to enable them to develop their competence in using it properly.

Thus, this paper aims to explore the use of Consciousness-raising (CR) tasks in addressing this issue. CR approach is one of the most viable teaching techniques in developing learners' explicit understanding of linguistic features (Fotos & Ellis, 1991; Fotos, 1994; Sugiharto, 2006; Ming & Nooreiny, 2010; Rasha, 2011; Moradkhan & Sohrabian, 2009; Amirian & Fatemeh, 2012) and it is also suggested by Sirhajwan, Lee and Gurnam based on thesis research of subject-verb agreement among secondary school students (2013), that consciousness-raising tasks are plausible to be conducted in Malaysian ESL classroom to teach grammar.

### **Problem Statement**

Malaysian employees, despite having the required skills in their area of expertise, tend to have poor English proficiency. According to a report released by Prestariang Systems (2011) on a survey conducted on 14 Malaysian industry sectors, 80 percent of Malaysian employers claimed that English language is an important skill that their employees ought to have. However, Malaysian employers considered only 20 percent of Malaysian employees who graduated from universities that were proficient enough to use English at workplace. This is consistent with employers' dissatisfaction on graduates which derived mainly from their low proficiency in English rather than their technical skills. This signifies that mastering technical skills alone is not sufficient especially when their ability to use English is equally crucial. Therefore, vocational colleges, despite having a heavy emphasis on vocational skills, need to adopt an effective method in teaching English in line with the introduction of new ESL syllabus and the need for the teachers to make their own ESL module.

A survey was randomly conducted on workers and employers around the Klang Valley and there were 211 employers and 257 working graduates who responded to the survey. It was revealed that poor English proficiency is one of the main factors that hampered most Malaysian graduates from having better career prospect (Gurcharan Singh & Garib Singh, 2008). In fact, the Human Resources Minister of Malaysia, Datuk Wira Dr Fong Chan Onn asserted on how poor English proficiency had caused 30,000 Malaysian graduates to be underemployed despite their degrees ("30,000 grads in unsuitable jobs", 2005). Chook Yuh Ying, the manager of JobStreet.com, also claimed that Malaysian employers' poor English proficiency is a "worrying trend" based on a survey conducted on 1.5 million workers in Malaysia, Philippines, Indonesia, Singapore, and Thailand (Sen, 2011).

Thus, this research is crucial to address learners' poor proficiency in English especially when the main goal of vocational colleges is to produce quality workers with high level of employability. Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025 (Ministry of Education, 2012) emphasizes the teaching of English due to the poor standard of English among Malaysian students where only 28% of students attained a minimum credit in English exam of Malaysian Certificate of Education (SPM) against Cambridge 1119 standards in 2011. According to the Malaysian National Graduate Employability Blueprint 2012-2017 (Ministry of Higher Education, 2012), a survey conducted on Malaysian companies also revealed that 55.8 percent of responded companies cited poor command of English as the most common problem that they have with Malaysian graduates who worked for them.

Students' difficulty in mastering English still persists among students in primary schools, secondary schools, colleges and universities (Sahirah & Zaidah, 2004; Maros, et al., 2007; Siti Hamin & Mohd Mustafa, 2010) and this affects their employability as they lack skills to communicate in the language. If there is no research conducted on vocational colleges in identifying how to properly teach English particularly grammar, the students of vocational college will experience similar difficulty of using the language. Even worst, as students of vocational college are trained to enter industrial worlds as skilful employees, their inability to use English proficiently will reduce their employability despite the vocational training they receive. Hence, this research is essential in finding a better way of teaching English grammar on students of vocational colleges.

## II. LITERATURE

### A. *The Verb "Be" and Malaysian ESL Learners*

Arshad and Hawanum (2010) argue that the verb "be" is one of the most difficult structures for Malaysian ESL students to acquire and this is due to the different meanings that the verb "be" can express. In their research, they emphasize the three structures of the verb "be": progressive auxiliary, copula be and passive construction. It is claimed that the nearly absent semantic meaning that the verb "be" may carry as progressive auxiliary (She is going to the town) and passive form (The window was smashed) leads to its lack of salience. Therefore, learners might not invest much attention on the structures. As for the verb "be" as a copula, its functions are numerous in expressing locations, characteristics, identification, existence and others. As a result, the structure poses a great demand for learners to understand, remember and apply correctly. Learners also tend to be confused on how to differentiate the diverse forms of the verb "be" (Surina and Kamaruzaman, 2009). Consequently, it becomes very challenging for Malaysian ESL learners to master the target structure as the verb "be" varies with the contexts where it is used, i.e. singular or plural forms, present or past tense, prepositional phrase, interrogative form and any other grammatical structures that exist with it. In addition, the absence of the verb "be" in the learners' native languages also interferes with their learning (Siti Hamin & Mustafa, 2010). This necessitates a plausible and viable teaching technique that can address learners' lack of competence in using the verb "be".

### B. *CR Techniques*

Willis and Willis (1996) list seven main techniques in designing CR tasks: identification, classification, hypothesis building/checking, cross-language exploration, reconstruction/deconstruction, recall and reference training. Crivos and Luchini (2012) studied the use of three techniques (identifying/consolidating, hypothesis building/checking, and reconstruction/deconstruction) through three different tasks respectively which yielded positive results in students' acquisition of tense forms. Moradkhan and Sohrabian (2009) also used a similar technique of recalling rules in communicative CR tasks that resulted in better performance of learners in learning grammar. The method of teaching was through deductive approach where the teacher presented the rules to the learners at the beginning of the lesson.

#### 1. **Classification Technique**

Arshad and Hawanum (2010) propose that teachers need to help students to distinguish the different use of similar forms to express different meanings through comparison and contrast. For instance, teachers can draw students' attention to different use of the verb "be" in the copula "be" and the auxiliary "be" by presenting sentences that illustrate the use of the two forms respectively and the students are required to identify the difference and categorize them accordingly. This method of classification justifies the need to explore classification technique in promoting students' learning of the verb "be".

Fotos and Ellis (1991) utilized classification CR tasks of identifying grammatical and ungrammatical sentences on Japanese EFL college students of Language majors and Business Administration majors and the results indicated the task enhanced their understanding of the target form "dative alternation". Classification technique might assist Malaysian ESL learners to better understand the verb "be" based on several reasons. First, the verb "be" comprises various forms with different functions (Kolln, 1994) and therefore, learners must be able to identify the specific forms of the verb for specific functions. Second, ESL Malaysian learners have difficulty distinguishing the verb "be" and other grammatical structures in English (Arshad & Hawanum, 2010; Saadiyah & Subramaniam, 2009; Surina & Kamaruzaman, 2009) and classifying grammatical structures might facilitate them to be aware of the different variations of the target form.

#### 2. **Hypothesis building/checking**



Students usually have to make, test and confirm their hypothesis in order to learn a target form (Ta Thanh & Nguyen Thi Huong, 2013). Hypothesis building/checking will allow learners to realize the false hypothesis they form and compare it with the correct rules they are supposed to grasp. There is a need for the technique of hypothesis building/checking to be further studied on how it can help learners learn the verb “be”. This hypothesis building/checking technique might assist them to realize their errors and deficiency of knowledge and therefore acquire the correct one.

Rachmawati (2011) proposes the technique of hypothesis building/checking by identifying ungrammatical sentences and providing reasons as to why they are inaccurate. For example, the teacher introduces students to the correct use of comparative adjectives through several sentences and then the teacher presents sentences in which some of them contain grammatical errors on the use of comparative adjectives and asks the students to specifically identify the errors. They are then required to provide explanations on how the target form should be used. Similarly, Wan Nurul Elia (2009) found that weak students managed to improve their accuracy in using article and singular/plural nouns through CR task in which one of the CR techniques that she used was hypothesis building/checking through analysis of errors. Richard (1974) claimed that if learners tend to form wrong hypothesis of how linguistic features work, this leads them into making errors or mistakes in using English. This technique can facilitate learners’ understanding of the target form. Learners tend to form wrong hypothesis of how the verb “be” is used by overreliance on other grammatical rules and being influenced by previously application of a rule (Arshad & Hawanum, 2010). Hence, hypothesis building/checking will enable learners to actively develop accurate understanding of the actual rules.

### *C. Objective*

The aim of this study was to investigate the effectiveness of the two CR techniques, classification and hypothesis-building/checking, in promoting ESL learners’ learning of the target form the verb “be” in three structures: affirmative, negative and interrogative.

### *D. Research Question*

1. Is there a statistical significance of difference in means of scores between pre-test and post-test in Group 1 (Experimental Group) and in Group 2 (Control Group)?
2. Is there a statistical significance of difference in means of gain scores between pre-test and post-test in Group 1 (Experimental Group) in comparison with Group 2 (Control Group)?
3. How does the classification and hypothesis-building/checking techniques help learners to learn the verb “be”?
4. Which structure of the verb “be”: affirmative, negative and interrogative is most effectively learnt through classification and hypothesis-building/checking techniques?

## III. METHODOLOGY

Mixed-methods design was the design used in this study since it encompassed quantitative and qualitative methods (Fraenkel, Wallen & Hyun, 2012). The quantitative methods consisted of pretest and posttest and Likert-scale structured questionnaire. The qualitative method was also involved through the implementation of interviews.

### *A. Sample*

The subjects were selected based on convenience sampling (Fraenkel, Wallen & Hyun, 2012) as they consisted of intact two classes of 28 sophomore students from two different engineering courses: Construction Technology and Electronic Technology at Keningau Vocational College, Sabah. Overall, there were 56 students. The sample was available highly accessible for the researcher to carry out a research which took five consecutive weeks without interrupting their credit hours on various courses and subjects they had to complete.

The average age of the subjects was 17 years which is the same average age for Form 5 students in Malaysian secondary schools. The students enrolled in this college after they completed their Form 3 education in secondary schools. Admittance was based on their performance in the standardized Lower Secondary Assessment (PMR) for Malaysian students. There were 28 students from Construction Technology course. Their PMR results revealed that thirteen of them obtained D, eight scored C, two obtained B and five of them managed to get A in English. For Electronic Technology course which consisted of 28 students, there were six students with grade D in English, thirteen scored C, three managed to get B and six obtained grade A in English in their PMR examination. According to the academic qualifications for Malaysian Technical and Vocational Education (Ministry of Education, 2013), out of the 37 courses offered in vocational colleges across Malaysia, only 25 courses require the students to obtain a minimum grade of D in English to qualify for admittance, eight courses requires the applicants to obtain a minimum C in their English and only 4 courses requires learners to attain minimum English grade of B (Ministry of Education, 2013). However, the minimum qualification varies in some colleges and in the case of Keningau Vocational College, students who obtained D in English were able to enrol in courses that stipulated that the applicants must obtain grade C for English provided that their overall results were sufficiently satisfactory. 16 students in the Construction Technology only managed to get D in their English but they were able to enrol in the course that actually required the students to attain a minimum C in

their English. The standardization of the grade for English subject in vocational colleges allows the results of this study to be generalizable to most students at vocational colleges to a certain extent.

The two classes chosen for this study were assigned into one experimental group and one control group. The class doing Electronic Technology course was labelled as Group 1, the experimental group. The class doing Construction Technology course was labelled as Group 2, the control group. The experimental group was assigned with classification task and hypothesis building/checking task during the course of treatment whereas the control group was assigned with task that included the use of the verb “be” through conventional lessons and less focus on the target form. As for the interviews, five students from Group 1 were randomly selected as the respondents.

### *B. Instrument*

The instruments comprised three methods: pretest/posttest, questionnaire and interview. The pre-test and post-test contain 30 test items where 10 items were allocated for each of the three structures of the verb “be” that were studied in this research: affirmative, negative and interrogative. The test items required the students to construct sentences in accordance with specific structures of the verb “be” that they had to apply in the sentences. The questionnaire contained nine items. Three items focused on investigating the students’ opinions on whether classification technique helped them to learn the affirmative “be”, negative “be” and interrogative “be”. Another three items attempted to explore students’ opinions on whether hypothesis-building/checking technique aided them to understand the verb “be” in the three structures. The last three items identified students’ opinions as to whether providing explanations on the usage of the verb “be” contributed to their learning of the verb “be” in the three forms: affirmative, negative and interrogative. The questionnaire required students to rate their responses based on a likert-scale rating number from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

There were five open-ended questions in the interview. The first three questions explored the respondents’ opinions on whether the CR tasks: classification technique and hypothesis-building/checking technique assisted them to learn the verb “be”. The other two questions explored which structure of the verb “be” that was most effectively learnt through each of these two CR techniques.

### *C. Data Collection*

There were six classification CR tasks and six hypothesis building/checking CR tasks on the verb “be” that were developed for this study. Each CR tasks focused on the affirmative, the negative and the interrogative forms of the verb “be”. In classification task, learners were required to classify the grammatical and ungrammatical sentences based on the use of the verb “be” for affirmative, negative or interrogative forms. In hypothesis building/checking tasks, the students needed to identify and analyse errors on the use of the verb “be” for the three forms: affirmative, negative and interrogative sentences and explain why the use of the target form was wrong. Each sentence in every task was complemented with a picture which acts as a stimulus for learners to understand the sentence better.

The teacher started the treatment session by introducing the general rule of the verb “be” in accordance with the verb “be” being focused in the task for that lesson: affirmative (Week 2), negative (Week 3) and interrogative forms (Week 4) and demonstrated how it was used through a few examples. The teacher then administered the CR tasks for the experimental group (Group 1) and a comprehension task for the control group (Group 2). The experimental group (Group 1) was assigned with classification tasks in the affirmative, negative and interrogative forms for three week (one form for each week). This was followed by hypothesis-building/checking tasks for the same forms after classification tasks were completed. Group 2, the control group, was instructed to answer a set of comprehension questions after the different forms of the verb “be” were taught. After they completed each task, the teacher asked the students to state the rules on the use of the particular form of the verb “be” based on what they had discovered from the tasks. The sequential teaching method was repeated in every treatment session.

The data collection took five weeks to be completed. The course of treatment for each CR task during the study included the explicit instruction at the beginning of the session, the discussion of the answers to the questions together with the teacher and the follow-up tasks where learners were required to state the rules on the forms of the verb “be”. Hence, the entire session was conducted within duration of 60 minutes and it was conducted twice a week with at least one day of interval.

The experiment was conducted in classroom during “free-time” (each course had time allocated for revision) or “relief class” (a period where the assigned subject teacher is not available and another replacement has the freedom to conduct his/her own activities). It is important to take note that classes in vocational colleges start at 7.30 am and finish at 4.30 pm from Monday to Friday. The interview with five students was conducted at Week 5.

TABLE 1:  
ALLOCATION OF TIME AND ASSIGNMENT OF INSTRUMENT/TREATMENT OF THE RESEARCH

No.	Week	Material	Duration
1	Week 1	Pre-test	30 minutes
2	Week 2	Classification tasks on affirmative “be” 1	60 minutes
		Hypothesis building/checking tasks on affirmative “be” 1	
		Classification tasks on affirmative “be” 2	
		Hypothesis building/checking tasks on affirmative “be” 2	
3	Week 3	Classification tasks on negative “be” 1	60 minutes
		Hypothesis building/checking tasks on negative “be” 1	
		Classification tasks on negative “be” 2	
		Hypothesis building/checking tasks on negative “be” 2	
4	Week 4	Classification tasks on interrogative “be” 1	60 minutes
		Hypothesis building/checking tasks on interrogative “be” 1	
		Classification tasks on interrogative “be” 2	
		Hypothesis building/checking tasks on interrogative “be” 2	
5	Week 5	Post-test	30 minutes
		Questionnaire	15 minutes
		Interview	10 minutes for each respondent (100 minutes)

#### D. Data Analysis

As suggested by Seliger and Shohamy (2008), a paired-sample (dependent) t-test was used to analyse means of the pre-test and post-test scores of the experimental group and the control group. This was crucial in identifying whether there is a statistically significant difference between the means of their scores in the pre-test and the post-test. It was followed by an independent t-test performed on the means of learning gain scores between the experimental group and the control group in order to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference of means of the learning gain scores between the two groups. This was used to answer the first and second research question as to whether there is any significant effect of the classification technique embedded in the CR tasks on the students’ learning of the verb “be”. The means of responses for each item in the Likert scale questionnaire conducted on the treatment group were obtained. The mean responses were assigned to five levels of agreement to obtain students’ opinions on how each technique facilitated their learning of the target form as seen in Table 3.2.

TABLE 3.2:  
THE CATEGORIZATION OF LEVEL OF AGREEMENT THROUGH LIKERT SCALE QUESTIONNAIRE.

Mean level	Level of agreement
4.50 - 5.00	Strongly agree
3.50 - 4.49	Agree
2.50 - 3.49	Neutral
1.50 - 2.49	Disagree
1.00 - 1.49	Strongly disagree

Source: Atef & Munir, 2009; Shams, 2008

As for the findings of the interview, the process of analysis, coding and categorization based on emerging pattern from the students’ responses was carried out to deduce findings pertinent to the research (Fraenkel, Wallen & Hyun, 2012). The findings from the three interview question were directly used to address the last two research questions on which structure of the verb “be” that was most effectively learnt through these techniques and how these technique helped them to learn the target form.

#### IV. RESULTS/FINDINGS

##### A. T-test within Group

A dependent sample t-test was used to identify the significance of difference between the pretest scores and the posttest scores within group for Group 1 (Experimental Group) and Group 2 (Control Group). This was used to answer the first research question.

TABLE 2:  
PAIRED-SAMPLED T-TEST WITHIN GROUP 1 (EXPERIMENTAL GROUP) AND GROUP 2 (CONTROL GROUP).

	Pre-test	Post-test	Mean difference	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Group 1 (Experimental Group)	19.00	20.68	1.68	2.2050	27	.0362
Group 2 (Control Group)	16.32	15.14	1.18	1.3385	27	.1919

\* The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level or less

The paired-sampled t-test results displayed in Table 2 indicate that there were increases in scores for both groups in the posttest. Group 1 (Experimental Group) initially obtained a mean score of 19.00 in the pretest and it further improved in the posttest with a mean score of 20.68. Group 2 (Control Group) attained a mean score of 16.32 in the pretest and their scores generally increased in the posttest with a mean score of 15.14. The P value of Group 1 (Experimental Group) was less than 0.05. This implies that the mean differences of increase in scores for Group 1 (Experimental Group) was statistically significant with  $t(27) = 2.2050$ ,  $p = .362$ . The P value of Group 2 (Control Group) was not less than 0.05 and therefore, the mean difference of increase in scores was not statistically significant with  $t(27) = 1.3385$ ,  $p = .1919$ .

#### B. T-test between Groups

Next, the learning gain scores from each individual performance in the pretest and the posttest were obtained and the means of these gain scores were calculated separately based on groups. An independent t-test was conducted on the two means of the learning gain scores obtained from Group 1 (Experimental Group) and Group 2 (Control Group) respectively to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference of means of gain scores between the two groups. This was used to answer the second research question.

TABLE 3:  
T-TEST BETWEEN GROUP 1 (EXPERIMENTAL GROUP) AND GROUP 2 (CONTROL GROUP).

	Mean	Std. Deviation	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Group 1 (Experimental Group)	.93	4.24	2.5931	54	.0122
Group 2 (Control Group)	-2.21	4.81			

\* The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level or less

The P value was less than 0.05 as indicated in the Table 3,  $p = .0122$ . Hence, the difference in gain scores between Group 1 (Experimental Group) and Group 2 (Control Group) was statistically significant: Group 1 ( $M = .93$ ,  $SD = 4.24$ ) and Group 2 ( $M = -2.21$ ,  $SD = 4.81$ ), condition ( $t(54) = 2.59$ ,  $p = .0122$ ).

#### C. How Classification and Hypothesis-building Techniques Promote Learning

The interview findings for classification technique are as follow: Respondent 1 claimed that “the technique trained us how to state the use of grammar by identifying the wrong and the correct which helped me to understand”. Respondent 2 stated that classification technique helped him to learn the form because it was “based on the pictures that showed whether the subject was singular or plural”. Respondent 2 referred to the CR tasks that focused on affirmative “be” where they had to identify its accuracy or inaccuracy through its use of singular form (is, was) or plural form (are, were). Sentences such as “these cars is manufactured in Detroit only” is identified as wrong due to the use of the singular form of the verb “be” for a plural subject. This is consistent with the response from Respondent 3 that classification technique assisted him to learn “through the pictures which shows number of subject involved which indicates “is” or “are” and the use of “was” or “were” can be identified from the sentence where the time is stated”. The response also indicated that Respondent 3 also referred to the CR tasks focusing on affirmative “be” where the learners had to classify the sentences as wrong or correct based on the accuracy of the use of the verb “be” in accordance with present or past tenses as demonstrated through sentences like “She is born in 1987” is classified as wrong due to the use of the present tense of the verb “be” when past tense form should be used. This is corroborated by Respondent 4 who claimed that such technique “shows us how to differentiate past and present tenses” which likely referred to similar CR tasks focusing on the affirmative “be”. Respondent 5 claimed that “it helps me to identify “is”, “are”, “is not” and “are not”, what is the use of “is” and “are”. Respondent 5 implied that the CR tasks enhanced his ability to distinguish affirmative “be” and negative “be”.

The students’ opinions on hypothesis-building/checking technique were also elicited. Respondent 1 claimed that the technique helped him to learn the target form by “stating and identifying the wrong use of grammar”. Respondent 2 explained that by “identifying and stating the errors or the wrong sentences, we can learn to know which sentence is correct and which sentence is wrong”. Respondent 3 stated that it was “based on what has been taught, we never learnt “not was” because it is wrong, “is not” has been always the correct ones”. Respondent 3 clearly referred to the CR tasks focusing on negative “be” which required them to analyse errors on how the negative auxiliary “not” is positioned in applying negative “be”. For example, the use of negative “be” in sentences like “Mattel not is a mobile phone company” is identified as wrong due to the inaccurate position of the auxiliary “no” which should be placed after the verb “is”. Respondent 4 claimed that the technique “allows us to identify the sentence whether it is in past tense or present tense, it is in singular or plural form”. Respondent 4 referred to the CR tasks focusing on affirmative “be” where they had to take consideration of these grammatical rules (present/past tenses, singular/plural nouns) in identifying the errors in the usage of the affirmative “be”. Respondent 5 stated that “these questions helped me when there were wrong sentences like “there is a necklace on the bed?” (supposed to be in interrogative forms), it is a statement and not a question, so you can identify the right and the wrong”.

#### D. Which Structure Is Most Effectively Learnt through Classification and Hypothesis-building

Table 4 indicates that students in the experimental group generally agreed that classifying the sentences based on grammatical or ungrammatical use of the verb “be” assisted them to learn the target form. The form of affirmative “be” had a mean of 3.54 and SD of 1.10, negative “be” had a mean of 3.58 and SD of 1.13) and interrogative “be” with a mean of 3.92 and SD of 0.74. It is implied that interrogative “be” is the most effectively learnt structure through the classification technique.

TABLE 4:  
STUDENTS’ OPINIONS ON CLASSIFICATION TECHNIQUE IN ASSISTING THEIR LEARNING ON THE VERB “BE”.

Form	Mean	Std. Deviation
Affirmative “be”	3.54	1.10
Negative “be”	3.58	1.13
Interrogative “be”	3.92	0.74

Table 5 denotes that students in the experimental group generally agreed that checking for errors and building hypothesis how the target form is correctly used assisted their learning. Affirmative “be” had a mean of 3.92 and SD of 0.89, negative “be” had a mean of 3.92 and SD of 1.05 and interrogative “be” with a mean of 3.76 and SD of 0.99. It is implied that affirmative “be” and negative “be” are equally the most effectively learnt structures through the hypothesis-building/checking technique.

TABLE 5:  
STUDENTS’ OPINIONS ON HYPOTHESIS BUILDING/CHECKING TECHNIQUE IN ASSISTING THEIR LEARNING ON THE VERB “BE”.

Form	Mean	Std. Deviation
Affirmative “be”	3.92	0.89
Negative “be”	3.92	1.05
Interrogative “be”	3.76	0.99

The findings from the interview indicate various opinions on which form was best learnt through which technique. Respondent 1 claimed that the negative “be” was the most effectively learnt structure through classification technique because “the use of the negative “be” in a sentence is easier to understand and to differentiate between the wrong and the right”. Respondent 1 stated that interrogative “be” is best learnt through hypothesis-building technique because “the use of the form in sentences helped to construct correct questions”. This contradicted with Respondent 2 who stated that the interrogative “be” was best learnt through classification technique because the verb “be” is usually at the earlier parts of sentences” for interrogative “be”. Respondent 2, however, stated that the negative form of “be” was most effectively learnt through hypothesis-building technique because “errors are easier to identify due to the position of the word “not”. For example, “is not” is the correct form whereas “not is” is wrong in applying the negative “be”. Respondent 3 and Respondent 4 both claimed that the affirmative “be” was the most effectively learnt structures among the two techniques because the affirmative “be” is the most basic form to learn. Respondent 5 agreed that the affirmative “be” was best learnt through classification technique because “It’s easier to identify the correct affirmative “be”, it is however confusing to identify correct interrogative “be”. Respondent 5 stated that interrogative “be” was best learnt through hypothesis-building technique because “it helps me to identify the wrong use of interrogative “be” in questions because the position is usually before the subject, as for statement, the position of the verb “be” is usually after the subject”.

#### V. DISCUSSION

The statistical significance of means of gain scores between pretest and posttest of Group 1 (Experimental Group) implies the high probability that the increase in test scores was the results of performing the CR techniques of classification and hypothesis building. This also indicates that the two CR techniques were effective in enhancing the respondents’ knowledge and application of the verb “be” in the three forms: affirmative, negative and interrogative. The statistical significance of means of gain scores between Group 1 (Experimental Group) and Group 2 (Control Group) signifies the probability that the students in Group 1 (Experimental Group) performed better than students in Group 2 (Control Group) due to the usage of the two CR techniques in learning the verb “be” is high. Thus, the use of CR techniques of classification and hypothesis-building in learning the three forms (affirmative, negative and interrogative) of the verb “be” is effective and viable.

Based on the interview of the respondents about how these tasks assisted them in learning the target form, it can be deduced from their responses that classification technique can help students to differentiate singular and plural forms, present tenses and past tenses, and the correct and incorrect use of the verb “be” particularly for affirmative “be” since the CR tasks focusing on this form were more heavily influenced by other grammatical forms than the CR tasks focusing on negative “be” and interrogative “be”. As for hypothesis-building/checking technique, it can be deduced from the students’ responses that hypothesis-building/checking technique can help ESL learners to identify and analyse the wrong use of the target form which then consolidates their knowledge and application of the verb “be”. Both techniques can promote the learning of the verb “be” (affirmative, negative & interrogative) among students.

The results of the questionnaire indicate that the learners had moderate perceptions on which form can be learnt best through these CR techniques. It can be concluded from the students' responses in the interview that classification technique is best used to learn the affirmative verb "be" based on functions or meanings of the affirmative "be" in terms of singular/plural, present/past tense, etc. Hypothesis-building/checking technique is best used to learn the correct position of the verb "be" (before the subject, after the subject, position of negative auxiliary "not" or "no", etc.) in accordance with the form focused on and this is more applicable on the negative "be" and interrogative "be". Therefore, the effectiveness of a form to be learnt through any of these two techniques is subject to which trait of the form that is targeted to be learnt. Classification technique provides a better way of learning affirmative "be" when it involves other grammatical rules such as tenses and singular/plural nouns because it helps learners to distinguish the use of the basic forms of the verb "be" in affirmative sentences. Hypothesis-building/checking technique is more appropriate to be used in learning the negative "be" and interrogative "be" as it assists learners to be aware of how the verb "be" is positioned in interrogative form and where the auxiliary "no" is placed in applying the negative "be". This explains why there is no definite answer on which structure is best learnt through which technique as there were various responses from the subjects.

## VI. IMPLICATION TO RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

The findings of the research indicate how the verb "be" can be plausibly taught better through CR techniques in making sure students can understand the form better. This will help to provide more pathways to teachers on how to teach grammar especially which technique is to be used and what specific form that needs to be focused. It also indicates the need to further explore the use of CR techniques in numerous other grammatical forms that students tend to have difficulties to master.

Since vocational colleges are learning institutions that have been recently transformed from ordinary conventional schools to colleges that emphasize education which prepares students for industrial world and tertiary education at the same time, it is very crucial for the teachers to adopt effective methods in teaching English as proficiency in the language is not just an important requirement for tertiary education but also for the industrial and corporate world. This is also consistent with the need for the English teachers in vocational colleges to design their own ESL modules based on a given syllabus rather than following the secondary schools' modules.

## VII. CONCLUSION

To conclude, CR tasks such as classification and hypothesis-building techniques are effective in promoting the learning of the verb "be" for three forms: affirmative, negative and interrogative among ESL learners. This can help them to be more competent in using the language more accurately in speaking and writing. The techniques are feasible to be used in Malaysian ESL classrooms particularly in vocational colleges in order to help them to be proficient in using the language. This will ensure their employability as graduates of vocational colleges since English proficiency is a highly sought-after skill in the industrialized world. This study can also provide pathways for teachers to effectively teach grammar in their ESL lesson in order to enhance the teaching and learning of English language in vocational colleges.

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# Lower-order and Higher-order Reading Questions in Secondary and University Level EFL Textbooks in Jordan

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**Abstract**—The purpose of this study was to analyze thinking levels of the reading comprehension questions in *Action Pack 11* (hereafter *AP 11*) which is taught for grade 11, *Action Pack 12* (hereafter *AP 12*) that is taught for grade 12 at the schools of The Jordanian Ministry of Education and *New Headway Plus Pre-intermediate* (hereafter *NHWP*) that is taught for the first English language course taught at Yarmouk University. All WH-questions in the three textbooks analyzed according to Bloom's Taxonomy. The researchers calculated the percentages and frequencies of the cognitive levels of the questions in the three textbooks. Chi square ( $\chi^2$ ) was used to draw comparisons between the cognitive levels of the questions. The results indicated that low-level questions are dominant in the three. It was also found that low-level questions were dominant in both stages. An interesting conclusion was that the reading material of the university textbook does not show a higher level of thinking. On the contrary, the reading content in the high school textbooks revealed more concentration on higher-level thinking questions. As a result, the study recommended that there should be more communication between secondary schools and universities to bridge the gap between them.

**Index Terms**—higher-order questions, lower-order questions, EFL textbooks, University reading, secondary reading

## I. INTRODUCTION

Questioning is one of the most regularly employed teaching strategies by teachers and in textbooks. Good questions lead to good understanding. Questions serve as means of organizing knowledge, or correlating the results of educative experience (Underhill, 1991). There is no doubt about the importance of questioning as an instructional method for teaching reading. Textbook questions can be used for academic evaluation as well as the development of various skills. The cognitive level of questions develops the interaction between the students and the text. Therefore, the types of questions should take into consideration the different ability levels among students. Therefore, it is necessary to analyze the aspect of questions in textbooks in order to assess how these textbooks develop students' thinking.

Reading comprehension questions have been classified into various taxonomies. A variety of classification systems have been used to determine the levels of questions asked by textbooks. In general, these categories have sorted questions on the two major categories: lower-level questions and higher-level questions. Lower level questions emphasize the recall of specific and universal methods, processes, structures, and settings. Higher-level questions, on the other hand, are more advanced and require knowledge of subject matter. Moreover, they require students to engage on deeper thinking processes.

Bloom (1956) developed a taxonomy for categorizing questions and responses. This taxonomy includes the following elements: Knowledge: recalling specifications; Comprehension: describing in one's words; Application: applying information to produce results; Analysis: subdividing something to show how it is put up together; Synthesis: creating a unique product; and Evaluation: making value decisions about issues. The first three levels deal with lower-order thinking skills whereas the last three employ higher-order thinking skills (Hopper, 2009). Barrett and Smith (1979) adapted Bloom's taxonomy to provide a classification of reading objectives and suggested educational goals for reading instruction. Four objectives were classified: 1) Literal meaning 2) Inference 3) Evaluation 4) Appreciation.

Pearson and Johnson (1978) claimed that comprehension is best understood by employing the "new to known" principle. Pearson and Johnson taxonomy is a three-level taxonomy. The three categories are textually explicit, textually implicit, and script implicit. Several studies have applied these taxonomies to the examination of comprehension questions.

Davies and Widdowson (cited in Williams and Moran, 1989) classified questions into direct reference questions, inferences, and supposition and evaluation questions. Furthermore, Barrette (cited in Williams and Moran, 1989) distinguished five types of questions: internal comprehension, recognition of the ideas in the text, inferential ability, evaluation, and appreciation.

Researchers who studied the influence of lower- and higher-level questions on students' achievement have obtained mixed results. Research has also shown conflicting conclusions regarding the effect of using different cognitive levels of questions on students' achievement. Carlsen (1991) and Ghall and Rhody (1987) have categorized several reasons for these contradictory factors. Among the reasons was that researchers used different question classification systems. They recommended that both lower- and higher-level questions should be used. Lower-cognitive questions are employed to review basic facts and skills whereas higher-level questions promote critical thinking ability and skills.

#### A. *Statement of the Problem*

A number of university students in Jordan suffer from apparent difficulties in comprehending English texts. They fail to deal with the whole text as a unit. This weakness impairs their utilization of texts within and outside the academic context (Al Haddad, 1996). The deficiency in the students' reading can be attributed to different factors including the preparation of the students at school and the gap between the school and the university textbooks. Hussein (2012) maintains that Jordanian first year students lack many "reading comprehension skills" which they need to understand fully a piece of writing. For instance, he complains that, they lack the ability to answer questions that demand the possession of skills involving deep thinking. He adds that little attention is given to skills which belong to inferential and critical levels. To ascertain whether there is a textual gap or not it requires that the content of textbooks prescribed for students be analyzed. This study sheds some light on the connection between high school stage EFL textbooks and an introductory university EFL textbook with respect to the thinking levels demonstrated by the reading comprehension questions.

The nature of textbook questions has received frequent attention. Research on this area has shown that there is a preponderance of lower-level questions in the textbooks in general and in reading textbooks in particular (Rawadieh, 1998; Sunggingwati, 2003; Alul, 2005; Ewies, 2010; Igbaria, 2013). These questions tend to develop students' abilities to memorize facts, but not to think critically. In spite of the continual calls for employing higher-level questions for enhancing the development of critical thinking and problem solving skills, research has not shown any marked increase in the higher cognitive levels. This study was designed to use Bloom's taxonomy to analyze types of the reading questions in the Jordanian high school stage and university first year textbooks. This was done to determine if there were significant differences among these English Language textbooks at the two stages in the distribution of lower-level questions (knowledge, comprehension and application) and higher-level questions (analysis, synthesis and evaluation). In other words, this study addressed the following questions:

1. To what extent are the WH-questions in the cognitive domain of Bloom's Taxonomy varied or frequent in the First Secondary Grade EFL textbook in Jordan (*Action Pack 11*), the Second Secondary Grade EFL Textbook in Jordan (*Action Pack 12*) and Preparatory English Language textbook at Yarmouk University (*New Headway Plus Pre-intermediate*)?

2. Do the high school stage textbooks (*Action Pack 11* and *Action Pack 12*) and first year preparatory English language course textbook (*New Headway Plus Pre-intermediate*) differ in the proportions of lower- and higher level-reading questions?

#### B. *Purpose of the Study:*

The study aimed to analyze thinking levels of the reading comprehension questions in *Action Pack 11* which is taught for grade 11, *Action Pack 12* that is taught for grade 12 at the schools of The Jordanian Ministry of Education and *New Headway Plus Pre-intermediate* that is taught for the first English language course taught at Yarmouk University. The study also aimed to compare thinking levels of the reading comprehension questions in the high school stage EFL textbooks in Jordan (*Action Pack 11* and *12*) to those demonstrated in a first year university EFL textbook in Jordan (*New Headway Plus Pre-intermediate*).

#### C. *Significance of the Study*

The study becomes more important when one considers the importance of the transitional period between the last year at school and the first year at university. The findings of this study are significant for those who are concerned with teaching reading comprehension in high schools and at universities, selecting EFL courses, and evaluating students' performance in reading. The importance of the study also stems from the importance of questioning and textbook questions as an instructional method in teaching the reading skills and critical thinking. Furthermore, the study is significant because it compares the thinking levels demonstrated by the textbooks in two stages; the high school stage and the first year at university. The study also sheds light on how smooth and logical the transition from school to university is with regards to the thinking levels of the reading comprehension stages.

#### D. *Context of the Study*

In Jordan, English is the dominant foreign language taught at the basic stage, high school stage, and at universities. EFL instruction in Jordan begins at Grade 1 and extends to grade 12 and continues as a compulsory subject throughout the whole school system. The average number of hours given to English is five hours a week at the basic stage and four hours a week at the high school stage for each class. At the conclusion of the high school stage which includes grades

11 and 12, students have to sit for an exam known as The General Certificate Exam or “*Tawjihi*”. Performance in the English language subject of this exam with the other subjects is determinant for university enrollment.

Textbooks, in Jordan, are considered an essential tool for teaching and learning. In some cases, textbooks are the only available reading material for students. The teaching of English as a Foreign Language in Jordan is an important objective which aims at developing different language skills. As a natural learning environment is unavailable for Jordanian students, their major source to acquire reading comprehension is through classroom instruction of the assigned EFL textbooks. The importance of EFL textbooks entails that these textbooks should be evaluated to make sure they are suitable for the level of the learners. Furthermore, EFL textbooks should also be evaluated to make sure that the suitable language skills are tackled properly. An important feature that should be evaluated is the transition from one stage to the other. The current study investigates the levels of thinking demonstrated by reading comprehension questions in three textbooks in two different stages and how logical the sequence of these levels from one stage to the other is.

In the academic year 2009/2010, the Jordanian Ministry of Education introduced “*AP 11*” and in the academic year 2010/2011, *AP 12* was introduced. The *AP* series is a twelve-level EFL course for Jordanian students leading them from the basic stage to the high school stage. The series is based on the most modern methods of teaching language which combines a topic-based approach with functional language practice. Careful attention is given to a comprehensive skills syllabus (Lambert, 2010). *Action Pack* series is developed by the Educational Research Center and Published by York Press. *AP 11* and *12* are written by Simon Haines.

On the other hand, Jordanian Universities use different EFL textbook series for teaching the compulsory EFL courses. One of these series is *New Headway Plus*. This series was introduced at Yarmouk University and at other Jordanian universities recently. The authors said that the *New Headway Plus* series is an attempt to guide students to an understanding of new languages rather than just having examples of it on the page. The aim of teaching reading activities according to the teacher’s book is to develop students’ ability to read for gist and specific information, to expand vocabulary around the topic, and to encourage lots of fluency-based speaking practice. *New Headway Plus Pre-intermediate* is taught in the first introductory course at Yarmouk University.

The researcher selected *New Headway Plus Pre-intermediate* textbook for analysis because it is the first course taught for first year students (English 099). On the other hand, *Action Pack 11* and *Action Pack 12* were selected because they are the two EFL textbooks taught at the high school stage in Jordan. The researcher assumes that when moving from the high school stage to the university level, focus should be more on higher-level reading comprehension questions and less on lower-level reading comprehension questions.

## II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Literature has demonstrated that there is a lack of higher-level questions and preponderance of lower-level questions in most of English Language textbooks prescribed for students. However, as far as the researcher is interested, no research has focused on the application of the taxonomy in EFL reading instruction or assessment. In one of the studies that analyzed the cognitive levels of questions in the textbooks of the Ministry of Education in Jordan, Rawadieh (1998) analyzed the types of questions in Jordanian secondary social studies textbooks according to Bloom’s cognitive taxonomy to determine whether significant differences existed among these textbooks in the distribution of lower level questions and higher level questions or not. The total number of the analyzed questions was 822. The results revealed that the four textbooks presented significantly more lower-level questions than higher-level questions. The results also showed that the twelfth grade textbooks gave less emphasis to higher level questions than did eleventh grade textbooks. The findings also showed that the authors of the Jordanian social studies textbooks were familiar with various types and levels of questions so that they followed similar questioning patterns in the textbooks.

The predominance of lower-level questions seems a worldwide problem. For example, Rinser, Nicholson, and Web (2000) used Bloom’s taxonomy to determine the levels of questioning granted by two series of third grade social studies textbooks namely, *Communities: Harcourt Brace Social Studies: 2000*, and *Communities: McMillan- McGraw Social Studies: 1997*. The study examined the extent to which each selected textbook emphasized higher and lower levels of questioning. Three raters classified the questions using the six major categories of Bloom’s taxonomy. It was found that elementary students exposed to the textbooks would have opportunities, as encouraged by the questions included in the textbooks, to understand, apply, synthesize, and evaluate social concepts. It was also shown that in order to answer the majority of questions in the textbooks, students must demonstrate higher cognitive abilities such as application and evaluation. Moreover, the study found that Harcourt Brace was superior to McMillan in the area of higher level questioning. When a textbook is written or adopted for a certain context, thinking levels demonstrated by the book need to be taken into consideration. As proved earlier, the inclusion of the various levels of thinking helps the learner master various thinking skills.

Similarly, Sunggingwati (2003) analyzed all the questions in junior high school English language textbooks. The textbooks analyzed were “*Let’s learn English 1,2, and 3.*” The researcher used Barret’s taxonomy for evaluating reading comprehension questions which has four levels of comprehension (literal, inferential, evaluation, and application). The study found that the levels of reading questions in the analyzed textbooks covered only three levels of reading comprehension based on Barrett’s taxonomy namely, literal, influential, and evaluation. Therefore, the

application level was not represented in the textbooks. This indicates that the thinking levels are not perfectly taken into consideration when the books have been published as the author concludes.

In another study, Alul (2005) used Bloom's Taxonomy to evaluate the instructional questions in the Eighth Grade English Textbooks used in Palestine during the academic year 1999-2000. The researcher prepared an analysis sheet and used keywords in the classification of the questions. Then the researcher computed the number of questions per each cognitive level and calculated lower and higher level questions and tabulated the frequencies and percentages. The results of the study revealed that there was still a preponderance of lower level questions in the studied textbooks.

In one of the most recent studies, Ewies (2010) analyzed the English language Islamic education textbooks for the primary cycle in the United Arab Emirates. The questions in the textbooks were analyzed using a tool that the researcher developed employing Bloom's cognitive taxonomy. In regard of the distribution of the questions over the cognitive aspect, the study revealed that 36% of the questions involved higher-level thinking whereas 64% of the questions involved lower-level thinking.

In the same year, Riazi and Mosalanejad (2010) investigated the types of learning objectives represented in Iranian senior high school and pre-university English textbooks using Bloom's taxonomy of learning objectives. Three high-school textbooks and a pre-university textbook were included in the analysis. In addition to the comprehension questions, the exercises and tasks of the textbooks were codified and the frequencies and percentages of occurrence of different learning objectives were calculated. Results of the study indicated that in all grades lower-order cognitive skills were more prevalent than higher order ones. Furthermore, the difference between the senior high school and the pre-university textbooks in terms of the levels of the taxonomy were significant as the pre-university textbook used some degrees of higher-order learning objectives.

Most recently, Igbaria (2013) examined the variety in the cognitive level represented by the WH-questions in "Horizons" textbook according to Bloom's Taxonomy. The results showed that 244 questions emphasized levels of cognition representing lower-order thinking skills, while only 137 questions emphasized the three higher-order thinking skills. The study also found that the questions in the "Horizons" textbook placed a great deal of emphasis on comprehension, which is one of the lower order thinking skills.

According to the literature reviewed, several conclusions can be made. First, an effective means of stimulating critical thinking skills could be developed through questioning. Second, research results continue to support the importance of questioning in facilitating high levels of thinking. Third, the analyses of the questions indicated that most textbooks emphasized lower-level thinking questions on the expense of higher-level thinking questions. Fourth, a balanced mixture of lower- and higher-level questions seems to be the most appropriate technique for improving students' achievement. Moreover, neglecting higher-level questions in reading textbooks will limit students' thinking skills and replace them with factual memorization skills instead.

Reviewing the literature related to the analysis of the reading comprehension questions according to Bloom's Taxonomy, the researcher found that few studies tackled this issue in Jordan. The literature review helps shows that the validity and reliability of the instrument of this study have been obtained. However, to the best of the researchers' knowledge, no study has investigated the levels of comprehension questions in the two stages of high school and university.

### III. METHODOLOGY

The appropriate procedure for the purposes of the present study is the descriptive content analysis style which describes the phenomenon and monitors the occurrence of the categories of analysis accurately. All open-ended reading comprehension questions in *Action Pack 11*, *Action Pack 12* and *New Headway Plus Pre-intermediate* were categorized in light of the cognitive levels of Bloom's Taxonomy of educational objectives. A checklist was prepared to analyze the cognitive levels of all open-ended reading comprehension questions in the three textbooks. Moreover, the list of behavioral verbs appropriate for the levels of Bloom's taxonomy (the cognitive domain) were also used clarifying the process of classification.

#### A. Choice of the Textbook Level for Analysis

For a number of reasons, the reading content in grade 11, grade 12, and an introductory University EFL course (LC 099) were chosen as the levels of textbooks to analyze. Grade 11 and 12 represent the English language textbooks prescribed for students at the high school stage in the Jordanian educational system while LC 099 is the first EFL course that the majority of the university freshmen study if compared to other courses. The period including the high school stage and university first year represents the transition from school to university. The researcher was interested in this stage when he planned his research as this stage is a crucial one in the students' academic life and it has not been studied as shown by the literature review. Therefore, it is hoped that this study presents an insight into some aspects of this stage by investigating the appropriateness and the difficulty level of the reading content in the textbooks under study.

#### B. Validity of the Analysis

To establish the validity of content analysis, the researcher defined the concepts operationally, prepared the criteria, units and the categories for analyzing the three books. The researcher consulted some experts in the field of language teaching who had experience in content analysis and there was agreement among the experts on the procedure. Moreover, the validity of Bloom's taxonomy has been obtained through theoretical and experimental modes. Research studies in various curriculum areas have supported the structure and content validity of the taxonomy.

### C. Reliability of the Content Analysis

To verify the intra-rater reliability of the analysis, the researcher analyzed a random sample of the questions with the percentage of 5% of the total number of the analyzed questions twice. The researcher then computed Scott coefficient between the two analyses. The retrieved reliability coefficient between the two analyses was 0.94 which is considered high. Moreover, to verify the inter-rater reliability of the analysis, another analyst was asked to conduct the analysis using the same categories and units of analysis. The second analyst was acquainted with the procedure. The two analyses were done separately on the same sample of questions. The inter-rater reliability coefficient was calculated and it was found 0.93 which is considered high.

### D. Data Analysis

To answer the study questions, the primary data collected from the textbooks under study were approached through descriptive and inferential analysis. The descriptive analysis included classifying all questions according to the six categories of the cognitive level of Bloom's taxonomy, calculating frequencies, and reporting percentages in each textbook. All data were presented in tabular forms. Results of the data were then divided into lower and higher-level categories and percentages were computed to determine the extent to which the reading comprehension questions in the high school stage textbooks (*Action Pack 11* and *Action Pack 12*) and university stage textbook (*New Headway Plus Pre-intermediate*) emphasize both lower- and higher-levels of questions. All data which originated from descriptive analysis, such as frequencies and percentages, were utilized in the inferential component of data analysis. The statistical procedure of Chi square ( $\chi^2$ ) cross tabulation was used to determine if the reading content in *Action Pack 11*, *Action Pack 12*, and *New Headway Plus Pre-intermediate* differ in the proportions of lower-and higher-level questions.

## IV. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

The results of the study are presented according to the order of the study's questions respectively:

*Results related to the first question:* To what extent are the WH-questions in the cognitive domain of Bloom's Taxonomy varied or frequent in the First Secondary Grade EFL textbook in Jordan (*Action Pack 11*), the Second Secondary Grade EFL Textbook in Jordan (*Action Pack 12*) and Preparatory English Language textbook at Yarmouk University (*New Headway Plus Pre-intermediate*)?

The three textbooks under study contained varied numbers of questions as follows: *AP11* included 58 questions, *AP12* included 57 questions, and *NHWP* included 183 questions. 298 questions were obtained from the three textbooks.

In order to offer an answer to this question, which focused on analyzing the proportions of lower- and higher-level questions, the researcher analyzed the cognitive levels of the questions found in the textbooks under study. Comparisons were also made between proportions of the questions in each of the three textbooks, and then comparisons were made between the proportions of the cognitive levels of the questions at both stages; high school stage including *Action Pack 11* and *Action Pack 12* and the university stage represented by the *New Headway Plus Pre-intermediate*.

In addition, frequencies of the questions included in the three textbooks under study were calculated according to Bloom's Cognitive Levels. The percentages of the questions among these levels in each textbook were calculated in addition to calculating the adjusted residual where needed in light of Chi Square Test for Independence, taking into account that the cognitive level "synthesis" was excluded because it had not been noticed in any of the three textbooks under study. The data are presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1:  
FREQUENCIES AND PERCENTAGES OF READING COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS ACCORDING TO BLOOM'S TAXONOMY OF EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES IN  
*AP11*, *AP12*, AND *NHWP* AND RESULTS OF  $\chi^2$  TEST OF INDEPENDENCE REGARDING TEXTBOOK

Text Book	Statistic	Bloom's Levels					Total
		Knowledge	Comprehension	Application	Analysis	Evaluation	
<i>AP11</i>	Count	20	7	13	17	1	58
	% within Text Book	34.5	12.1	22.4	29.3	1.7	100.0
	Adjusted Residual	0.166	-4.065	1.830	3.152	0.610	
<i>AP12</i>	Count	9	24	14	9	1	57
	% within Text Book	15.8	42.1	24.6	15.8	1.8	100.0
	Adjusted Residual	-3.159	1.269	2.318	0.004	0.629	
<i>NHWP</i>	Count	71	73	17	21	1	183
	% within Text Book	38.8	39.9	9.3	11.5	0.5	100.0
	Adjusted Residual	2.417	2.280	-3.361	-2.567	-1.004	
Total	Count	100	104	44	47	3	298
	% within Text Book	33.6	34.9	14.8	15.8	1.0	100.0
$\chi^2$		N of Cases		Df		Sig.	
37.291		298		8		0.000	

Table 1 shows a significant relation between the textbooks and Bloom Cognitive levels in relation to the questions contained in the three textbooks. When moving from *AP 11* to *NHWP*, a decline is noticed in the analysis level in *AP 11*, and when moving from *AP11* to *AP12* to *NHWP*, a decline is noticed in the level of application with a huge increase in the levels of knowledge and comprehension levels in *NHWP*. Table 1 also indicates that the questions were presented in the following order according to their inclusion: in *AP11* (knowledge, analysis, application, comprehension, and evaluation), *AP12* (comprehension, application, knowledge, analysis, and evaluation) and *New Headway Plus Pre-intermediate* (comprehension, knowledge, analysis, application, and evaluation).

Moreover, frequencies of the questions included in the three textbooks under study were calculated according to Bloom's Thinking levels (Low-level questions and high-level questions). The percentages of the questions among these two levels in each textbook were calculated in addition to calculating the adjusted residual where needed in light of Chi Square Test for Independence, taking into account that the cognitive level "synthesis" was excluded because it had not been noticed in any of the three textbooks under study. The data are presented in Table 2.

TABLE 2:  
FREQUENCIES AND PERCENTAGES OF LOWER AND HIGHER LEVEL QUESTIONS IN *AP11*, *AP12*, AND *NHWP* AND RESULTS OF  $\chi^2$  TEST OF INDEPENDENCE REGARDING TEXTBOOK

Text Book	Statistic	Thinking Level		Total
		Low	High	
AP11	Count	40	18	58
	% within Text Book	69.0	31.0	100.0
	Adjusted Residual	-3.24	3.24	
AP12	Count	47	10	57
	% within Text Book	82.5	17.5	100.0
	Adjusted Residual	-0.17	0.17	
NHWP	Count	161	22	183
	% within Text Book	88.0	12.0	100.0
	Adjusted Residual	2.77	-2.77	
Total	Count	248	50	298
	% within Text Book	83.22	16.78	100.00
$\chi^2$	N of Cases		Df	Sig.
11.431	298		2	0.003

Table 2 shows that there is a relation between the textbook and the level of thinking. This can be noticed when moving from *Action Pack 11* to *New Headway Plus Pre-intermediate* an incline is noticed in the percentage of the higher-level questions and an increase is noticed in the percentage of the lower-level questions. Table 2 also shows that the low-level questions are dominant in the three textbooks with percentages of 69.0% for *Action Pack 11*, 82.5% for *Action Pack 12*, and 83.22% for *New Headway Plus Pre-intermediate*.

*Results related to the second question:* Do the high school stage textbooks (*Action Pack 11* and *Action Pack 12*) and first year preparatory English language course textbook (*New Headway Plus Pre-intermediate*) differ in the proportions of lower- and higher level- reading questions?

Frequencies of the questions included in the three textbooks of the two stages (High school and university) under study were calculated according to Bloom's Cognitive Levels. The percentages of the questions among these levels in each textbook were calculated in addition to calculating the adjusted residual where needed in light of Chi Square Test



for Independence, taking into account that the cognitive level “synthesis” was excluded because it had not been noticed in any of the three textbooks under study. The data are presented in Table 3.

TABLE 3:  
FREQUENCIES AND PERCENTAGES OF COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS ACCORDING TO THE BLOOM’S TAXONOMY OF EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES IN UNIVERSITY AND HIGH SCHOOL STAGE TEXTBOOKS AND RESULTS OF X2 TEST OF INDEPENDENCE REGARDING STAGE

Stage	Statistic	Bloom's Levels					Total
		Knowledge	Comprehension	Application	Analysis	Evaluation	
High school	Count	29	31	27	26	2	115
	% within stage	25.2	27.0	23.5	22.6	1.7	100.0
	Adjusted Residual	-2.42	-2.28	3.36	2.57	1.00	
University	Count	71	73	17	21	1	183
	% within stage	38.8	39.9	9.3	11.5	0.5	100.0
	Adjusted Residual	2.42	2.28	-3.36	-2.57	-1.00	
Total	Count	100	104	44	47	3	298
	% within stage	33.6	34.9	14.8	15.8	1.0	100.0
$\chi^2$		N of Cases		Df		Sig.	
23.443		298		4		0.000	

Table 3 shows that there is a significant relation between the academic stage and Bloom’s Cognitive Levels. It can be noticed that when moving from the high school stage to the university stage there is a decline in the levels of application and analysis and an increase in the levels of knowledge and comprehension. Table 3 also shows that the thinking levels of knowledge and comprehension were dominant in the two stages with percentages of 25.2%, 27.0% for the high school stage textbooks, and 38.8%, 39.9% for the university textbook respectively. The least number of questions were categorized at the level of Evaluation with percentages of 1.7% for the high school stage and 0.5% for the university level. Not to mention the level of Synthesis which had not been categorized in any of the two stages. Table 3 also indicates that the questions were presented in the following order according to their inclusion: The High school Stage (comprehension, application, knowledge, analysis, and evaluation), The University Level (comprehension, knowledge, analysis, application, and evaluation).

Finally, frequencies of the questions included in the two stages under study (high school and university) were calculated according to Bloom’s Thinking levels (Low-level questions and high-level questions). The percentages of the questions among these two levels in each academic stage were calculated in addition to calculating the adjusted residual where needed in light of Chi Square Test for Independence. The data are presented in Table 4.

TABLE 4:  
FREQUENCIES AND PERCENTAGES OF LOWER AND HIGHER LEVEL QUESTIONS IN UNIVERSITY LEVEL AND HIGH SCHOOL STAGE TEXTBOOKS AND RESULTS OF X2 TEST OF INDEPENDENCE REGARDING STAGE

RESULTS OF $\chi^2$ TEST OF INDEPENDENCE REGARDING STAGE				
Stage	Statistic	Thinking Level		Total
		Low	High	
High school	Count	87	28	115
	% within stage	75.7	24.3	100.0
	Adjusted Residual	-2.772	2.772	
University	Count	161	22	183
	% within stage	88.0	12.0	100.0
	Adjusted Residual	2.772	-2.772	
Total	Count	248	50	298
	% within stage	83.2	16.8	100.0
$\chi^2$	N of Cases		Df	Sig.
7.684	298		1	0.006

Table 4 shows that there is a significant relation between the academic stage (high school/university) and the level of thinking (low/high). This can be noticed when moving from the high school stage to the university. A decline is noticed in the percentage of the higher level questions and an increase is noticed in the percentage of the lower level questions. Table 4 also shows that low-level questions are dominant in both stages with percentages of 75.7% in the high school stage textbooks and a percentage of 88.0% in the university level textbook.

## V. DISCUSSION

The discussion of the results will be proposed according to the questions respectively.

### A. Discussion of the Results of the First Question



The first question focused on analyzing the cognitive levels of thinking demonstrated by the WH-reading questions in *Action Pack 11*, *Action Pack 12*, and *New Headway Plus Pre-intermediate*. The results of this question are shown in Tables 1-4.

An overall conclusion that can be drawn from the results of this analysis was that Jordanian High school Stage EFL textbooks and *New Headway Plus Pre-intermediate* (taught as a university course of Communication skills for freshmen students) had a dominant emphasis on lower level questions. Sixty nine percent of the questions of AP 11, 82.5% of the questions of AP12, and 88% of NHWP questions were classified under lower-level cognitive questions and only 31%, 17.5%, and 12% of AP11, AP12, and NHWP questions respectively at higher levels. To clarify whether the three textbooks under study led equally to the foregoing results, each textbook was examined by itself.

#### *Action Pack 11*

The analysis revealed that AP11 included a greater proportion of higher-level cognitive questions than the other textbooks understudy. A percentage of 31% was categorized as higher-level questions and 69% was categorized as lower-level questions. Although this textbook did not have a balanced distribution of lower- and higher-level questions, it gave more opportunities than the other textbooks for the students to use higher level thinking processes. The concentration of the questions of this textbook was found under the domains of knowledge, comprehension, and analysis with the level of synthesis excluded and the level of evaluation appearing in the textbook only once.

#### *Action Pack 12*

The analysis of the comprehension questions in AP12 showed a concentration on lower- level thinking skills. The greatest percentage of questions was comprehension and application with the level of synthesis excluded and the level of evaluation appearing in the textbook only once.

#### *New Headway Plus Pre-intermediate*

The analysis revealed that NHWP included a greater proportion of lower-level cognitive questions than the other textbooks. A percentage of 88% was categorized as lower-level questions and only 12% was categorized as higher-level questions. Opposite to the expectation, the focus of the reading comprehension questions was under the level of comprehension and knowledge, although a person expects more high-level questions when moving to upper grades.

### *B. Discussion of the Results of the Second Question*

Do the high school stage textbooks (*Action Pack 11* and *Action Pack 12*) and first year preparatory English language course textbook (*New Headway Plus Pre-intermediate*) differ in the proportions of lower- and higher level- reading questions?

A comparison of the questioning levels in the two stage textbooks revealed significant outcomes. Table 2 shows that when moving from the high school stage to the university stage there is a decline in the levels of application and analysis and an increase in the levels of knowledge and comprehension. The table also shows that the thinking levels of knowledge and comprehension were dominant in the two stages. It also indicates that the questions were presented in the following order according to their inclusion: the high school stage: comprehension, application, knowledge, analysis, and evaluation; at the university level: comprehension, knowledge, analysis, application, and evaluation. Moreover, the results indicate that when moving from the high school stage to the university, a decline is noticed in the percentage of the higher level questions and an increase is noticed in the percentage of the lower level questions.

The predominance of the lower-level thinking questions, the scarcity of some higher-level questions, and lack of progression of the cognitive level questions among the three textbooks indicate that the textbooks failed to offer enough higher level questions at this stage, taking into consideration that the three textbooks are taught at the end of the high school stage and at the beginning of the university life which needs higher levels of thinking than at school. This shows that there was a tendency in these textbooks to provide questions that are designed to help students to acquire factual knowledge rather than to teach them to think. One can thus conclude that the main objectives of the textbooks were the development of lower-order cognitive skills. Similar to earlier studies (Rawadieh, 1998; Sunggingwati, 2003; Alul, 2005; Ewies, 2010; Riazi and Msalanejad, 2010; Igbaria, 2013), the current study found that the examined textbooks emphasized lower-level thinking questions.

This could be a result of the fact that in the Jordanian educational system, the major emphasis is on acquiring knowledge in the form of memorization, rather than creativity through higher-levels of cognitive skills such as analysis and synthesis. The Secondary General Examination (Tawjihi) exerts a real negative backwash effect in that the students are required to learn exactly what is included in the textbooks without any changes on the part of the learners. That is, learners are motivated to memorize the materials and reproduce them on the exam sheets. As such, students are not asked or given the opportunity to use the language.

Due to this fact, students are not required to analyze, synthesize or evaluate the content of the reading material. The teachers do not feel any need to go through these higher-level cognitive skills and they prefer to have time to teach their students the grammatical points and other lower-level cognitive skills they need for the Tawjihi exam or to familiarize them with direct-answer questions. It is likely that textbook developers have also been affected by this phenomenon and have worked in favour of this objective.

Another result of interest was the similarity between the percentages of thinking levels in the reading content of secondary school and university communication skills EFL textbooks. The reading material of the university textbook does not show a higher level of thinking. On the contrary, the reading content in the school textbooks revealed more

concentration on higher-level thinking questions. This indicates that *New Headway Plus Pre-intermediate* textbook is below the level of *Action Pack 11* and *Action Pack 12* in this regard.

This could be attributed to the fact that the university textbook under study is entitled “Pre-intermediate” and that the high school stage textbooks are presented to the students after ten years of English language learning. Although *Action Pack 11* and *12* do not clearly identify the language level they are suitable for, one can expect Grade 11 and Grade 12 students to be at least in the pre-intermediate level which makes them equal in level to or higher than *New Head Way Plus Pre-intermediate*. Such a fact could be due to the lack of harmony between the Ministry of Education and universities which can motivate textbook developers to revise the high school textbooks to bring them into harmony so that university textbook could use higher cognitive questions and skills.

## VI. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

One should consider the nature of relationship between lower- and higher- cognitive questions. This relationship can be described as integrative. Lower-level questions can enhance the acquisition of factual knowledge and the foundations for attaining high-cognitive skills. On the other hand, higher-level questions are effective tools for stimulating thinking and developing other cognitive skills such as problem solving and decision making. Clearly, attention should be given to preparing teachers and textbook authors to employ both lower- and higher-level questions in classroom interactions and contents of texts. A balanced mixture of lower- and higher-level questions would contribute to accompanying broad educational goals as well as furnishing learners with knowledge and improving their abilities to think and solve problems.

It can be concluded that the reading part in the Jordanian High school Stage EFL textbooks and the introductory university EFL course textbook had a dominant emphasis on questions that involved lower-level thinking processes. Another interesting conclusion was that the reading material of the university textbook does not show a higher level of thinking. On the contrary, the reading content in the school textbooks revealed more concentration on higher-level thinking questions. Furthermore, The predominance of the lower-level thinking questions, the scarcity of some higher-level questions, and lack of progression of the cognitive level questions among the three textbooks indicated that the textbooks failed to offer enough higher level questions at this stage, taking into consideration that two textbooks are taught at the end of the high school stage and one at the beginning of the university life which needs higher levels of thinking. This shows that there was a tendency in these textbooks to provide questions that are designed to help students to acquire factual knowledge rather than to teach them to think critically. One can thus conclude that the main objectives of the textbooks were the development of lower-order cognitive skills.

In light of the findings of the study, it is recommended that there should be more communication between high schools and universities to bridge the gap between schools and universities with regard to reading comprehension questions, and to enable schools prepare the students for the expected reading demands at the university level. This articulation mainly includes the expected reading level, the desired reading skills, and the suitable materials to achieve these purposes. It is also recommended that Jordanian EFL teachers and instructors do not solely depend on the textbook as a major source of instructional questions. Instead, they need to design supplementary questions to remedy the lack of higher level questions. Furthermore, Textbook developers should try to devise exercises and activities that go beyond lower-order cognitive skills and to include higher-order ones. Finally, it is recommended that other research studies be conducted on larger samples and in other areas in addition to reading. More research studies are needed in the area of transition from school to university in all fields of study.

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# Foreign Language Learning Recounts by Two Muslim Religious Scholars: A Narrative Education Discourse Analysis

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**Abstract**—The study analyzes two narratives written by Muslim religious scholars describing their experiences in learning a foreign language. Imam Mohammad Abduh's account on learning French and Sheikh Salman Al Ouda's account on learning English are the subject of analysis. These two scholars were selected because they represent two different cultures (Liberal Egyptian and conservative Saudi), two different ages (end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century) and two different language learning strategies (learning French and learning English). They were also selected because they are the ones whom are known to have written their experiences with learning a foreign language; Abduh through his student Rashid Reda in 1935, and Ouda by himself in his autobiography published 2011. The study analyzes these narratives and draws on literature from modern Educational theories in language learning and applied linguistics. Based on this analysis, the mentality of the Muslim religious scholars is unlocked with respect to foreign language learning. Differences and similarities between the two scholars' experiences are sorted out and implications for designing an ESP course based on these successful strategies are then proposed for similar religious scholars who wish to learn a foreign language.

**Index Terms**—learning strategies, Islamic education, religious scholars, EFL narratives

## I. INTRODUCTION

The twentieth century witnessed the beginning of an age of enlightenment in both religious thought and civil movement. This movement was led by Jamal Eddin Al Afaghani who was followed by Mohammad Abduh, best known as Al Ustaz Al Imam. Abduh is considered a landmark in the modern Egyptian and Arab history. Away from his controversial religious views that aroused, and still arouse to this day, many disputes in both secular and religious societies, the man was distinguished in another field that was rarely treaded by religious scholars at his time; namely the field of foreign language learning. While Abduh who died in 1905 had a very special experience in learning the French language, the Saudi Muslim preacher and Scholar Salman Al Ouda followed Abduh's steps approaching the English Language. Both scholars are classified under the moderate school of Islamic thought. While Abduh is seen as a leader and one of the early godfathers who established modern Islamic thought, Al Ouda is an acting example of these thoughts that emerged from a very conservative environment and succeeded in making a difference in the religious as well as literary lives of many Muslim young people in the Arab world. A close reading of both scholars' experience is expected to achieve the following aims:

- 1- Identifying the psychology of learning and learning styles of religious scholars as reflected in their writings.
- 2- Tracing the learning strategies employed by these learners-scholars as represented in their narratives to reach a holistic view of their foreign language study.
- 3- Identifying aspects of self-study strategies that can be used individually by Higher Education students especially in a foreign context.
- 4- Comparing the experiences of two Muslim religious scholars who represent two different cultures wide apart by more than one hundred years (Abduh died in 1905 and Al-Ouda wrote his account in 2010).

## II. CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

### **Questions of the study:**

Based on the above introduction, the following are the questions of the study:

- 1- What are the strategies used by Muslim religious scholars in learning a foreign language?
- 2- In what way do these strategies represent modern education theories in foreign language learning?
- 3- What are the similarities and differences between both scholars' experiences?
- 4- What are the implications that can be derived from these scholars' experiences in learning foreign languages in higher education institutions?

### **Methodology:**

Employed in this study are two methods of analysis. First, discourse analysis was used as the primary and central method of inquiry. Tracey (1998) states that "discourse analysis is the close study of talk (or text) in context...situated within an interpretive social science meta-theory that conceives of meanings as socially constructed" (p. 10). Second, several principles of narrative were used as grounding for conducting this analysis of storytelling. Gergen (1991: p. 161) describes the life story as a type of "account you might give if musing over how you got to be where you are" (as cited in Bollis-Pecchi, 2000)

The procedures that were utilized in the present study are the following:

- 1- A short biographical note is given to each scholar to explore the factors that shaped his character and affected this thought.
- 2- The excerpt of each scholar's narrative account is presented in English translation, and original Arabic extracts for both accounts are in the appendix.
- 3- An analysis of each text is then presented in the light of modern education and applied Linguistics theories. An explanation is given of the cultural and traditional Arabic context allusions.
- 4- Similarities and differences between both scholars' accounts are then spotted.
- 5- Lessons learnt, implications and recommendations are presented for developing foreign language courses for Muslim preachers, sheikhs, scholars, Imams and Islamic studies students.

### III. DATA ANALYSIS

#### A. Imam Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905)

##### *A biography note:*

Born in 1849 in Lower Egypt and educated at Al-Azhar Islamic University, Imam Muhammad Abduh is best known as a reformer and a philosopher. Under al-Afghani's influence, Abduh combined journalism, politics, and his own fascination in mystic spirituality. He believed that education was the best way to achieve this goal. Kügelgen (2009) mentions that Abduh founded a religious society and became president of a society for the revival of Arab. He travelled a great deal and met with European scholars in Cambridge and Oxford. He studied French law and read a great many European and Arab works in the libraries of Vienna and Berlin. (as cited in Wikipedia, 2014).

##### **Text:**

**"I started learning French when I was 44. However my inclination towards learning a foreign language was during the Urabi<sup>1</sup> rebellion when I learnt the alphabet but I didn't use it and almost forgot it. When I first travelled to France, I stayed ten months editing issues of Al Urwa Al Wuthqa<sup>2</sup> (The firmest bond) and I learnt nothing from French because my time with Assayed Jamal Eddin<sup>3</sup> and Arab companions and my engagement in editing this journal didn't allow me to have a sufficient time to start a systemic study. So this time was spent useless in learning the language. When I returned from exile to Egypt and after working in the national court and giving verdicts in criminal cases based on the French law and sitting among judges who were well-versed in this language, I had an urging tendency towards learning French so as not to be inferior in knowing laws to those with whom I sit in the law counsels. After I came to Cairo and worked in one of its courts, I found time and circumstances suitable to start work (in language learning).**

**I searched for a tutor and found a rather good one. So I invited him home, he came with a book of Grammar (Grammaire). I asked: *what is this?* He said: *a grammar book*. I said to him: *"I do not have time to start, I rather have time to finish"* then I handed him a novel by Alexandre Dumas, and said *"I will read and you fix my pronunciation, and explain the (general) meaning. Anything except this is my duty and grammar will come along during work"*. In this manner I finished the book, and another and another. I was reading aloud whenever I was alone at home, so I learned the basics of French and could read and understand. However I couldn't speak (well).**

**After that I travelled to France and Switzerland many times during the summer vacations. I attended summer classes in Genève College. In this way I learnt French in my leisure time while I was working in jurisdiction in the Municipal Courts and the Courts of appeal. What really increased my lingering for learning a foreign language is that I found that nobody can claim to have learning that can be used to serve the nation and to defend its interests as should be unless he knows a European language- why not? The interests of Muslims have become intertwined with the interests of the Europeans in all over the world. Can he, who does not know their**

<sup>1</sup> Ahmad Urabi (1841-1911) was an Egyptian army general, and nationalist who led a revolt in 1879 against Tewfik Pasha, the Khedive of Egypt and Sudan, and the increasing European domination of the country. The revolt was ultimately crushed in 1882 when the United Kingdom invaded at the request of Tewfik, thereby commencing the 74 year British occupation Egypt. Urabi was the first Egyptian national political and military leader to rise from the fellahin. (Wikipedia, 2014).

<sup>2</sup> Edited from Paris by Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and Muhammad Abduh, al-Urwa al-Wuthqa was published between March and October 1884. The title, meaning "the firmest bond," alludes to the Qur'an; it had been used by Afghani in 1883 to refer to the pan-Islamic caliphate of the Ottoman sultan. After eighteen issues had appeared in 1884, the paper suddenly ceased publication, probably owing to lack of funds. Subsidization afforded wide distribution, which helped to enhance the reputation of the paper and its editors.

<sup>3</sup> Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1838-1897), was a political activist and Islamic ideologist in the Muslim world during the late 19th century, particularly in the Middle East, South Asia and Europe. One of the founders of Islamic modernism and an advocate of pan-Islamic unity, he has been described as "less interested in theology than he was in organizing a Muslim response to Western pressure." (Ludwig, 2001, p. 32).

**language, then benefit from the goodness of their good (people) or get rid of the evil of their evil (people)?** (Reda, 2003, pp. 104-105)

#### **Analysis:**

The first thing we notice in Abduh's account is that it is too short. He does not mention a lot of details but gives a rather reflective experience more than a detailed account. However short the account, it is heavy loaded with educational practices that represent modern language learning theories. The second thing to observe is his relatively old age (44) when starting to learn French, a thing that defies a negative attitude widely spread among young Muslim scholars.

We notice that the real urge for Abduh to start learning French was his work in jurisdiction. The best results of language learning are achieved when the purposes of learning are closely related to a learner's interest and work. Gardner and Lambert (1972 as cited in Hussin et al, 2001) introduced the notions of instrumental and integrative motivation. Instrumental motivation refers to the learner's desire to learn a language for utilitarian purposes (such as employment or travel or exam purposes) in the context of language learning. On the other hand, integrative motivation refers to the desire to learn a language to integrate successfully into the target language community.

What strikes attention is Abduh's discard of traditional grammar books that were very popular at his time, and his adoption of a content-based approach. At the time of Imam Mohammad Abduh, there was one dominant method of teaching foreign languages, namely the grammar-translation method. Thanasoulas (2010) states that: 'In the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries, foreign language learning was associated with the learning of Latin and Greek, both supposed to promote their speakers' intellectuality. At the time, it was of vital importance to focus on grammatical rules, syntactic structures, along with rote memorization of vocabulary and translation of literary texts'.

A look at English language courses used in Egypt by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>4</sup> shows that even in formal schooling, the grammar-translation method was overwhelmingly shaping the curricula. So to have Abduh discard of these prevalent teaching methodologies and current language courses is really a sign preceding his age.

Abduh, furthermore, indicates to the tutor his own personal method of teaching. This method compiles content-based instruction using literature as the core content, active learning strategies with Abduh doing most of the tasks, and the learning contract by identifying the roles of the tutor and the roles of the learner. Content-based Instruction (CBI), in Richards and Rodgers' words 'refers to an approach to second language teaching in which teaching is organized around the content or information that students will acquire, rather than around a linguistic or other type of syllabus...' (2005, pp 204, 207). It is worth noting that CBI as a systemic approach to language teaching and learning was not popular till the 1980s, and 'it is now widely used in K-12 programs for ESL students, in university foreign language programs and in business and vocational courses in EFL settings' (Richards and Rodgers 2005, p. 219). 'Literature-based programs can lead to increased use of literature for independent reading and improved attitudes toward reading for students experiencing difficulty in learning' (Morrow 1992).

It is worth noting that the content selected by Abduh is a world masterpiece by Alexandre Dumas. Abduh seems aware of the nature of world literature masterpieces and the French ones in particular. He understands that the canon of a nation represents its utmost peak in its standard language and reflects its morals and identity. In addition to the novel selection, Abduh takes the burden of reading and unlocking the meaning, while the tutor is there just to correct and explain ambiguities. Active learning where the learner is actively involved in the process of discovering things by himself is a celebrated approach in learning these days. Active learning is an umbrella term that refers to several models of instruction that focus the responsibility of learning on learners. Bonwell and Eison (1991) popularized this approach to instruction. A variety of research studies since the 1990s, has promoted an important principle: Guidance early, and then practice later is suggested for the best results. Another term related to *Active Learning* is *Learner Autonomy*. The term 'learner autonomy' was first coined in 1981 by Henri Holec, the 'father' of learner autonomy. Holec (1981 as cited in Wikipedia 2013) explains that many definitions have since been given to the term, depending on the writer, the context, and the level of debate educators have come to. It has been considered as a personal human trait, as a political measure, or as an educational move. This is because autonomy is seen either (or both) as a means or as an end in education.

There is also the idea of a learning contract. Contract learning is, in essence, 'an alternative way of structuring a learning experience: It replaces a content plan with a process plan.' Knowles (1986, p. 39). Education has to be an active rather than a passive process. To be active, students must participate in the process of education and become more independent and responsible for their own learning. They must develop the skills of self-directed inquiry. (Codde, 2006).

'*Grammar will come along during work*'- this sentence summarizes an abundance of language teaching research in grammar and grammar instruction. The Imam seems to refer to the functionality of grammar rather than the knowledge

<sup>4</sup> Examples include: Al Bakurah Al Shahyya Fi Nahw Al Lughah Al Injelizya (literally: *the sweet first fruits in the English language grammar*), but known as "English-Arabic Grammar" by Ahmad Faris Effendi in 1836, Al Muhawarah Al Inssyah Fi Al Lughatain Al Inkelizya wa Al Arabya (literally: *the Human conversations in the English and Arabic languages*), also known as "Arabic and English Grammatical exercises and Familiar dialogues" by the same author in 1840, Al Touhfa Al Baheyah Fi Al Lughatain Al Inkelizya wa Al Arabya (literally: *the shining gift in English and Arabic*), but known as "English-Arabic phrasebook" by Mohammad Lotphy and Hassan Hassanin in 1874, and Al Touhfa Al Baheyah Fi Al Lughat Al Inkelizya wa Al Arabya wa Al Fransaweeyah wa Al Turkyah (literally: *the shining gift in English, Arabic, French and Turkish*) by Mouhammed Mihri in 1899.

about grammar. He focuses on *grammaring* rather than grammar itself. Larsen-Freeman's book 'Teaching Language; from Grammar to Grammaring' while recently published (2003), still proposes a shock for many teachers of a foreign language worldwide. Dickey (2004) expresses his astonishment wondering 'How do you review a book that calls for dramatic change in a traditional and key aspect of your profession?' Larsen-Freeman claims grammaring is 'the fifth skill'; the ability to use grammar structures accurately, meaningfully, and appropriately. Dickey, furthermore, sees Freeman's attempt on introducing grammaring to have 'some new and scary stuff in here. Teachers who are known as grammarians might be very uncomfortable with the message – teaching rules is not enough'. We can imagine that Abduh's tutor was equally scared not to teach grammar. Savignon (1983, p. 47) tells us the example of Montaigne who learnt Latin 'without methods, without a book, without grammar rules, without a whip and without tears'

Finishing more than one book (French novels) refers to a common trend in reading instruction known as 'extensive reading'. Pring (2011) sees that extensive reading is an approach to language learning, including foreign language learning, by the means of a large amount of reading. The learners view and review of unknown words in specific context will allow the learner to infer the word's meaning, and thus to learn unknown words. The idea behind extensive reading is that a lot of reading of interesting material that is slightly below, at, or barely above the full comprehension level of the reader will foster improved language skills.

While Abduh mentions French fictional works in this account, we have evidence from other writings that shows that he moved from extensively reading fiction to reading non fictional works. Reda (2006, p. 103) states that the Imam 'was very concerned about [reading] in Ethics, psychology, sociology, history, philosophy and education books. ...Rarely did he hear about a foreign book about Islam and Muslims and he didn't get a copy of it and read it.'

In addition to being an example of extensive reading practice, Abduh's choice of the French novels represents a selection of authentic learning materials. Harmer (1991) defines authentic texts as materials which are designed for native speakers; they are real texts; designed not for language students, but for the speakers of the language. Jordan (1997, p. 113) refers to authentic texts as texts that are not written for language teaching purposes.

Abduh used to read aloud when alone at home. This technique reflects the reading-aloud protocol. Katalin (2000) views reading in a second language as a problem-solving activity per se, because it involves considerable efforts on the reader's part to make sense of a text written in an unfamiliar code. Thus the cognitive processing required to comprehend a text written in a foreign language can easily become the subject of verbalization in a think-aloud experiment. This method of thinking and reading aloud has been used since the 1980s as a metacognitive strategy where a learner is aware of his learning procedures. It has since been used in language teaching, and other problem solving domains. Kussmaul and Tirkkonen-Condit (1995, p. 179) state the steps taken in this *monologue* protocol when translating: 'one subject talks to himself or herself while translating a text. Since talking to oneself is normally not a natural thing to do, the subjects are given a chance to get used to this behavior in a 'warming-up phase.'

Abduh's final comment on his experience affirms the moral purpose to which all his efforts are geared and from which all his innovative ideas stem. This moral purpose is defending the religion, spreading the word of God, and confronting the enemies of the nation. He has a high aim, a deep intrinsic motivation and high aspirations. It is not striking then that Michael Fullan's celebrated model of change is built upon the idea of a moral purpose. Fullan (2007, p. 3) defines a moral purpose as 'acting with the intention of making a positive difference in the (social) environment...moral purpose is the only way for large scale, sustainable reform to occur — and it is moral purpose of the highest order. Moral purpose, however, without understanding of the change process is moral martyrdom. Having innovative ideas, and being good at the change process, is not the same thing.' Imam Muhammad Abduh represents a good model of a moral purpose accompanied with a deep understanding of change in his time. His high spirit is evident not only in learning a foreign language but, moreover, in learning a dead script within the study of grammatology. Reda (2006, p. 103) points out that the Imam 'learnt the [Arabic pre-Islamic script type called] Al Musnad because he knew that some European libraries hold some ruins of the Himyaritic kingdom [in which some inscriptions were written] which shed light on the history of Arabs and Islam'

#### B. Sheikh Salman Al Ouda (1955- )

##### **A biography note:**

Al-Ouda was born in 1955 in al-Basr, near the city of Burayda in Al-Qassim in central Saudi Arabia. He spent his early years in al-Basr then moved to Burayda. At the Burayda Institute, he studied Arabic grammar, Hanbali jurisprudence and hadith under the guidance of local sheikhs. He spent his early years in al-Basr and then moved to Buraydah to study. Al-Ouda was imprisoned for five years, from 1994 until the end of 1999 due to the anti-regime content of some of his books and some of the lessons that he had given. He was released along with his colleagues and resumed his activities from his home, giving lessons weekly. Al-Ouda has stated that he is currently supporting peace and coexistence with other religions. He announced that this was a result of deeper understanding of Islamic teachings. Al-Ouda is in charge of the popular website *Islam Today*, which offers a wide variety of subject matter and material. (Wikipedia, 2014)

##### **Text (selected paragraphs)**

**When he started study in the academic institute, there was no real teaching of English. Despite his deep desire for religious education, he wanted to share public schools students' their distinction – so he enrolled as a part time student in the public intermediate school, and began to study some of its lessons. Nevertheless due to the**

parallel timing of both schools exams, he couldn't combine both types of study. In this way he missed the chance to gain the basics of the [English] language from an early time.

Even when English was established as a school subject in the academic institute, students didn't benefit from it; as the trouble makers in the class used to make strange noises when it was time for the English class ...the noise was unbearable. In addition to some whispering fatwabs issued by some sheikhs that allow cheating in the course of English! ...

[Learning] another language would give one a new linguistic system, a new thinking style...through which one can develop communication techniques; as language arts are the international train to ride for a wider and a bigger audience.

[Years later] Abul Munzir, who was a graduate of the British educational system, was leading the Zuhur prayer, when he looked back and rather than saying in Arabic "Sudu-l furaj", he said, in a rather quiet and sad voice, "close the gap, please". People preparing for the prayer smiled, while he [Ouda] found a thread to hold to, to achieve his old dream...

The controversy between the American and the British accents ...resembles the historical controversy between the Koufa and the Basrah schools in Arabic grammar..... he [Ouda] stayed, however, unable to overcome his Qassimi accent, unable to spot the differences between his own and others' pronunciation. It was not easy for him to digest a pronunciation he was not familiar with.

His learning tools: After he was interested in what cans might hold inside, he became interested in their package covers. He used to carefully examine the English sentences and phrases written outside...trying to get them in context before he does his lessons assigned by the tutor. Then he could get a big number of school books with which he interacted without a guide and in which he wrote comments, questions and answers. In addition to some short stories which represent common human background ...like *Sinbad*, *Arabian Nights*, *Cinderella*, and *the wolf and the lamb*...here you have returned a young child reading fairy tales and comic books!.. He wondered, however, if Europeans didn't find in the Arabic culture but these fairy tales to transfer into English!

Then [these learning materials] developed to an English-Arabic digital dictionary with a machine voice .... He preferred to carry it everywhere... and still remembers it as a dear piece of memory. Then he got a small radio... and placed the lever on the BCC. "*A Journey to the centre of the Earth...*, *step by step*, *Time to speak*, *the story of the three brothers*, *the lost boy*, *Make your break*, *The news: special English..etc*" [are some of the programmes he followed] as indicated in his private papers. ... He may translate some of the titles into Arabic and sometimes writes the English, their pronunciation, and their translations, not knowing why he would do so. He would listen, record appointments, write down words, and if the broadcasting is not clear would write a note "We have got nothing today!". He used to write what he didn't understand, then look up the pocket e-dictionary for it. He may write comments on some of the phrases like: "*He drinks a bottle of wine*" – *I seek refuge in Allah from you and what you drink!*.

This habit (writing comments, personal views and other information on the margins) reflects what Heritage book experts call "al tasweed = blackening – writing in black ink)...some of them may state "a book is not whitened = understood clearly, until it is blackened= commented on". ...He finished three notebooks with vocabulary items, their meanings, conjugations and etymologies written in cramped handwriting horizontally and vertically, derived from the broadcast, school books, short stories – all he considers as an important wealth, part of his personality and history, including anecdotes, stories, occasions, and comments. In this way a notebook becomes a comprehensive container of study, news, events, dates, appointments, wishes and even thoughts.

....He tried to write in Arabic funny poetry some of the English vocabulary items and their meanings...so he began to write what he hears from the broadcast in poetry...

His first lesson with the tutor ...was in 1418. His note book includes many explanations in the neat handwriting of Muahammad Al Hadhif (the tutor). These include: explanations on grammar, very much like a Al Ajroumiya<sup>5</sup>, training on writing *Cool Alphabet*...some [learners] are obsessed with finding English words of Arabic origin...clarifications on problems of tenses..., wise optimistic sayings which rip despair from the heart of a believer, like: *Pass the storm in peace, make the world a better place if you can, give him the freedom, Allah defends the oppressed...*

He insists on this matter [learning a foreign language]...since other scholars in the past could learn different languages like Imam Muhammad Abduh... ...[For him] science has no age, and his own supremacy in Arabic language and literature means that his linguistic ability is not bad, and that he is able to unlock [the English language] secrets aided with a strong will. Sitting on the desk, he write, tries, hesitates, makes mistakes, arouses laughter by his faulty pronunciation, wipes the board, does his homework... he has already been identified with the character of a schoolboy but this time he finds it more interesting.

Whenever he remembers "close the gap, please", he smiles and realizes that there are many gaps that need to be closed... he has to carry on aided with supplications to Allah.....For him, a language is...more important for

<sup>5</sup> A celebrated traditional Arabic text in grammar by Ibn Ajroum.



**preachers and cultural speakers, not only to give people [knowledge] but to take[knowledge] from them as well-it is a matter of mutual interaction... in order to narrow the gap between people and Islam- the religion of Allah.**

#### **Analysis:**

Al-Ouda wrote this account in the third person to eliminate the unintentional boastfulness that can come from repeating "I" many times. What strikes us at first in Al-Ouda's account is his high motivation and persistent trials to learn the language from an early age. "Enrolling in a public school as a part time student" was a remark of this high spirit. Like Abduh, he has a moral purpose and an early realization that language is "*the international train to ride for a wider and a bigger audience*". And like Abduh, he starts a serious study of a foreign language, only when he is above 40 (in 1418 H = 1996).

In Al-Ouda's account, a reference is made to some of the misconceptions associated with learning a foreign language; especially English by some Muslim Sheikhs. Allowing cheating in English reflects the vision of these sheikhs to English as an imperialistic language, the language of the invaders who occupied many countries of the Arab world and are still Americanizing the peoples of the religion. With the gulf war, and America's unjustified support for Israel, many Arab scholars would associate English as a language with the practices of the American administration. In this view, English is seen as a threat to the national identity, a language of disbelievers, and a waste of time (Al-Hajoori: 2011, para 2). One naïve way of facing this threat would be the negligence of such study and encouraging students not to take it seriously.

The real start of learning English was the connotations aroused from his tutor's sentence "*close the gap, please*". He took it to mean the gap in his knowledge, the gap in reaching other people of different tongues, and the gap in benefiting from the wealth of knowledge provided through a foreign language. Urged by this personal understanding, and recollecting his failure as a young boy to get a systemic study of English, Al-Ouda seizes the opportunity and embarks onto learning English.

A major language learning theory encountered in Al-Ouda's account is the role of L1 in L2 learning. L1 refers to the mother tongue and L2 refer to the second or foreign language. Methodologists have long called for a pure direct teaching of the foreign language with no interference from the mother tongue. However, Brown (2000, as cited in Nazary, 2008) claims that "first language can be a facilitating factor and not just an interfering factor". Schweers (1999, p. 7) encourages teachers to incorporate the native language into lessons to influence the classroom dynamics, and suggests that "starting with the L1 provides a sense of security and validates the learners' lived experiences, allowing them to express themselves". Similarities that exist between the mother tongue and the foreign language can lead to fruitful results and can motivate the learner to carry on in studying a language that does not seem stranger any longer. Excluding the students' L1 for the sake of maximizing students' exposure to the L2 is not necessarily productive (Dujmovic, 2007, as cited in Nazary, 2008). A large scale study by Levine (2003) in an ESL context revealed the same result. Levine concludes that "despite the prevailing monolingual principle in U.S FL classes, both the target language and the L1 appear to serve important functions" (p. 356).

Al-Ouda's use of L1 in learning L2 is evident in the similarities he jots down between Arabic and English, even if the similarities are sometimes funny and with no real linguistic value. Examples include resembling the American and the British accents to the Basrah and Koufa schools of Arabic Grammar, resembling the sounds of the word 'grammar' with the sounds of the celebrated traditional Arabic text on grammar called "Al Ajroumiya", and commenting on the obsession of some learners to search for Arabic origins of some English words.

Another important theory that is reflected in the account is "individualized learning". Reading cans covers, ads and signs is a practical practice of reading comprehension, it is visual learning and it is authentic materials use. Reading ingredients, advertisements and coupons is a great way to help students become confident and independent as they work through activities involving real-life situation. There are even some training courses in reading that are mainly based on reading ads and package covers (Boning 1978 and Remedios 2007). According to Daves et al (1996, p. 32) "*Visual learners* are those who learn primarily with their eyes. It is important for the teacher to use resources that must be read or seen: the chalkboard, posters, and bulletin boards; books, magazines, and manuals; programmed learning materials; drawings, pictures, graphs, and diagrams; films, filmstrips, transparencies, and computer monitors if available. Visual learners prefer to have written assignments, and it is wise for the teacher to provide written evaluations".

Like Abduh, Al-Ouda heads to literature, but rather than picking a full-text original novel, Al-Ouda selects some simplified readers largely based on Orientalists' view of the Arab culture. His autonomy is evident in collecting the old schoolbooks, short stories and comics used by children in different countries to undertake a serious study of these easy-to-handle materials. Depending on West's supplementary readers for different levels paves the way for Al-Ouda to carry on in this internationally used language. In these endeavors, Al-Ouda reflects the literature-based, content-based and authentic materials and learner autonomy theories discussed above.

Moving to modern learning aids represents a development in the techniques of studying a foreign language for Muslim religious scholars. Using a digital dictionary and then a radio is one of the implementation of available technology in language learning. Research has repeatedly confirmed the effectiveness of such devices in developing language skills. Using pocket e-dictionaries has proved to be an effective language learning tool. While some educators insist on paper-based dictionaries (Koren 1997; Weschler & Pitts 2000), Jian et (2009, p. 511) emphasize that if referencing a dictionary is a bottleneck in the language class, then the motivation for study and learning progress may

be hindered. If the student is allowed to use an electronic pocket dictionary, the focus and effort can be shifted away from the mechanical and laborious task of referencing the dictionary onto the actual language learning.

In addition to the digital dictionary, Al-Ouda makes use of the radio programmes. Crookall (1983, p. 155) states that “radio broadcast can foster intercultural understanding”. He (1983, p. 300) also notes that “...listening to other countries’ media may contribute a little to greater awareness of the fact that different people perceive and interpret the world in different ways. Cross-cultural communication is an area of much study and of increasing concern among L2 teachers”. The use of the BBC per se has also been reported to be highly effective in developing second and foreign language learners’ skills in English. Rybak (1980) highlights the developments in the BBC pedagogy and presentational style of language programs and also discusses the progressive attempts to combat drop outs.

What is more important than using the radio programmes, is how Al-Ouda interacted with these programmes. We notice that he used not only to write down most of what he listens to, but also to write comments on it to make it easy to remember, and fun to recall. “Seeking refuge in Allah” when writing something on *wine*, is one example of the interaction he has with the process of language learning, in addition to the lengthy Arabic sentences he writes on news concerning the Arab or the Muslim world. This personalization style (linking situations to one’s interests and real life with a critical consciousness) is a celebrated language learning and teaching strategy. Greater *personalization* requires greater participation and control over their learning in the decisions of learning.

The peak of Al-Ouda’s personalization is embodied in his detailed comments on the margins of his notebook. This in turn is highly *reflective* learning; where learners reflect on their experiences in language learning and act as contributors to the process of learning. This is also known as the *Experiential* approach in learning. Experiences of language, communication, culture and personal learning processes are essential for foreign language learning – but they need to be processed consciously for learning to take place. Learning requires an explicit awareness and understanding of what it is that needs to be learned (metalinguistic and metacognitive awareness), and why such learning is necessary. Learning is the process of creating new knowledge and understandings through the transformation of experience. Reflection plays an important role in this process by providing a bridge between practical experience and theoretical conceptualization (Kolb 1984). Experiential learning involves observing the phenomenon and doing something meaningful with it through an active participation. It emphasizes learning in which the learner is directly in touch with the phenomenon being studied, rather than just watching it or reading, hearing or thinking about it (Kohonen 2001, as cited in Mollaei & Rahnama, 2012).

Keeping a phrase notebook for recording new vocabulary items and unfamiliar expressions is another note of good attention paid to the study of a foreign language. Cramming these vocabulary notebooks with words, their meanings, their pronunciation, examples for their use, comments on similar words, etymologies, related Arabic sayings or lines of poetry- all incorporate the active learning experience. Educators have reported effective language learning results when aided with vocabulary and phrase notebooks. Vocabulary notebooks encouraged for use by EFL learners as a tool to aid them in their learning and achieve learning mastery (Fowle, 2002, Schmitt and Schmitt, 1995; Laufer and Nation, 1999). Among the 58 vocabulary learning strategies included in Schmitt’s (1997) taxonomy, keeping a vocabulary notebook is classified as a cognitive strategy within the larger division of consolidation strategies. (Walters & Bozkurt, 2009)

Writing Poetry that incorporates English vocabulary with Arabic meanings reflects a high level of musical intelligence affected by a long history of Arabic language tradition of forming difficult knowledge in sonorous rhymed lines of verses which resemble the heroic couplet technique in Neo-Classical English poetry to be easy for students to enjoy and memorize. The Multiple Intelligences theory proposed by Gardner in 1983 claims that humans have different separate types of intelligences rather than a single general ability. He identified eight types of intelligences; the linguistic, the logical, the bodily, the visual, the musical, the natural, the intrapersonal, and the interpersonal intelligences. Musical intelligence people have sensitivity to rhythm, rhyme, pitch, meter, tone, melody or timbre. Music and rhythm have been defined as powerful aids to language learning, memory, and recall.

Focusing on proverbs and wise sayings is in fact using common past experiences shared among different nations. A proverb is “a saying popularly known and repeated, usually expressing simply and concretely, though often metaphorically, a truth based on common sense or practical human experience. Dougall (2004) points out that the learning of proverbs can be a key element in the language acquisition process. ‘Refrains, idioms, and proverbs can provide a snapshot of other cultures that allows for “a more thorough understanding of both language and culture”. Leeven (2010) calls proverbs “language learning magic tools”; he states “even more magic awaits the language learner in the form of old-fashioned proverbs. Not only do they teach language but culture as well. Proverbs often embody what can be most pleasing about learning another language—a surprising change in perspective”.

A final remark on Al-Ouda’s experience is his high spirit, excessive work, and high motivation. All these are believed not to have continued with him in his imprisonment plight without aid from God. The spiritual factor cannot be undermined in the process of education and learning a foreign language in particular. Hong (2007, p. viii) conducted a qualitative study to investigate the effect of Spirituality and the Christian faith on the practices and paradigms of language teaching professionals and concluded that “the Christian faith permeates every aspect of Christian scholars’ professional development including vision, motivation, problem-solution, decision making, and personal relationships with students”. Al-Ouda’s consistent supplication and deep faith in Allah acted as a helping factor that keeps motivation high, and will strong – the will to close the gap.

#### IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

##### ***Similarities and differences between the two accounts:***

While the two accounts were written in quite different circumstances and the two experiences are rather different, certain similarities can be noticed between them. Both Imams seem to have a high inclination towards learning a foreign language. Both started learning a foreign language when they were above 40 of age. Both consider language a universal medium for reaching wide groups of people worldwide. Both have a moral purpose to achieve; namely delivering the message of Islam as well as benefiting from other peoples' wisdom. Both rely on literature as the main content in their experience and both enjoy a high linguistic ability in the mother tongue. Both scholars seem quite autonomous in their learning and seem aware of their needs and their capabilities.

On the other hand, certain important differences are also noticed between the two accounts. While Abduh seems preceding his age and using 20<sup>th</sup> century theories (like *grammaring*, CBI, authentic materials), Al-Ouda seems more influenced by his Arabic traditional culture (writing comments on the margins, forming new vocabulary in Arabic poetry, using proverbs). While Abduh seems to be in full command of his learning process that he directs the tutor to carry out certain roles, Al-Ouda seems more dependent on his tutor. While Abduh makes use of full text original novels written by French writers from the very first day, Al-Ouda resorts to simplified texts, mainly translations of Arabized fairy tales. Abduh seems to put very high levels for himself from the start, while Al-Ouda seems to go step by step in this new world, preferring to start from something he already knows to something new. While Abduh combined both reading- writing and listening-speaking in two different contexts (in Egypt and in Geneva), Al-Ouda had to depend mainly on reading and writing, and the only resource of listening would be his tutor and the BBC programmes. This limited access to the spoken language affected his speaking ability as he confesses he couldn't get rid of the *Qassimi* dialect. While Abduh discarded the traditional study of grammar from the start and focused on meaning, Al-Ouda had to write down pieces of grammatical rules and structural examples in his *confidential* notebooks. While Abduh set a duration for finishing his learning process from the start, Al-Ouda does not seem to have cared about finishing- may be because he didn't know when he would be released.

##### ***Lessons learnt and Implications:***

###### **1. For language learners**

Language learners in general and Islamic studies students in particular, who want to learn a foreign language, are advised to consider the experiences of both scholars. Making use of the rich and varied strategies will facilitate learning and empower motivation to achieve high standards of language learning. Holding a moral purpose and working towards a spiritual higher goal is an effective and successful technique for carrying on the study of the foreign language.

###### **2. For language teachers**

Understanding the nature and needs of the learners should top the priorities of a successful language teacher. These needs are the key to effective learning and teaching. Teachers are advised to discover the learning styles and the preferences of their learners so as to design learning materials that are suitable for them. Teachers can make use of some of the techniques used in the two scholars' accounts in order to enrich the learning experience of their students.

###### **3. For language course designers**

Using general language courses with people of different backgrounds does not seem to be a wise decision. Developing an ESP course for Islamic studies, religiously inclined students, Muslim scholars, preachers and Imams, should take into consideration some of the features of the language learning experiences analyzed in this study. Such a course should address areas of interest and uses enriching supplementary materials for this group of learners.

#### V. CONCLUSION

While 100 years separate between Imam Muhammad Abduh and Sheikh Salman Al-Ouda, both of their experiences in learning a foreign language reflect different aspects of the Muslim religious mentality. Successful language learning strategies take place when there is an urging need to make it happen, when there is a moral purpose that keeps motivation high, and when there is a real desire to close the gap.

## APPENDIX. ORIGINAL TEXTS IN ARABIC

## TEXT ONE

بدأت بتعلم اللغة الفرنسية عندما كانت سني أربعاً وأربعين سنة، ولكن ميلي إلى تعلم لغة أجنبية ابتداءً في أثناء الحوادث العربية فتعلمت الهجاء ثم تركته ونسبته تقريباً، وعندما سافرت إلى فرنسا أول مرة أقمت هناك عشرة أشهر.. ولم أتعلم شيئاً من الفرنسية.. أما بعد عودتي من النفي إلى مصر واشتغالي بالقضاء.. خصوصاً في الجنابات على أصول القوانين الفرنسية وجلسي بين قضاة يغلب عليهم العلم بتلك القوانين في لغتها. فقد تقوى عندي الميل إلى تعلم اللغة الفرنسية حتى لا أكون في معرفة القوانين أضعف ممن أجلس معهم مجلس القضاء.. فوجدت أستاذاً لا بأس به جاءني حاملاً كتاب نحو في يده (كرامير) فسألته ما هذا؟ فقال كتاب نحو فقلت له: "لا وقت عندي لأن ابتدي، وإنما عندي زمن لأن أنتهي" ثم ناولته قصة من تأليف "إسكندر ديماس"، وقلت له: أنا أقرأ وأنت تصلح. سافرت بعد ذلك إلى فرنسا وسويسرا عدة مرات في أيام العطلة، وكنت أحضر دروس العطلة في كلية جنيف.. ثم أضاف يقول: ثم إن الذي زادني تعلقاً بتعلم لغة أجنبية هو أنني وجدت أنه لا يمكن لأحد أن يدعي أنه على شيء من العلم يتمكن به من خدمة أمته ويقدر على الدفاع عن مصالحها كما ينبغي إلا إذا كان يعرف لغة أوروبية. كيف لا وقد أصبحت مصالح المسلمين مشتبكة مع الأوربيين في جميع أقطار الأرض؟ وهل يمكن مع ذلك لن لا يعرف لغتهم أن يشتغل للاستفادة من خيرهم للخلاص من شر الشرار منهم؟!

## TEXT TWO

يتميز الأول بالسرعة والاختصار وأكل بعض الحروف، إلى إطلاقات وتعبيرات ينفرد بها عن نظيره البريطاني الذي يفخر بعراقته ووصانته، ويجعل اللهجة الأمريكية محل سخرية وتندر. اللهجة البريطانية تتميز بالراء العجيبة في آخر الكلمات، حيث تصبح ألفاً مفخمة.. واللهجة الأمريكية تتميز بالثناء في وسط الكلمات، حيث تبدو دالاً مخففة.. وبين التخفيف الأمريكي الذي كأنه يحدث رجل الشارع.. وبين النقل البريطاني الذي كأنه مديح في نشرة الأخبار.. يكون العراك. أما هو فظل عاجزاً عن تجاوز (الأكسنت القصبي) ، وعاجزاً عن تحديد نقاط الاختلاف بينه وبين الآخرين ، وإن كان سمعه ينبو عن نطق لم يالفه.

## أدواته في الدرس عديدة :

بعد أن كانت محتويات العَلَب هي التي تعنيه ، بدا له اهتمام جديد بملصقاتها الخارجية وأغلفتها ، إذ كان يتفحص ما يكتب عليها من العبارات الإنجليزية ، ويربطها بسياقها في محاولة لترجمة الذاتية قبل أن ينتظم مع معلمه في دروسه. ثم ظفر بمجاميع من الكتب المدرسية، التي طلبها من المكتبات، وتعاطى معها بمفرده دون مرشد أو دليل، وملاًها بالتعليقات والإجابات والأسئلة. إضافة إلى قصص قصيرة هي من المشترك الثقافي البشري، إذ وجد نفسه يقرأ بلغة أخرى قصة السندباد، أو ألف ليلة وليلة، أو سندريلا، أو العازز والذئب!

## ها قد عدت طفلاً تقرأ قصص الصغار ورسم الكرتون!

وعرف أن المرء كلما بدأ عالماً معرفياً جديداً بدأت طفولته وكبر صغره .. وعاد يكتب الدرس، ويعكف على الحفظ والتجني.

## وعجب ألا يجد القوم من ثقافته العربية إلا هذه الأحدثات لينقلوها.

وحيث أنه كان يقرأ الكلمات نحتاً، كان يظن أن بعض الأحداث لم تكن موجودة داخل النسخة العربية للقصّة.

ثم تطورت إلى جهاز معجم إنجليزي-عربي، بصوت آلي، تسلل إلى غرفته بطريقة خاصة، كان يخبئه عند تركه الغرفة، إلا أنه لا يتخلص من القلق لتركه: فضّل أن يحمله في ذهابه وإيابه، خشية أن يقع في أيدي مسؤولي التنظيف والرقابة، ولا يزال يحتفظ به كذكرى عزيزة على نفسه. ثم توسعت دائرة الممنوعات إلى اقتناء المذياع، والذي أصبح موجوداً في أكثر الغرف، وتفنن الناس في إخفائه. حتى تفتقت حيلة أحدهم عن حفر داخل كتاب ضخ، وإخفاء المذياع وسط صفحاته، ثم صوّه بين الكتب بطريقة لا تخطر على بال الرقيب..

لم يكن هو من المبادرين بهذه المغامرة غير محسوبة العواقب، حتى اقتربت أن تكون عرقاً جارياً. فاقترت منه جهازاً صغيراً، ثم أخذ الإذن فيه بعد.

## ثبت المؤشر على الـ "BBC"

الهم ارزقنا القوة على تغيير ما يمكن تغييره من عيوبنا، وارزقنا الصبر على ما لا يمكن تغييره، وارزقنا الحكمة التي تميز بها بين هذا وذاك."

أعجبه هذا الدعاء وظل يردده، فانشغالاته صنعت لغرات طالما تمنى أن يسدّها، وتنافس طالما حلم برحيلها ..

-حين درس في المعهد العلمي لم يكن ثم تدريس للغة الإنجليزية ، ومع رغبته في العلم الشرعي ، أحب أن يشارك طلاب المدارس الأخرى تميزهم . واستطاع أن يسجل نفسه كمنتسب في المتوسط العامة ، وأن يذاكر دروسها ، بيد أن وقوع الامتحان في ذات الوقت حرمة من الجمع بين الدراسين ، وبذلك فانت عليه فرصة التزود في الصغر من أساسيات هذه المادة.

## وحتى بعد تقرير المادة في المعاهد العلمية لم يتمكن الطلاب من الانتفاع بها.

كان العايشون في الفصل - في معهد برودة - يصدرون الأصوات الغربية والجلجلة والصلصلة حين يحين وقتها : فهي بالذات مادة إضحاك وعبث .. يستغلها الكبار المثلثون القابعون في زاوية الفصل حيث يديرون الفوضى ، إذا صح للفوضى أن تدار ، ويديرون العبث إذا صح للعبث أن يدبر .. فيفوت الطالب الجاد أن يعطي شيئاً من تركيزه على تلك المادة آنذاك .. فالفصل صخب لا يطاق!

## هذا إلى جوار فتاوى هاسية من بعض الشيوخ ، تجيز الغش في مادة الإنجليزي.

سيح خياله في تصوّر الفرض القائمة واصطفاها ، فلن تجد نفسك في وضع أفضل مما أنت عليه الآن: لتفك رموز اللغة الأخرى ، وتقتحم أسوارها ، وتستكشف أسرارها.. فاللغة الأخرى تعطيك نظاماً لغوياً وفكرياً جديداً تفكر به وتعيشه وتطور مفاهيمك من خلاله وتطور الآليات الاتصال من خلاله فالمعارف اللغوية هي القطر العالمي للحديث إلى جمهور أكبر وأكثر والاستماع إليهم.

كان أبو المنذر يتقدمهم يوماً في صلاة الظهر ، وهو خرج المدرسة البريطانية في اللغة الإنجليزية. التفت إلى المأمومين، وعوضاً عن "تراصوا وسدوا الفرج" قال بصوته الهادئ جداً، والحزين جداً "كلوز ذ قاب بليس"، تلقف المأمومون ذلك بابتسامات بعددهم ، أما هو فكانما مدّ إليه خيطاً يمسك به لتحقيق حلمه القديم.

## اختار بمساعدة أن يعود تلميذاً ، واختار د، محمد الحضيف أستاذاً له .

أن تكون تلميذاً من جديد ليس بالأمر البين على النفس ، خاصة حين تبدأ من الألف باء ، على أن مما شد أنه لم يكن وحيداً في الأمر . فهناك الشيخ سفر الحوالي ومجموعته الذين اختاروا د، محسن العواحي أستاذاً لهم . وكان يسكن بجوارهم ، والدكتور محسن هو خريج المدرسة الأمريكية .

العراك بين الأكسنت الأمريكي ، ونظيره البريطاني على أشده في حقول التعليم ، والأصحاب يشبهونه بالخلاف التاريخي بين مدرسة الكوفة ومدرسة البصرة في النحو العربي !

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# Salinger's Depiction of Trauma in *The Catcher in the Rye*

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**Abstract**—Although J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951) is one of the most widely read novels in American literature, it has usually been prohibited in academic centers across the US from its publication. While many things were taboo and banned in 1950s America, Salinger talks about them frankly through his novel. From the time of its first publication, *The Catcher* has been seen as a depiction of trauma for many adolescents and young readers who have observed themselves opposed to the values of America. Salinger pursues a style of romantic individualism and sees society as innately corrupt. As a "trauma fiction," *The Catcher* exhibits the author's tormented relation to the war. The present study explores the root of trauma through the protagonist of the novel.

**Index Terms**—trauma, war, sex, 1950s America

## I. INTRODUCTION

*The Catcher in the Rye* begins with the sixteen years old Holden Caulfield's despair departure from what might be the last in a series of schools that fail to nurture, inspire and support him, persuaded via a troublesome odyssey in New York. The story is written from the advantage of an "adult" who wants to relive that earlier time through his following life time and criticizes himself for contentment and not knowing better. It seems to be wrong to see the fiction as solely an attempt to recapture a lost past. It seems also to be incorrect to discuss that the novel is simply about issues of generational differences. But, it seems to be more about what "adulthood" regards cultural and political role in a traumatized society for which adults feel responsible.

It is also important to understand *The Catcher in the Rye*'s popularity in relation to the history of the 1950s. Currently, critics have reconsidered the features of the 1950s as an era of optimism, uniformity, and harmony, referring to unspoken classifications, festering clashes, and hidden kinds of dissatisfaction and revolution. When many World War II soldiers happily rejoined American society, many others were suffering from psychic pain. Mental health centers developed during this era for increasing psychological complaints among soldiers and even common people. Millions of people, according to Alfred Kinsey, secretly were involved in different sexual affairs. Thus, if the Cold War raised patriotic feeling, the danger of universal destruction sustained scattered trauma, and the postwar era observed the emergence of pacifist group obligated to civil insubordination. As many Americans were not engaged in political activity during this era, for those who were dissatisfied with their lifestyles, for those who were in conflict with the American values, Holden was a misfit protagonist.

The economy of postwar was coming, and many American citizens could buy houses in the new areas. Many American people observed the necessity of defending the US and the freedom that it allegedly protected against the communist danger. In that era, however, thinkers considered patterns of popular conformity. Mass products, system of bureaucracy, and same designed suburbs, they feared, served to homogenize the people, and created what David Riesman (1950) observes as "the other-directed" human being, or what William Whyte (1956) calls the "organization man". Holden represents his individual term of disparagement, "phony," and so wants to share trauma of a conformist culture. Indeed, Holden becomes a representative of a generation who observed the destruction and experienced the trauma of the war. Similarly, many other writers after Salinger depicted the trauma and destruction of WWII. For instance, Kurt Vonnegut in *Slaughterhouse-Five* (1969) illustrates Billy, like a counterpart for Holden, Salinger, and Vonnegut himself, who experienced "birth and death many times" (Babae, WanYahya & Sivagurunathan 2014, p. 240) and accepted "war and [its] destruction" (Babae, WanYahya & Sivagurunathan 2014, p. 241). The present study traces the root of this trauma through a figure like Holden whose story is truly a reflection of a generation of fear, anxiety, and depression.

## II. SALINGER'S PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF TRAUMA

Any assessment on Salinger's success should consider the merit of his works. Like Ginsberg, Kerouac, and Burroughs, Salinger has been known as an influential literary figure. A keen advocator of American entry into the war,

Salinger tried to enlist in mid-1941 prior to America was officially in war, but his views toward the war as well as his reflection would have been typical of the era. (Hamilton, 1998, p. 69) Salinger was writing in the war. From 1940 to 1945, he published twenty-two works that half of them have war-related theme, mainly praising wartime heroism. As in 'The Last Day of the Last Furlough', the hero expresses his yearning for defending the country against invaders: "I believe in this war [...] I believe in killing Nazis and Fascists and Japs because there's no other way that I know of" (A.P. Salinger, 1944, p. 10).

According to Alexander Salinger, the war changed Salinger's "patriotic, almost romantic view of war and the military forever" (100). According to Salinger's daughter:

While the war was often in the foreground of our family life, it was always in the background. It was the point of reference that defined everything else in relation to it. [...] As long as I've known him, my father has never taken being warm and dry and not being shot at for granted. [...] The constant presence of the war, as something not really over, pervaded the years I lived at home (M. P. Salinger, 2001, p.44).

In fact, there was something more important than the loss of 'romantic' illusion. Salinger represents what transpired in the mind of his war soldiers in his post-war fiction. Salinger's life is labeled a personal experience of trauma of the Cold War. According to Felman and Laub (1992), the Second World War was the "watershed trauma of our times – not an event encapsulated in the past, but as a history which is essentially not over, a history whose repercussions are omnipresent" (p. xiv).

*The Catcher* is a reflection of Salinger's personal experience of war and trauma, and Holden is modeled based on his youth and the novel can be read as his biography. In a 1954 interview, Salinger noted "My boyhood was very much the same as that of the boy in the book [*Catcher*]" (Salinger, 1999, p.177-8).

### III. TRAUMA

By the events such as the Holocaust and the atomic bombings of Hiroshima, trauma became, according to Granofsky (1995), the experience of the second half of the twentieth century – and "the shock at the destructive potential in human depravity given free rein by technology inconceivable before 1945" leads to the "trauma novel" (p. 11).

Although philosophers totally agree on the factors leading to trauma – "a psychologically distressing event outside the range of usual human experience generating intense fear, terror, and helplessness" – also they emphasize the complicate reflections on the part of victim trying to grip traumatic shock (Granofsky, 1995, p. 16).

According to Kali Tal (1996), the subject has to "tell and retell the story of the traumatic experience, to make it "real" both to the victim and to the community" (p. 21). Also philosophers have considered how, under the influence of trauma, memories and perceptions have become suspended: "No trace of a registration of any kind is left in the psyche, instead, a void, a hole is found" (Caruth, 1995, p. 6).

Whitehead (2004) considers, in a relevant comment to Salinger, how the trauma becomes "not fully acknowledged at the time it occurs [...] and only becomes an event at some later point" (p. 6). But as proposing that a range of dysfunctional manners might be observed in trauma victims, philosophers have also considered approaches through which victims try to grip its impacts. Itzvan Deak (1997) sees trauma victims try to retreat into "idyllic memories of a mythicized past" (p. 38).

Granofsky (1995) observes a "fragmentation" of self that yields to a stage of "regression" that is able to mark a primary step toward getting back to 'normal' life, and a progress that can reinforce the trauma victim's emotions of loneliness and vulnerability (Granofsky, 1995, p. 18). Salinger's post-war work fit into the pattern of regression. Salinger's *The Catcher*, depicts such condition. Considering any parallels between Salinger's life and the protagonist of his novel, it can be claimed that Holden is "a character whose curriculum vitae is in almost every detail like the author's own" (Hamilton, 1998, p. 12).

### IV. HOLDEN'S WORLD

*The Catcher* has been usually prohibited in academic centers across the US from its publication. While many things were taboo and banned, Salinger talks about them frankly through Holden. He explains the sexual affairs of his classmates, and his clumsy encounter with a prostitute. He states, "Sex is something I just don't understand. I swear to God I don't" (p. 54). Also, Holden argues his attempts with mental disorder, "I'll just tell you about this madman stuff that happened to me around last Christmas just before I got pretty run-down and had to come out here and take it easy" (p. 59). Holden reveals that besides his neurotic parents and an unfriendly atmosphere, social hierarchy, strict teachers, and a city of prostitutes takes part in his failure. Holden suggests a critical image of postwar America in conflict with basic norms, addressing himself "sort of an atheist" and "a pacifist." Holden states, "I'm sort of glad they've got the atomic bomb invented. If there's ever another war, I'm going to sit right the hell on top of it" (p. 127)—a statement aligning the US' military policies with the suicidal motivations of a bewildered adolescent.

Holden tries to resist the force of growing up and imagine adults' responsibilities against his own values. Not able to speculate on a single vocation which he would like to get into, Holden states in response to his sister Phoebe's recommendation that he becomes a lawyer:



I mean they're all right if they go around saving innocent guys' lives all the time, and like that, but you don't do that kind of stuff if you're a lawyer. All you do is make a lot of dough and play golf and play bridge and buy cars and drink Martinis and look like a hot-shot. And besides. Even if you did go around saving guys' lives and all, how would you know if you did it because you really wanted to save guys' lives, or because you did it because what you really wanted to do was be a terrific lawyer, with everybody slapping you on the back and congratulating you in court when the goddam trial was over, the reporters and everybody, the way it is in the dirty movies? How would you know you weren't being a phony? The trouble is, you wouldn't (p. 72).

The laws, norms, and traditions in adults' vocation are so crafty, as Holden observes, adults thwart even the capacity to know one's hypocrisy or to recognize honesty from self-deception. Declining the legal vocation, Holden explains his desired profession in the most well-known lines of the text:

I keep picturing all these little kids playing some game in this big field of rye and all. Thousands of little kids, and nobody's around—nobody big, I mean—except me. And I'm standing on the edge of some crazy cliff. What I have to do, I have to catch everybody if they start to go over the cliff—I mean if they're running and they don't look where they're going I have to come out from somewhere and catch them. That's all I'd do all day. I'd just be the catcher in the rye and all. I know it's crazy, but that's the only thing I'd really like to be (p. 78).

Holden's desire to protect children from threats and let them enjoy their life as they wish shows his desire for suspending time, for inhabiting a space of young people conserved endlessly.

#### V. HOLDEN'S TRAUMA

Regarding the setting and Holden's age, social background and experience, the story considers what could be a "simpler", pre-trauma stage of life. Thus, as a "trauma fiction," *The Catcher* exhibits the author's tormented relation to the war. Whitehead (2004) states that "trauma does not lie in the possession of the individual to be recorded at will, but rather acts as a haunting or possessive influence which insistently and intrusively returns" (p. 6). As Holden shows an especial affability, also he finally addresses the entire of the society to consider some unknown hurt. Observing "the unbearable ordeal of having to endure, absorb, to take in with no end and no limit", Felman (1992) considers trauma as "unerasable and untranscendable" (p. 35-6).

Unable to forget, the victim sees the experience itself inexpressible – a side of trauma signified in Holden's story through the lack of clear references to the war – and the post-traumatic subjects come to observe the world through the lens of the trauma-inducing and reality-transforming events. Therefore, if *The Catcher* exemplifies the traumatized victim's return to the pre-trauma, that time is represented as everything except idyllic. Indeed, Holden stays in a numb state, close to suicidal depression. Seen as an example of the post-war adolescent's "spiritual odyssey", a teenager's pursuit of identity or the ambiguities in youth in the Cold War time, *The Catcher* shows the situations of injury, madness, illness, and suicide (an American coming-of-age story) (Steinle, 1991, p.128).

Holden is depicted as an isolated person who is obsessed with ideas of death and suicide, fraught with fear of disease and palsy, the roots of which can be seen in Holden's sadness over the death of Allie, his younger brother. In fact, Holden lives in a condition close to inconsolable mourning. Holden gets even more sternly persuaded of his forthcoming death, an instance of what Felman (1992) refers to as he talks of the trauma victim who fears "that fate will strike again" (p. 67).

Engaged in memories of Allie, lonely in his room, "so lonesome [...] I almost wished I was dead" (p. 42), Holden sees himself in a Manhattan hotel room alone and overwhelmed in thought of "jumping out the window" (p. 94). He is persuaded that, similar to Allie, he suffers from a deadly disease: "a tumor on the brain" (p. 51); "pneumonia" (p. 139); "cancer" that would lead to his death "in a couple of months" (p. 176). Attacked by Maurice, Holden lies on the floor and states "I was dying [...] I was drowning" (p. 93). Also, Holden makes an image of himself with a "bullet in [his] guts" (p. 135). In another point, walking about the city, Holden is affected by fear of instant extinction: a "feeling that I'd never get to the other side of the street" (p. 178). According to Felman (1992), trauma is the feeling that "one is impotent to act" (p. 35). Holden feels powerless to influence the conditions: "I thought I'd just go down, [...] and nobody'd ever see me again" (p. 178).

Clearly, Holden's identification with his dead brother sustains the story's deeper flow. Memories of Allie repeat throughout the story, lending structure to Holden's story while representing the inescapable essence of his trauma. Obviously, any of those people that he sees on his travel around Manhattan cannot create the feeling of closeness that he has with his brother and every flaw he faces which confirms that loss of Allie is very influential in Holden's life. If the importance of Allie's loss is obvious enough, it can also be seen as a projection of what in the subject is "killed off". Allie, as a brother, embodies a death that Holden is experiencing as his own. In a turning point, sitting lonely at night in Central Park, Holden has a vision of himself joining to his dead brother. Hopelessly, he presents the funeral: "I felt sorry as hell for my mother and father. Especially my mother, because she still isn't over my brother Allie yet", and continues, "I hope to hell when I do die somebody has sense enough to just dump me in the river" (p. 139–40). Declining to have funeral ceremony only confirms his state of despair and weakness. In a post-mortem imagination of himself, Holden resumes "how old Phoebe would feel if I [...] died" (p. 140).

In order to get back to his normal life, Holden would like to have communication with people. An obsessive telephone user constantly calls to arrange date and make appointment; then, Holden experiences an urgent necessity to

talk. He is striking up the conversation with everybody who wants to listen –classmates’ parents, priests, cap drivers, visitors from Seattle– and takes a particular grudge against the people who reject to reply. Indeed, lack of answer is a main fact through which he evaluates other people: “That’s the way you can always tell a moron. They never want to discuss anything” (p. 39). Although proud of some moral values, Holden chooses girls he sees by chance; makes date with his friends’ girlfriend; and has a prostitute sent to his hotel room. But even such affairs end in miscommunication and isolation. As lack communication becomes more obvious, there takes place what Krystal (1995), about trauma victim, observes as a “destruction of basic trust”, that is in others as well as oneself (p. 80)

In a story noticeably shows the reasons of Holden’s situation, it is his confirmation of his brother’s comment about the American army that an “Army practically as full of bastards as the Nazis were”, and perception of the disaster of the atomic bomb that makes him more angry because “you got to hate everybody in the world” (p. 126–128). In the story when one hears an authorial self suffering the brutalizing impact of war, Holden states: “If there’s another war, they better just take me out and stick me in front of a firing squad” (p. 127). Also, when his feelings of rage, depression and annihilation assemble, Holden says: “I’m going to sit right the hell on top of [the atomic bomb]” (p. 127). Indeed, In the allusion to atomic bomb, suicide, and mass destruction, we feel not only seemingly directed anger, but also a redirection of aggression into the self. While the story considers a society radically involved in a conflict with what is seen about the author’s uneventful years, it is exactly such “uneventfulness” which makes the more irritation that the author is in its quest. A victim who finds himself as “perpetrator” of his victimization, Salinger perceives himself as yielded to an ideological system involved in the creating of a world of unbelievable horror and trauma.

## VI. CONCLUSION

Seen as an example of trauma fiction- both in its expression of impacts particular to trauma and its silence in revealing the sources of such impacts- *The Catcher* illustrates the maneuvering by which the authorial self manifested in Holden sought to work through his tormented relationship to the war and its trauma.

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# “The End Is in the Beginning”: The Riddle and Interpretation of Ellison’s *Invisible Man*

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**Abstract**—In the prologue of *Invisible Man*, the narrator states that “the end is in the beginning” and supplements it with the metaphor of “boomerang”. More than encapsulating his experience, this essay tries to show that “the end is in the beginning” is operating in two other senses: narrative progression and thematic meaning. The narrative progression of the whole novel is epitomized and prefigured in the opening narrative. Thematically, the interpretation of the novel cannot ignore the riddle—grandfather’s deathbed advice which is given in the opening narrative and repeatedly returned to throughout the novel. As critics have turned from identity readings to political readings of the novel, the riddle is especially important and deserves more attention than it has received. To appreciate the narrative and thematic end-in-the-beginning, the essay will undertake a cognitive unpacking of the riddle and on this basis make a detailed stylistic analysis of the opening narrative.

**Index Terms**—*Invisible Man*, riddle, deathbed advice, narrative progression, cognitive, stylistic

## I. INTRODUCTION

*Invisible Man* has been acclaimed as a twentieth-century masterpiece of American fiction and has established Ralph Ellison as one of the major American writers of the century. Since its publication in 1952, it has been widely read and studied by readers and critics. There is an “enormous, existing body of critical work on *Invisible Man*.”<sup>1</sup> Various components of the novel have been showered in critical attention but the riddle—the deathbed advice is still under-explored. This could be a serious neglect, the more so when recent critics have felt, as articulated by Posnock in the introduction to *The Cambridge Companion to Ralph Ellison*, that “the existential or ‘identity reading’ of *Invisible Man* is inadequate: biased to the inward and psychological, this reading ignores the political, thus sundering what Ellison entangles.”<sup>2</sup> Amid the heightened awareness of political significance of the novel, the deathbed advice is especially important, for the political message of the whole novel has it as an important part. It is a recurring motif in the novel. The novel-memoir begins and ends with it, with the wiser protagonist-narrator at his endpoint of growth trying to seek lessons from it: trying to “study the lesson of [his] own life,”<sup>3</sup> he confesses, “my mind revolved again and again back to my grandfather. And . . . I’m still plagued by his deathbed advice . . .” (p.560). His mind reverts to his grandfather and his advice at important stages of his life, on his fateful drive with Norton (p.40), at the moment of expulsion from college (p.144), when hunting jobs in New York (p.167), before his first Brotherhood speech (p.327), when he contemplates turning against Brotherhood (p.497), in the final event of Harlem Riot (p.552). The advice has been a constant puzzle for him and has been respectfully left as such by otherwise perceptive critics. It has to be left as a puzzle to the protagonist, so that he could “boomerang” a long way before he finds himself (p.560), which process makes up the novel. But if we leave it as a puzzle, we would fail to see the author’s design for it and much of our critical interpretation of the novel would miss the mark. This essay is an attempt to help fill the gap by making a careful cognitive analysis of the deathbed advice using blending theory. On this basis, the essay discusses the interpretation of the novel in terms of its thematic meaning and narrative progression.

In the past two decades, cognitive-stylistics has been gaining momentum and has played an important role in opening the field of literary criticism to interdisciplinary investigation.<sup>4</sup> Cognitive analyses have been shown to illuminate literary interpretation in meaningful ways. In the present case, the cognitive unpacking of the riddle contributes to our understanding of the thematic meaning and narrative progression of the novel.

## II. UNPACKING THE RIDDLE

Blending theory as developed by Fauconnier and Turner<sup>5</sup> establishes that conceptual integration or conceptual blending is a basic mental operation that is indispensable not only for intellectual work, but also for basic everyday thought. It plays a decisive role in human thought and action and is at work even in the simplest mental events in

<sup>1</sup> Callahan, “introduction,” 12.

<sup>2</sup> Posnock, 5.

<sup>3</sup> Ellison, *Invisible Man*, 559. All subsequent references are to the Vintage Books edition of *Invisible Man* published by Random House in 1972 and page numbers are enclosed in brackets after each quotation.

<sup>4</sup> See Semino and Culpeper, (2002); Stockwell, (2002); Gavins and Steen, (2003); Brône and Vandaele, (2009).

<sup>5</sup> Fauconnier and Turner, *The Way We Think*, (2002).

everyday life. At first glance, the grandfather's deathbed advice is no more than a crude metaphoric view of black life befitting an uneducated black peasant, but a closer look indicates that a lot more is going on and blending theory enables us to see that the old man's mind is engaged in what could be described as constructing a complex integration network. If we content ourselves, as most previous critics do, with squeezing a general import from the deathbed advice based on our initial impressions, we will miss its hidden complexity and function, and the puzzle will remain a puzzle not only to the protagonist. The deathbed advice is as follows:

Son, after I'm gone I want you to keep up the good fight. I never told you, but our life is a war and I have been a traitor all my born days, a spy in the enemy's country ever since I give up my gun back in the Reconstruction. Live with your head in the lion's mouth. I want you to overcome 'em with yeses, undermine 'em with grins, agree 'em to death and destruction, let 'em swoller you till they vomit or bust wide open. (p.16)

To understand the advice requires constructing two blending networks. In the first network, we have the input space of black life as our focus of understanding and the input space of war as the other framing input. The war space contains the topological elements: traitor, spy, enemy's country, surrender of arms, with traitor/spy and enemy as participants. Let's first focus on "spy". In the war space, the spy is engaged in a most dangerous mission and can fulfill his mission only by living among the enemy, pretending to be one of them, winning their trust, while disguising his real identity, allegiance and intention. His intention can only be achieved if he succeeds in masking, in deception. A successful spy, so to speak, should be a master of masking, masking being necessary training and requirement for him. The grandfather who has been a spy for years since he lays down arms without being caught and killed is arguably a successful spy, a master of masking. There are at least two aspects to this. On the one hand, he moves in the enemy's country with dexterity, manipulating the sympathy of the enemy; on the other, he can never be the man he feels like being, never afford to be true to himself, which sacrifices are required of a spy.

As is often the case with spoken language, "a spy in the enemy's country ever since I give up my gun" should be a more accurate formulation of his thought than the earlier wording "a traitor all my born days", which is, not surprisingly, more emotionally loaded. Succinctly, he is a traitor or more accurately a spy since he surrenders. In the war space, the sheer act of surrendering makes a soldier traitor (to his people and cause), to all appearances. But there is another possible sense to traitor as well. If the soldier after surrendering and winning the enemy's trust secretly maneuvers against them without their knowledge, by being a spy, he can be said to be a traitor to the enemy. Consequently, the self-identifying spy-traitor is loaded with quite different emotions. In the first sense, he is revealing the true man he always is—the misunderstood man finally comes into his own; in the second, he is disclosing a fatal secret which has to be reserved for the last minute. What is brought out by our cognitive structuring of the war space is that, in a nutshell, there are two possible utterer meanings of "traitor", two voices speaking through it, so to speak, and there is no reason for us to be led by the naïve protagonist to which one he recognizes. The grandfather's "traitor" does not have to be relative to the enemy, a point espoused by O'Meally when he reads the life as "a war wherein to be a good soldier, snapping to attention and obeying all orders, is to work against one's people and oneself."<sup>6</sup> The protagonist says, "he had been the meekest of men" (p.16). That means he has been a completely different person from the militant former-self who fought the enemy with his gun. But all turns out to be false appearance as revealed clearly by "spy": he actually has never changed, he is the same militant man as before, only his militancy is put into the secret work of spying and he holds steadfastly to his cause and his people, with or without arms. In the focus input which we are concerned with, our knowledge of the context gives us the schematic story of the freed black man living his life in the American South amid racial hostility from the white man, that black living revolving around the focal point of white-black relationship. In this input, we have a participant—the grandfather who is a former slave living his freed life as a meek peasant, "a quiet old man who never made any trouble" (p.16). In the cross-space mapping of the two input spaces, the white man and the enemy, the meek black peasant and the traitor/spy, American South or America and the enemy's country are respectively counterparts. In the blend, we have black life as war and black living as fighting in disguise (and suffering in silence if we look at it from the other side).

The second blending network also has the input space of black life. The other input space is organized by the frame of fight between man and beast. The black son who would follow his father's steps from the black-life input is the counterpart of the beast fighter in the beast-fighting input, the white man is the counterpart of the beast and black living is fighting beast. In factual terms, no normal man will be so mindlessly brave as to put his head in the lion's mouth to fight it. It might be contemplated as a different space, that of a circus show of lion tamer with his lion. But that space has to be replaced by beast-fighting to achieve congruence with other spaces in the integrated network. We will see that this act makes sense in the conceptual blend of beast-fighting and man-fighting. There is a cross-space mapping between the beast-fighting input and the man-fighting input from the first blending network. The schematic structure of a weak party fighting against a strong party is common to the two input spaces. The spy who risks his life in the most dangerous place of the enemy territory maps onto the daring fighter who exposes himself to the greatest possible danger, and the enemy who is in the position of power and control and can inflict instant death maps onto the lion who can kill and eat the human prey at any minute. In the blend, the advised way of black living is therefore a daring entry into dangerously close contact with the white man. This is an important message not only of the deathbed advice but of the

<sup>6</sup> O'Meally, "The Rules of Magic," 165.

whole novel.

Up to now, we have seen a multiple blend with three input spaces. The counterparts are as follows:

MAN-MAN WAR	BLACK LIFE	MAN-BEAST FIGHT
spy	black man	human prey
enemy	white man	lion
enemy's country	American South or America	lion's mouth or body

The linguistic form of the last sentence, with vocabulary and syntax from the three input spaces, explicitly points to this multiple blend. “Overcome”, “undermine” and “to death and destruction” are typical vocabulary from the input space of war, “overcome” and “undermine” being what the spy is actually doing and “to death and destruction” his ultimate goal. As we know, the spy in the war space is not typically marked by yes-saying, grinning and agreeing: his trick is to pass as a member of the enemy, not to be upheld as a model of yes-sayer. Therefore, “yeses”, “grins” and “agree” are more likely from the input space of black life, being advised behaviors for the black son. “Let ’em swoller you till they vomit or bust wide open” is obviously from the input space of lion fighting and this “them” can only be understood to refer to the lion but the same “them” in the earlier part of the sentence “overcome ’em with yeses, undermine ’em with grins, agree ’em to death and destruction” cannot have the same reference: the uniform use of the deictic “them” in the sentence integrates lion, enemy, white man into a unit, hence the existence of the multiple blend.

In the multiple blend of the advice, the white man/enemy/lion is threatening the existence of the black man/spy/prey, and the advised behavior for the black man is to agree, yes, grin/keep up the disguised good fight/enter the lion’s body, and the black man will come out the winner. It is significant that in this life-and-death fight, the victor wins by spying, by apparently yielding not by direct confrontation and he appears the one destroyed but turns out the invincible. In reality, in the Southern power structure, the black is the weak party, vulnerable to death and destruction by the white man. The grandfather’s advice is to keep on fighting against the white man, not by direct confrontation, not by separating from them, but by living in close contact with them, getting accepted as members by masking and acting meek, in the belief that in due course the black will win. If we relate the global understanding of black life brought by this complex integration network with the historical context of black struggle, we can come to the understanding that, first and foremost, the grandfather does not opt out of the American society: he is anti-segregation and pro-integration. He does not approve of open warfare, violence, confrontation, to which the black radicals readily resort. He does not approve of bleaching their Negro souls either. His scheme is to accept the status quo and get accepted, and then gradually undermine it.

How to get it done? This is where the power of the novel lies: the answers lie with readers. Instead of faulting Ellison for offering no political resolution, we should see the potential scheme for action sounded in the riddle, which will become clearer as we move on. The readers are left with an invitation for “improvisation”, for creating the kind of society they would like to live in, as the “society [is] caught in the process of being improvised out of the democratic ideal,”<sup>7</sup> rather than with a troubling lack of political resolution.<sup>8</sup>

Significantly, the blending serves to add intentional framing to black living, the intentionality here involving persistent resistance against the dominating group, militancy under the guise of meekness, courage, strategic and deceptive use of yeses and grins, endurance, and steadfast hope and belief. Whether it is to live with the head in the lion’s mouth or to be a spy in the enemy’s country, it requires enormous courage. That the old man tells his son to keep up the good fight he has been engaged in until death implies that it may take generations for them to achieve their end, and the invoking of traitor, spy, enemy from our encyclopedic knowledge of war aggrandizes it as a cause of a people rather than an affair of some individuals. It takes persistence, endurance, unswerving faith, etc. to fight for such a cause. Besides, to be in the lion’s body until the lion throws one up is to fight and wait steadfastly and hopefully for the final day of light, of freedom. The intentionality is further intensified by biblical allusions. Note that the grandfather signifies upon biblical text, as Paul instructs Timothy to “fight the good fight of faith,”<sup>9</sup> he asks his son to “keep up the good fight,” and while God frequently delivers his believers from the lion’s mouth, he wants his son to “live with [his] head in the lion’s mouth.” The biblical text is, in Gates’s sense, repeated with a black difference<sup>10</sup>: their faith is not in God but in their cause and final victory, and their hope for delivery is not placed in God but in their own power.

Not engaged with resolving the meaning of the advice, the present cognitive analysis is about spelling out the largely unconscious cognitive processes involved in constructing the advice. That explains its greater explanatory power. For one thing, it enables us to see that some interpretations of the advice are too simplistic to capture its hidden meanings. For example, the reading of the advice as “double message of humility and enmity, seeming accommodation and inner resistance”<sup>11</sup> misses layers of meaning and virtually puts the grandfather in the same group with the scoundrel power-monger Bledsoe, who, hiding his inner resistance before whites, uses his seeming humility or accommodation to win power to oppress blacks. For another, this cognitive analysis, coupled with detailed stylistic analysis, enables us to

7 Ellison, *Collected Essays*, 466.

8 Cheng, “Politics of Melancholia,” 135. Cheng reports, “many critics in Ellison’s time as well as in our own have been troubled by what appears to be the lack of political resolution in *Invisible Man*.”

9 1 Timothy 6:12 (King James Version).

10 See Henry Louis Gates, Jr., *The Signifying Monkey*, xxii–xxiii.

11 Dickstein, “Ralph Ellison, Race,” 135.

see the narrative of the opening chapter and of the whole novel in a new light.

### III. THE RIDDLE UNIFIES THE OPENING NARRATIVE IN IRONIC COUNTERPOINT

The opening chapter both begins and ends with grandfather and his words, which frame the large portion of the narrative of the protagonist and the battle royal. On the basis of our cognitive unraveling of the riddle, a detailed stylistic analysis will reveal them to be in ironic counterpoint, which unifies the opening chapter.

Let's first examine the protagonist's reaction to the advice. It not only reveals his current state of consciousness, but also, structurally, foreshadows plot development of the novel. The protagonist is puzzled by the advice, because "grandfather had been a quiet old man who never made any trouble, yet on his deathbed he had called himself a traitor and a spy" (p.16). In other words, what puzzles him is the incongruity between, to use a simple dichotomy, appearance and reality implicated by the advice. In his idealization, appearance is reality. So, from grandfather's words, he makes out a simple equation: meekness is treachery, therefore danger. His puzzle reveals him to be naïve and sincere, that is, in terms of his beliefs about white society.<sup>12</sup> At a deeper level, his puzzle is his refusal to face the reality of the bankruptcy of the accommodation strategy for social climbing announced by his grandfather on his deathbed. Blinding himself to the reality, he clings to his single-minded belief in white philanthropy. When he was praised by white men for his "desirable conduct", he felt guilty that "in some way [he] was doing something that was *really* against the wishes of the white folks that if they had understood they would have desired [him] to act just the opposite" and he was afraid that "some day they would look upon [him] as a *traitor* and [he] would be lost."<sup>13</sup> He "was considered an example of desirable conduct—just as [his] grandfather had been" and his grandfather had been "the meekest of men" (p.16). Clearly, the desirable conduct is "meekness". Recall that his grandfather advises his son and grandchildren to make strategic and deceptive use of yeses and grins, to wear the mask of meekness. It is exactly for its false appearance that the old man advises the "desirable conduct". Ironically, the protagonist wants appearance to fit reality for white men: he wants the desirable conduct to be "really" desirable to them.

More revealingly, he unthinkingly takes "traitor" as betraying white men. As suggested earlier about "traitor", there are two voices in this word; the voice the protagonist automatically seizes on reveals not just his comprehension of a single word, but more importantly his point of view on the world, his belief system. His presupposition shows that he automatically pledges loyalty to white men and judges from their perspective, so grandfather's wisdom becomes a "curse" (p.17), holding him back from relishing white men's approval without feeling guilty to them. Two generations removed from his grandfather, he drifts in the opposite direction. While his grandfather advises double-dealing with white men, to accomplish "no" through saying "yes", ironically, he takes pains to do just the opposite: he tries to be true to his words, which effort can be seen in his speech-making. On graduation, he made an "oration in which [he] showed that humility was the secret, indeed, the very essence of progress" (p.17). Using "oration" for a graduation speech is inappropriate, inflated rhetoric, showing the excessive importance he attaches to his speech. The verb "show" is a revealing word, through which we know the protagonist actually tries to be true to his words, to match his doing with saying, and this "showing" endeavor is carried over to the ensuing episode of battle royal and is cast in an ironic highlight.

As is already clear, the naïve protagonist stands as an ironic contrast to his traitor-spy grandfather. Missing the contrast between them may lead to misguided interpretations that deprive the protagonist of individuality. A case in point is an interpretation of the advice that says "these then will be the tactics the Negro will employ for survival... He will pretend to agree to his invisibility" and the novel goes on to record "the hero's various initiation rites into invisibility."<sup>14</sup> The critic uses "the Negro" to designate a people, an undifferentiated mass, including the protagonist, and he takes the advice as a dictate that this undifferentiated mass will inevitably and uniformly follow. An unarguable exception is the protagonist himself, who will not employ the advised tactics. By putting the protagonist in the same mass with the grandfather and everyone else, the critic fails to see his individuality and reduces him to invisibility, missing the magnitude of meaning the characterization of the protagonist has for the novel.

The major scene presented in the opening chapter is the battle royal. Put simply, the plot of battle royal is: a group of black boys are blindfolded and forced to fight each other for the entertainment of a prominent white audience. This plot has rich racial connotations. As Ellison reveals, "It is a ritual in preservation of caste lines."<sup>15</sup> "It was a rite which could be used to project certain racial divisions into the society and reinforce the idea of white racial superiority."<sup>16</sup> With its images burning into readers' minds, it is a structurally and thematically important episode. It encapsulates the Southern racial reality and the whole world of the novel. Many critics have acknowledged the importance of the battle royal. The scene is "a prefiguration of almost everything else in the novel,"<sup>17</sup> or "a great part of the novel, indeed, is in that initial episode."<sup>18</sup> As Baker Jr. observes, most of the images and themes of battle royal scene recur in slightly altered forms

<sup>12</sup> He is capable of trickery; for example, in the battle royal, he tries to bribe Tatlock to pretend to lose to him.

<sup>13</sup> Ellison, *Invisible Man*, 16-17, (emphasis mine).

<sup>14</sup> Margolies, "History as Blues," 134-5.

<sup>15</sup> Ellison, *Shadow and Act*, 175.

<sup>16</sup> Ellison, *Going to the Territory*, 49.

<sup>17</sup> Vogler, "Somebody's Protest Novel," 76.

<sup>18</sup> Klein, "Ralph Ellison," 114-5.

throughout the narration<sup>19</sup>. Although the episode is thematically most important, its positioning immediately after the deathbed-advice-imparting scene seems merely a structural arrangement based on time sequence and place of occurrence, and the totality of them, i.e. the opening chapter, no more than a preponderant assembly of two most important events. But our unraveling of the deathbed advice enables us to see the later event in a new light. The battle royal is more than an event that comes later in plot development; viewed in connection with the deathbed advice, it is an ironic development of the latter.

Before battle royal started, the black boys “had words” (p.18), i.e. they had a verbal fight. The stylistic detail “had words” appears irrelevant to the plot development but if we examine it in relation to earlier textual details, i.e. the fighting theme of the deathbed advice, we can see that the inter-racial warfare of the deathbed advice is given an ironic rendering in intra-racial verbal fight. Moreover, the plot carries this irony to dramatic effect—at the battle royal, they put up a bloody physical fight. A close reading of the text brings a minor detail into our attention: in the fight, the protagonist “glimpsed a boy violently punching the air and heard him scream in pain as he smashed his hand against a ring post. For a second [he] saw him bent over holding his hand, then going down as a blow caught his unprotected head” (p.23). The textual expenditure on this boy seems to be for the purpose of making fun of the pitiable boy’s misaimed punch. Three pages later, after the fight, appears a sentence “One boy whimpered over his smashed hand.” This detail echoes with the earlier description of the boy. The continuous narratorial attention to the boy does more than furnish a complete story of an unnamed boy for our laughter: it carries the irony through. The intended target of the boy’s punch is the other black boys and he puts so much force into it that he still whimpers over it after the fight. The inter-racial warfare of the deathbed advice is ironically and forcefully acted out in intra-racial fight. Instead of fighting against white men, the black boys are engaged in fighting among themselves, in black-against-black fight. The apparently casual detail of the boy is a subtle stylistic means to enforce the irony that the boys fight against each other with such force as against the deadliest enemy. The battle royal is actually an ironic enactment of the “good fight” advised by the grandfather.

Amid their fighting, intimate access to the protagonist’s thoughts is given in two elaborate presentations of free indirect thought. One occurs when he was in the middle of fierce fighting. “I began to worry about my speech again. How would it go? Would they recognize my ability? What would they give me?” (p.24) From this, we can see the importance he attaches to his speech and to the judgment of whites. The other is: “I was confused: Should I try to win against the voice out there? Would not this go against my speech, and was not this a moment for humility, for nonresistance?” (p.25) This occurs when he was about to defeat his rival left in the ring with him to slug it out for the winner’s prize. Hearing a white voice yelling that he had his money on the other boy, the protagonist was confused and dropped his guard. A blow to his head settled his dilemma for him. The plot here makes the protagonist a ludicrous figure; in this sense, “He is more a comic than a tragic hero.”<sup>20</sup> His thinking “Would not this go against my speech, and was not this a moment for humility, for nonresistance?” links with earlier details: his interpretation of the advice, his graduation speech in which “he showed that humility was the secret, indeed, the very essence of progress” (p.17). As analyzed earlier, “show” means that he tries to match his behavior with his words, which endeavor continues here. He still wants to “show” the humility he preaches in his speech and this “showing” endeavour is ironically crowned with a blow to his head.

When we examine his speech in relation to his grandfather’s deathbed advice, rather than by itself, we find that the speech is an ironic echo of the advice. The subject of the speech is also inter-racial relationship, but the theme is “humility”, directly contradicting the fighting theme of the advice. His speech advocates making friends with the next-door neighbor—the Southern white man, while his grandfather advises secretly making enemies with the white man. Most revealingly, the mature narrator’s comment on his younger self’s gulping down blood while continuing his speech is “What powers of endurance I had during those days! What enthusiasm! What a belief in the rightness of things!” (p.30). This piece of narratorial wisdom reveals the ludicrous misplacement of the younger protagonist’s “endurance”, “enthusiasm” and “belief”, ironically echoing the intentionality that the grandfather advises for the fight against the white man, placing the protagonist under ironic spotlight.

Let’s examine in more detail how the protagonist and other black boys are treated during the battle royal. They are “rushed up” to the front of the ballroom, “pushed” into place (p.18), shouted at and provoked to fight each other. Blindfolded, sweat-washed, they stumble about “like drunken dancers” (p.23), fighting hysterically. At last, they are fooled to grab fake money from an electrified rug. They are told to be “on their knees” around the rug and called on to pick up the money. As they try to get themselves free of the electrocution, they are “pushed” onto the rug, or even “lifted” and “dropped” on the charged rug (p.27). And the white audience roars with laughter at their painful contortions. The way they are handled reminds us of the way animals are handled in a circus. Like animals in a circus show, the boys are manipulated and fooled to give the audience fun. The battle royal is virtually a circus show, a farce, staging amid an anarchic atmosphere of noisy excitement the performances of innocent black boys who are all along unaware that they are the performers. The stylistic details function to foreground it. The white blonde dancer who is exposed to the view of black boys for their humiliation, who is chased and tossed by white men, is depersonalized just like the protagonist’s group. “Turned into something less than human—beast, mask, object,” the treatment she receives is “a

<sup>19</sup> Baker Jr., “A Forgotten Prototype”.

<sup>20</sup> O’Meally, “The Rules of Magic,” 182.

counterpart to the depersonalizing of the hero himself.”<sup>21</sup> The black boys and the naked blonde are connected in their common depersonalizing, in their manipulation as animals, as the protagonist finally makes the connection, “I saw the terror and disgust in her eyes, almost like my own terror and that which I saw in some of the other boys” (p.20). Dehumanized in a like manner, at the money-grabbing section, a boy was “lifted into the air, glistening with sweat like a circus seal, and dropped” (p.27). Providing insight into their treatment is the dream the protagonist had at the end of day, which the narrator reveals he “was to remember and dream again for many years after. But at that time [he] had no insight into its meaning” (p.33). It indicates that the dream is an unconscious projection of insight into his experience. “I dreamed I was at a circus with [grandfather] and that he refused to laugh at the clowns no matter what they did” (p.33). The insight this dream affords is that the battle royal is in fact a circus show and the black boys are the clowns, which is why the grandfather refuses to laugh at the clowns.

Depersonalized and dehumanized as clowns unknowingly, the protagonist preaches “humility is the secret of progress” in his speech. Being a clown himself, the protagonist called his rival in the boxing ring “stupid clown” (p.25). What foregrounds his ignorance and naivety even more dramatically is the fact that he takes secret pride in his intelligence. He prides himself on his intelligence and hence feels superior. He thinks his intelligence marks him off from the other boys, so he attaches great importance to his speech which could show his superior intelligence. But the importance he attaches to his speech is given an ironic comment by the fact that his speech was “almost forgotten” as part of the program. When he was finally allowed to deliver his speech, the white audience paid him no attention, talking and laughing until he accidentally blurted out “equality”. He believes that “only these men could judge truly [his] ability” (p.25), but ironically, his judges are not there to judge his ability but to see how well he accepts “his place”, as a man warned “you’ve got to know your place at all times” (p.31) at his accidental slip of “equality”. His intelligence is treated by the white audience as the target of mockery. He thinks his intelligence differentiates him from the group of “tough” boys but ironically, he is recognized only by his color: he was there to give the speech but was recruited on the spot to take part in the fighting and his speech-giving was almost forgotten as an arrangement. He is treated just as the other black boys, “crowded together in the servants’ elevator” (p.18). He thinks his intelligence distinguishes him from his “peasant” grandfather, so after being awarded with a briefcase for his speech, he stood beneath his grandfather’s photograph, carrying the awarded briefcase in hand, and “smiled triumphantly into [grandfather’s] stolid black peasant’s face” (p.32). The use of the epithet “peasant” shows clearly his sense of superiority based on his belief in his intelligence. The adjunct “triumphantly” shows his delight at his success brought by his intelligence. But his grandfather turns out to be the more intelligent one and he is the one mocked for ignorance, which is projected into his dream and takes him years to realize.

This is the starting point of the hero’s journey of life in white society which makes up the novel. He starts out as a naïve boy with illusions both in white society and in his intelligence, which is shown clearly in the above analysis of the battle royal. As the analysis of the opening narrative shows, the hero and the battle royal are in ironic counterpoint to the grandfather and his deathbed advice. As the novel later makes clear, these two points span the journey of the hero: the distance between them is what he has to travel in order to achieve growth.

#### IV. THE RIDDLE AND NARRATIVE PROGRESSION OF THE NOVEL

In the process of the hero’s growth, the deathbed advice has a significant role to play. Although he tries to forget the advice, his mind keeps reverting to it at critical stages of his life. His reaction to the advice marks his stage of growth. He does not really grow until he accepts his past and the advice. As the author Ralph Ellison points out, “[grandfather] represents the ambiguity of the past for the hero, for whom his sphinxlike deathbed advice poses a riddle which points the plot in the dual direction which the hero will follow throughout the novel.”<sup>22</sup> As the hero goes in one direction, his growth goes in the other. As his life progresses forward, he will have to look backward, to restructure his past. His dismissal of the advice marks his pre-invisible days, days when one set of his illusions is replaced by another: from his fateful drive with Norton to his expulsion from college, his illusions in white philanthropy are replaced by illusions in the goodwill of black leadership, which are in turn replaced by his illusions in raceless politics when he joins the political organization of Brotherhood. When he finally gets disillusioned with Brotherhood, his real growth begins as he starts to embrace his past and the deathbed advice. His growth from “illusion to reality”<sup>23</sup> is the process of his coming to terms with the advice. He makes a literal translation of the advice to his situation with Brotherhood. He starts yessing the white men and confirming their decisions in order to destroy them. But it is he and his black folks who turn out to be the destroyed in the final event of Harlem Riot. He reflects, “my grandfather had been wrong about yessing them to death and destruction or else things had changed too much since his day” (p.552). At last in the epilogue, when the narrator has recounted the whole course of his life, he realizes that in trying out his grandfather’s advice, he has taken the advice literally, “perhaps he hid his meaning deeper than I thought... Could he have meant—hell, he *must* have meant the principle, that we were to affirm the principle on which the country was built and not the men...” (pp.560-561).

<sup>21</sup> Langman, “Reconsidering ‘Invisible Man’,” 122.

<sup>22</sup> Ellison, *Shadow and Act*, 70.

<sup>23</sup> Ellison, *Collected Essays*, 219.



In the light of the unpacking of the deathbed advice, we are in a position to see that how the advice is interpreted tells us more about the hero's state of consciousness than about the meaning of the advice. The function of the advice lies in its being reacted to. As our unpacking shows, the advice is on inter-racial relations and the intentional framing achieved by the blending is that the inter-racial warfare is a cause for generation after generation and not an affair of some individual men. It is not difficult for us to see that the hero, when carrying out the advice literally to destroy the Brotherhood, does not yet see the grand racial dimensions of the advice. He thinks within the confines of individual men and instant gains. In the epilogue, at the very end of the story, we see the protagonist-narrator finally comes to the understanding that the advice is beyond individual men, as he says "we were to affirm the principle...not the men" (p.561). On the other hand, as the narrator puts special emphasis on the principle and the interrelatedness of their fates, as he reflects, "weren't we *part of them* as well as apart from them and subject to die when they died?" (p.562), we can see that the narrator is re-accentuating the deathbed advice in a democratic context—he is openly polemical. This is part of the reason for critics' impression that the affirmativeness of the epilogue is "desperate, empty, unreasonable, and programmatic optimism"<sup>24</sup> or "sudden, unprepared and implausible."<sup>25</sup> Moreover, his hinting at the deeper meaning of the advice and his acknowledgement of his inability to figure it out, "I can't figure it out; it escapes me" (p.562), may well be an invitation for readers to dig into it; that is where the political power of the advice lies. Its unresolvedness invites improvisations.

## V. CONCLUSION

This essay has applied blending theory to the unraveling of the riddle—grandfather's deathbed advice in *Invisible Man*. On the basis of the unpacking, we are able to see in a new light the narrative structure of the opening chapter and narrative progression of the whole novel. The opening narrative, which consists of advice-imparting and battle royal, progresses on the logic of time only superficially; at a deeper level, the hero and the battle royal are in ironic counterpoint to the grandfather and his deathbed advice and these two points span the whole journey of the hero. The opening narrative epitomizes and prefigures the narrative progression of the whole novel. The novel returns to the advice at the end and highlights it as an unresolved riddle. Thematically, this is an invitation for political improvisation out of the advice.

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<sup>24</sup> Klein, "Ralph Ellison," 109.

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# Measuring the Lexical Richness of Productive Vocabulary in Iranian EFL University Students' Writing Performance

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**Abstract**—This quantitative study aimed at measuring L2 lexical richness of productive vocabulary in the written production of Iranian EFL university students. In fact, this work was conducted to find out how rich the productive vocabulary of Iranian EFL university students is. Productive vocabulary knowledge is to express meaning through speaking or writing, retrieve and produce the appropriate spoken or written word form (Nation, 2001). Considering the importance of size and level of this knowledge among language learners, 210 writing samples such as final examinations and homework assignments of EFL undergraduate students majoring translation at BA level in semesters 2, 4, 6, and 8 at Islamic Azad University, Khorasgan branch, were analyzed by LFP (a tool to measure lexical richness in written texts). The generated profiles matched with available vocabulary frequency lists. The results of this work indicated an increase in the students' ability to use their lexical knowledge throughout years of study at university. However, this knowledge is under the suggested threshold proposed by recent studies. The findings of the research can shed light on the relationship between vocabulary growth and different input conditions. The results of this work can provide insights for language teachers and program planners in developing appropriate materials for enriching vocabulary among learners more effectively.

**Index Terms**—lexical richness, productive vocabulary knowledge

## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. Overview

It is believed that vocabulary is the key component of language proficiency and provides much of the basis for how well learners speak, listen, read, and write. It is also claimed that without an extensive vocabulary and strategies for acquiring new vocabulary, learners often achieve less than their potential and maybe discouraged from making use of language learning opportunities around them (Richards & Renandya, 2002).

Second language learners who know less than 1000 word families have difficulty in comprehending and understanding the inferences of a normal text. The same problem exists when they listen to a speech. Even though many words can be recognized but many of them cannot be recalled quickly enough to enable fluent comprehension.

There are two major areas of interest in assessing the vocabulary knowledge of learners. The first one is assessing vocabulary size of learners which is referred to as assessing breadth of knowledge, and the second one is assessing quality of vocabulary knowledge which is referred to as assessing depth of knowledge (Anderson & Freebody, 1981).

Most of the studies have been based on the amount of vocabulary a second language learner needs. It is suggested that although a language makes use of a large number of vocabularies, not all of these vocabularies are equally useful. Some researchers define usefulness in word frequency, that is, how often the word occurs in normal use of the language. The most frequent 10 words account for around 25% of the running words in spoken and written use. The most frequent 1000 words account for around 75% of the running words in formal written texts. Therefore, it is essential to choose carefully what words to pay attention. For these reasons a distinction is made between the high frequency words of a language (Laufer & Nation, 1999).

We all have the experience of being able to understand a word when we see it in a text or hear it in a situation, but not being able to use it in producing language. This shows that there are different degrees of knowing a word. Receptive vocabulary knowledge means being able to recognize one of the aspects of knowledge through reading or listening, and productive knowledge means being able to use it in speaking or writing. Therefore, it is clear that without knowing a basic vocabulary there is little we can do. In this study the ability of Iranian EFL students to utilize their vocabulary

knowledge is on the focus. The attempt is to measure their vocabulary size during their education and examine if their language proficiency is compatible with their productive vocabulary knowledge.

As it was expected EFL students possess a high level of lexical richness at the end of their B.A. courses comparing with early stages of the education. It was intended to study whether it is true or not, and if it is to what extent they can utilize them efficiently. This investigation attempted to find out if lexical richness in its productive point of view changes with the increase of proficiency.

### *B. Statement of the Problem*

The majority of students learning a second or foreign language considers vocabulary as their major priority and agrees that most of their difficulties in the receptive and productive use of language arise from their inadequate vocabulary knowledge (Richards, 1990).

A learner might be able to understand a word when he sees the word but he is not necessarily able to utilize it in speaking or writing. To use the word productively a lot more knowledge of the word is needed.

Finding the vocabulary size of EFL students in different levels of language proficiency, this study attempts to examine the EFL students' lexical richness of their productive vocabulary knowledge and to find out whether this knowledge increases by passing courses at university. As vocabulary size itself forms a part of language proficiency, we wanted to see how it changes by reaching the higher levels of education.

As it was expected such learners should be able to utilize the vocabularies they have learned as they reach the end of their education. The attempt was based on such expectations to find out if these learners are able to fulfill it or not.

### *C. Research Question*

This study attempts to find the answer to this question:

How rich is the productive vocabulary profile of Iranian EFL university students?

### *D. Significance of the Study*

Lack of learners' knowledge of highly frequent words is viewed an indication of small vocabulary size. In this case, Nation (2005) proposes that the most frequent words are essential for any real language use.

On the other hand, Laufer and Nation (1995) believed that use of low frequency words is an indicator of richness in a learner's vocabulary which is essential for academic success. This group of vocabulary should be practiced autonomously and indirectly.

The results of this work help teachers to decide where and how learners should be given help with vocabulary learning. And it is also helpful for language planners and administrators to choose appropriate resources with consideration of learners' level of proficiency and their vocabulary needs.

## II. REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

### *A. Vocabulary Teaching*

For many years vocabulary was the poor relation of language teaching. Its neglect has been in part due to a specialization in linguistic research on syntax and phonology which may have caused vocabulary to be felt a less important element in learning a second language. According to Meara (2005) second language vocabulary acquisition is no longer a neglected area, and vocabulary has been given the pride of place in language teaching methodologies.

In the early stages of learning a language a range of techniques to aid memorization is necessary. In particular, teaching techniques which foster imagistic association should be given to phonological patterns to aid retention in the lexical store. Teaching vocabulary in early language learning requires constant reference to the notion of certain words begin more core than others (Carter, 1998).

According to Nation (2001), vocabulary building strategies should:

- involve choice, that is, there are several strategies to choose from
- be complex, that is, there are several steps to learn
- require knowledge and benefit from training
- increase the efficiency of vocabulary learning and vocabulary use

### *B. Lexical Frequency Profiles*

The lexical frequency profiles (LFP) is a technique to estimate productive vocabulary size explained in Laufer and Nation (1995). LFP was originally originated by Nation as an approach of evaluating whether a particular text is appropriate to be used with learners at a specified level of proficiency. In its easiest form, LFP takes a text as raw input, and outputs a profile that describes the lexical content of the text in terms of frequency bands (Meara, 2005).

LFP analyzes a piece of writing in terms of the proportion of frequent and non-frequent vocabulary in it, which is the percentage of words used from different vocabulary frequency levels (Laufer, 2005).

In Nation's original formulation of LFP (Nation & Heatley, 1996) the bands are explained as follows: the first [band] contains the most frequent 1000 words of English. The second [band] contains the second 1000 most frequent words, and the third [band] contains words not in the first 2000 words of English but which are frequent in upper secondary

school and university texts from a wide range of subjects. All of these base lists contain the base forms of words and derived forms.

Laufer and Nation (1995) claimed that the texts produced by learners at different levels of proficiency have characteristically different profiles, and that the text profiles change in predictable ways as learners' vocabularies grow. This is an attractive idea for vocabulary research, which is seriously short of good tools to assess productive vocabulary abilities, and the claims that Laufer and Nation make for LFP suggest that it needs to be taken very seriously indeed. These claims are that LFP:

- is a reliable and valid measure of lexical use in writing;
- provides similar stable results for two pieces of writing by one person;
- discriminates between learners at different proficiency levels;
- correlates with an independent measure of vocabulary knowledge;
- is a useful diagnostic test;
- is a sensitive research tool (Laufer & Nation, 1995; Meara, 2005).

In addition, LFP has been utilized by a number of other authors, including Cobb and Horst (2002), Meara, Lightbown, and Halter (1997), and Muncie (2002). According to Meara (2005), Laufer and Nation are absolutely right to identify the assessment of productive vocabulary as a crucial element in developing theories of vocabulary development in L2 learners.

### C. Measuring Lexical Richness

The general term that is used for the characteristics measured by statistics is *lexical richness*. Lexical richness has already been investigated both in *applied linguistics* and in the context of *word frequency distributions*. In *applied linguistics*, a number of tests have been developed for measuring the lexical usage of children or second language learners (Read, 2000). Lexical richness measures are used to evaluate the lexical proficiency level of a child or student, comparing their lexical richness with an external reference point. The most widespread tests are based on the concept of vocabulary diversity, which is assessed using a type-token ratio (TTR) or a TTR-based measure.

In the context of *word frequency distributions*, lexical richness has also been studied. Interestingly, Baayen (2001) has indicated that all mathematical TTR transformations proposed (including the Index of Guiraud, Herdina & Uber) are text length dependent. To be more specific, they are unable to capture the specific structure of the lexicon, which is characterized by a *Large Number of Rare Events* (LNRE): while a small number of words are very frequent, the majority of words occur only a few times, even in large token samples.

More recent work by Herdina and Jessner (2002) has produced a dynamic systems approach to multilingualism, which appears at first sight to have considerable implications for the study of lexicons.

A small number of researches have dealt specifically with developing properties of lexicons. The most important source here is the work of Luc Steels and his colleagues (e.g. Steels, 1995, 1996; Steels & Kaplan 2002) who have reported a series of research studies in which autonomous agents acquire a vocabulary by interacting with each other.

Thus, this study attempts to provide a profile of productive vocabulary in Iranian EFL students. Reid (1993) reports writing demands a rich and appropriate amount of vocabulary, and usually more than 40% of the words in written texts are lexical (content words), whereas in spoken texts the percentage is generally below 40 percent. It reflects the fact that information and ideas are presented in a more concentrated way in written language than is typical of speech. Therefore, here student's writing has chosen to be examined.

## III. METHODOLOGY

### A. Participants

This study involved a group of Persian learners of English who were in the second, fourth, sixth, and eighth semesters, majoring in translation at Islamic Azad University, Khorasgan Branch. The selection of this university was made since it was convenient and easy to access.

To carry this study, term papers, exam papers, and compositions of the students were used. In total, 210 student papers were manipulated. These students in each semester were from the same university, the same department, and were taught by the same university instructors. Thus, each group of students was as closely matched as possible with regard to input conditions at university. In sum, all the four groups were matched on all variables except the additional year of study. They were all native Persian speakers and their age ranged from 19 to 26.

At this work to get the required result, a cluster design was manipulated that is where research subjects are not sampled independently, but in a group. As this study required samples of student writing, therefore term papers, exam papers, and compositions were used.

As a result in each semester those courses that involve writing were selected and all students' papers and compositions were taken. Therefore, 210 papers were utilized from students in the second, fourth, sixth, and eighth semesters.

### B. Materials

To run this study, term papers and compositions of the students were used. This research aimed at measuring the richness of productive vocabulary in Iranian EFL university students' writing performance to see whether or not they add to their vocabulary portfolio through years of study at university.

As word choice and proficiency are two skills playing important role in writing, this study analyzed students' writing. For this purpose those courses that involve writing were selected. In semester 2 compositions of students attending Essay Writing classes were analyzed. It should be mentioned that the length of these compositions were not sufficient. Therefore, we asked for their compositions twice. In semesters 4, 6, and 8 courses like Advanced Writing, Contrastive Analysis, and Research Methodology were selected respectively.

### C. Instrumentations

In this work first we needed to know how much lexical items learners know in each semester. For this purpose, there is a computer program developed by Laufer and Nation in 1995. They developed a procedure which categorizes the words in a learner's text. It is a tool which attempts to measure free productive vocabulary in the compositions of second language learners.

They called this analysis the lexical frequency profile (LFP) of the text. The LFP analyser program, (now renamed *RANGE*), indicates the numbers and percentages of words and word families in a target English text coming from each of the 3 word lists, plus those which are not recognized. It is basically a measure of lexical use in writing.

In this study, the software *RANGE* was used to analyze the body gathered from students. *RANGE* is used to compare the vocabulary of up to 32 different texts at the same time. For each word in the texts, it provides a range or distribution figure (how many texts the word occurs in), a headword frequency figure (the total number of times the actual headword type appears in all the texts), a family frequency figure (the total number of times the word and its family members occur in all the texts), and a frequency figure for each of the texts the word occurs in. It can be used to find the coverage of a text by certain word lists, create word lists based on frequency and range, and to discover shared and unique vocabulary in several pieces of writing.

*RANGE* can be used to compare a text against vocabulary lists to see what words in the text are and are not in the lists, and to see what percentage of the items in the text are covered by the lists. It can also be used to compare the vocabulary of two texts to see how much of the same vocabulary they use and where their vocabulary differs.

It is beneficial for example for seeing what low frequency words are in an exam question paper, a technical information note or a text aimed at foreign readers. It may also be used to check the vocabulary of simplified reading texts or language course books to see how many of the words in the texts are among the high frequency words of English. It may also be used to see how much learning the vocabulary of one text helps with dealing with the words in a different text.

*RANGE* provides a table which shows how much coverage of a text each of the three base lists provides. Table 1 is a sample table of *RANGE* output:

TABLE 1:  
RANGE SAMPLE OUTPUT TABLE

WORD LIST	TOKENS/%	TYPES/%	FAMILIES
one	54/72.0	34/69.4	33
two	2/ 2.7	2/ 4.1	2
three	14/18.7	9/18.4	9
Not in the lists	5/ 6.7	4/ 8.2	???
Total	75	49	44

This depicts that 54 of the running words in the text are in base list one and these 54 words make up 72% of the total running words in the text. In the word list column, one, two, three refer to each of the base lists.

Three ready-made base lists are available. The first (BASEWRD1.txt) includes the most frequent 1000 words of English. The second (BASEWRD2.txt) includes the 2nd 1000 most frequent words, and the third (BASEWRD3.txt) includes words not in the first 2000 words of English but which are frequent in upper secondary school and university texts from a wide range of subjects. All of these base lists include the base forms of words and derived forms. The first 1000 words thus consist of around 4000 forms or types. The sources of these lists are A General Service List of English Words by Michael West (Longman, London 1953) for the first 2000 words, and The Academic Word List by Coxhead (1998, 2000) containing 570 word families. The first thousand words of A General Service List of English Words are usually those in the list with a frequency higher than 332 occurrences per 5 million words, plus months, days of the week, numbers, titles (Mr, Mrs, Miss, Ms, Mister), and frequent greetings (Hello, Hi, etc).

### D. Procedure

Participants (N=210) in this study were at the second (N=90), forth (N=40), sixth (N=40) and eighth (N=40) semesters of their English studies at Khorasgan Azad University. In sum, there were four groups of students in this research. This study conducted to measure the productive vocabulary of these students. To do so, we needed samples of their writings.

These samples have taken from those courses that involve writing during years of education at university. To this end courses such as, Advance Writing, Essay Writing, Contrastive Analysis, and Research Methodology selected. For each group, that here means each semester, 40 students' texts were used to analyze. It should be mentioned that in most cases the entire student's papers in a class have been used and there were no selection involved.

In semester 2 compositions of students attending Advance Writing course were not long enough to be manipulated. Therefore, instead of 40 papers, 90 papers of these students have been used.

After collecting the required data, which text length ranges from 9930 to 10820 words, were all typed and then converted into txt computer files in order to be analyzed in *RANGE*. For each group, *RANGE* has provided number of words in the text, Type/Token Ratio, and the Lexical Frequency Profile. Therefore, we observed how many words of base list 1, base list 2, and base list 3 occurred in each group. There are also some words that do not belong to any of these 3 base lists and they are referred to not in the list figures. These lists were not of concern at this work since presence of high frequency words in a text makes a text richer.

#### IV. DATA ANALYSIS

##### Results

Before presenting the data in tables, it seems necessary to give a short definition of the head words in the tables. As mentioned earlier, software *RANGE* provided us with the proportion of frequent and non-frequent vocabulary in students' writings that is the percentage of words used from different vocabulary frequency levels. All the words in a text have been classified into categories of frequency.

This program measures productive vocabulary in the compositions of second language learners. Lexical Frequency Profile or LFP analyzes a piece of writing in terms of the proportion of frequent and non-frequent vocabulary in it, that is the percentage of words used from different vocabulary frequency levels. The entire calculation matches vocabulary frequency lists with the learners' compositions.

The profile is calculated for *tokens* that is all words in the composition, for *types*, that is different words in the composition and for *word families*.

By *Word List* we mean the three lists of most frequent 1000, 2000 and 3000 words by Nation available in *RANGE*. The third word list forms most of academic or University Words List (UWL).

##### Range results for semester 2 students

The results of this work have been set out in tables and graphs as follows:

Table 2 presents a thorough description of the three available word lists in terms of word families, tokens and types.

TABLE 2.  
TYPES, TOKENS & FAMILIES OF WORDS USED IN STUDENTS' WRITTEN PAPERS IN SEMESTER 2 BY WORD LIST

Word list	Tokens	%	Types	%	Families
One	9092	89.54	777	59.77	487
Two	461	4.54	175	13.46	135
Three	196	1.93	79	6.08	62
Not in the list	405	3.99	269	20.69	???
total	10154	-	1300	-	684

It shows that the written papers of students in semester 2 consist of 684 word families. A word family is the base form of a word that might appear as a headword in a dictionary, plus all the derived and inflected forms of it. Among this 684 word families 487 word families belong to word list one, 135 word families belong to word list two, and 62 word families belong to word list three.

Table 2 also presents a type and token analysis. A token is any occurrence of a word form in the text, regardless of whether it is occurring for the 1st or the nth time. As we can see 9092 of running words are in word list one, which makes up 89.54% of the total words in the text. Then 461 words are in word list two that makes up 4.54% of the running words in total words in the text. Here 196 words belong to word list three that means 1.93% of total words, and 405 words belong to not in the list with 3.99% of the whole words, which are not of interest in this study because they might present words with spelling errors.

With regard to type, any word form which occurs once regardless of how many more times it might occur, table 2 indicates that there are 1300 word forms in students' texts in semester 2. Among this number 777 of word forms belong to word list one that makes up 59.77% of the total. In turn 175 word forms are in word list two with 13.46%, 79 word forms are in word list three making up 6.08%, and 269 word forms do not belong to any of these three lists. This group makes up 20.69% of the total word forms of the texts of the students in semester 2.

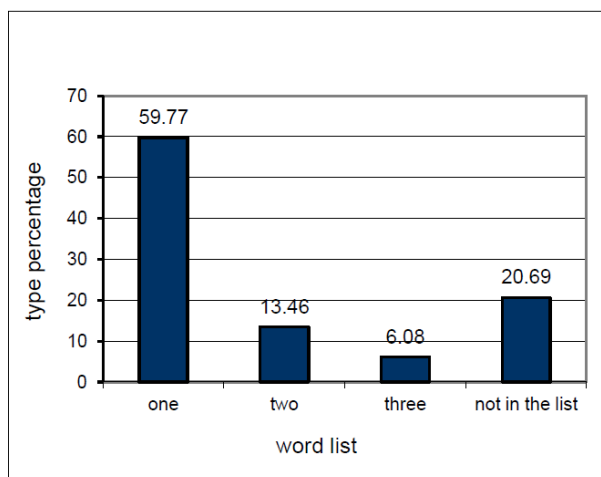


Figure 1. Types of words used in semester 2 students' written papers by word list

Figure 1 graphically shows that students in semester 2 make use of words that belong to word list one adequately. This figure also shows that words from word list two and word list three are not used much by these learners at this stage. It means students are more familiar with the first 1000 most frequent words at early stages than second 1000 high frequency words and word list three. The last one, not in the list, shows the words that do not belong to the available word lists and they are mostly the ones which have spelling errors.

#### Range results for semester 4 students

Table 3 illustrates that there are 868 word families in students' written papers in semester four. Among this number 555 word families belong to word list one, 215 word families are in word list two, and 98 word families are in word list three.

TABLE 3.  
TYPES, TOKENS & FAMILIES OF WORDS USED IN STUDENT'S WRITTEN PAPERS IN SEMESTER 4 BY WORD LIST

Word list	Tokens	%	Types	%	Families
One	8630	86.91	870	57.09	555
Two	707	7.12	287	18.83	215
Three	227	2.29	135	8.86	98
Not in the list	366	3.69	232	15.22	???
total	9930	-	1524	-	868

Table 3 also indicates that 9930 words (tokens) exist in students' texts in semester four. Out of this number 8630 words which makes up 86.91% are in word list one, 707 words that means 7.12% are in word list two, and 227 words which equals to 2.29% are in word list three. And also 366 words do not belong to any of the three word lists which make up 3.69% of the whole text.

Now considering types, there are 1524 word forms at this stage. Among this number 870 word forms or 57.09% belong to word list one, 287 word forms or 18.83% are in word list two, and 135 word forms which makes up 8.86% of the running words belong to word list three. The rest of words that is 232 word forms are in not in the list and makes up 15.22% of the running word forms.

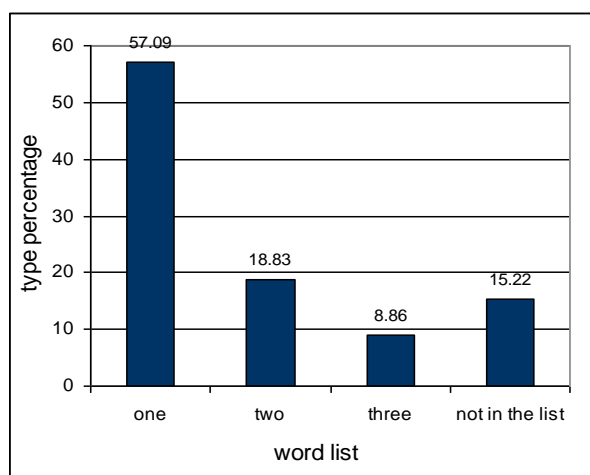


Figure 2. Types of words used in semester 4 students' written papers by word list



As figure 2 depicts we have almost similar results to semester 2, since in semester 4 words in word list one are also used more than other word lists. There are only some insignificant changes in usage of words from word lists two and three.

#### Range results for semester 6 students

According to table 4 there are 611 word families in written papers of students in semester 6 totally. Out of this number 393 word families belong to word list one and 60 word families are in word list two. The rest that is 158 word families belong to word list three.

TABLE 4.  
TYPES, TOKENS & FAMILIES OF WORDS USED IN STUDENT'S WRITTEN PAPERS IN SEMESTER 6 BY WORD LIST

Word list	Tokens	%	Types	%	Families
One	8217	76.56	660	53.10	393
Two	270	2.52	83	6.68	60
Three	1699	15.83	260	20.92	158
Not in the list	547	5.10	240	19.31	???
total	10733	-	1243	-	611

Table 4 also indicates that 10733 tokens are in written papers of students in semester six. There are 8217 words in word list one that makes up 76.56% of running words in the text. At this level we have 270 words from word list two that is 2.52% and 1699 words from word list three that makes up 15.83% of the running words in the text. The rest of words that are 547 or 5.10% are not in any of the three lists.

This table also tells us that there are 1243 types in written papers of students in semester six. It shows that 660 word forms or 53.10% of the word forms are from word list one and 83 word forms or 6.68% of the word forms belong to word list two. It also presents that 260 word forms that makes up 20.92% of the whole text belong to word list three. Again here we have 240 words which make up 19.31% of the running word forms that are not in neither of the previous lists.

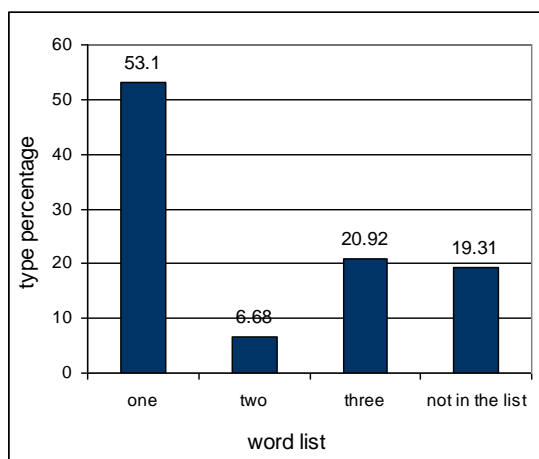


Figure 3. Types of words used in semester 6 students' written papers by word list

As figure 3 shows word forms in word list one are still used in semester six. But there is a significant change in usage of words from word list three which includes academic words.

#### Range results for semester 8 students

Table 5 provides the descriptive statistics of data selection in semester eight. The results show that there are 478 word families in the written papers of this group. Out of this number 341 word families belong to word list one, 51 word families belong to word list two, and 86 word families are in word list three.

TABLE 5.  
WORD LISTS IN SEMESTER 8

Word list	Tokens	%	Types	%	Families
One	8274	76.47	512	59.67	341
Two	384	3.55	73	8.51	51
Three	1410	13.03	134	15.62	86
Not in the list	752	6.95	139	16.20	???
total	10820	-	858	-	478

According to table 5 the sum total of tokens in written papers of students in semester 8 is 10820. As table 5 shows 8274 words are in word list one that makes up 76.47% of the running words, 384 words or 3.55% are in word list two, and 1410 words or 13.03% belong to word list three. The rest is 752 words that do not belong to any list which makes up 6.95% words of the text.

In table 5 the total number of types is presented as 858 word forms. Among this number 512 word forms which makes up 59.67% of the running words are in word list one, 73 words or 8.51% are in word list two, and 134 word forms or 15.62% of the running words belong to word list three. It also provides that there are 139 word forms or 16.20% in the written papers of students at this level that do not belong to any list.

Figure 4 below depicts an overview of types of words used in written papers of students in semester eight.

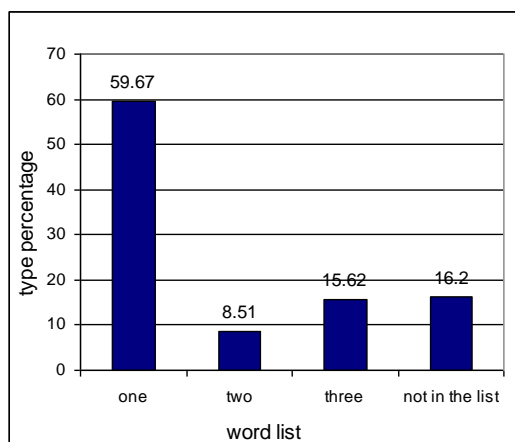


Figure 4. Types of words used in semester 8 students' written papers by word list

It shows that words from word list one is still used at this stage. It also illustrates that words from word list three are used by these students in their writing tasks.

#### Overall results for semesters 2, 4, 6, and 8

In this section we have an overall view on types of words used by students in semesters 2, 4, 6, and 8 by word lists. Table 6 displays the types of words used in written papers of students in each semester separately according to three available word lists. The last list consists of words that belong to none of the word lists.

TABLE 6.  
TYPES OF WORDS USED BY STUDENTS IN SEMESTERS 2, 4, 6, & 8 BASED ON WORD LISTS

Semesters	Types Word list1	Types Word list2	Types Word list3	Types Not in the list
Semester 2	59.77%	13.46%	6.08%	20.69%
Semester 4	57.09%	18.83%	8.86%	15.22%
Semester 6	53.10%	6.68%	20.92%	19.31%
Semester 8	59.67%	8.51%	15.62%	16.20%

According to the table words from word list one has been utilized by each group with almost similar percentage. But word list two does not have the same results. In semesters 2 and 4 words from word list two has been utilized more than in semesters 6 and eight. Table 6 also indicates that words from word list three has been applied by students in semesters 6 and 8 more than those in semesters 2 and four.

Figure 5 graphically shows the way that words from word list one function in each group. Figure 6 illustrates the change in usage of words from word list two among these four semesters. At last, figure 7 displays the trend of growth in words from word list three for semester 2 to semester eight.

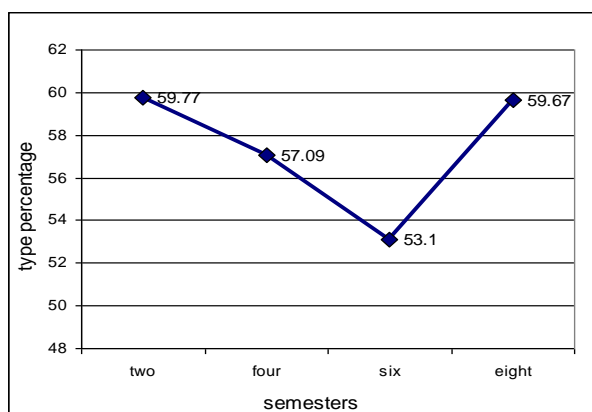


Figure 5. Type results of semesters 2, 4, & 8 based on word list 1

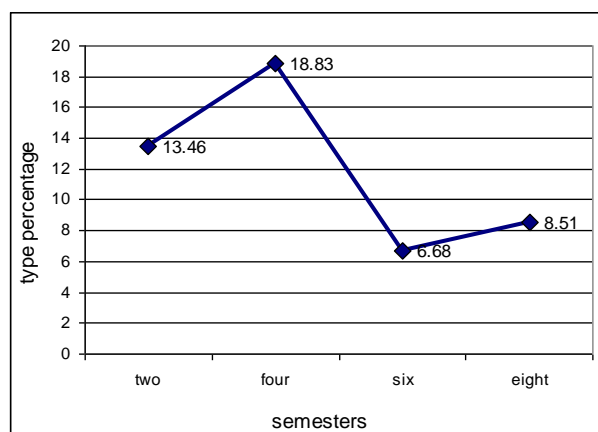


Figure 6. Type results of semesters 2, 4, 6, &amp; 8 based on word list 2

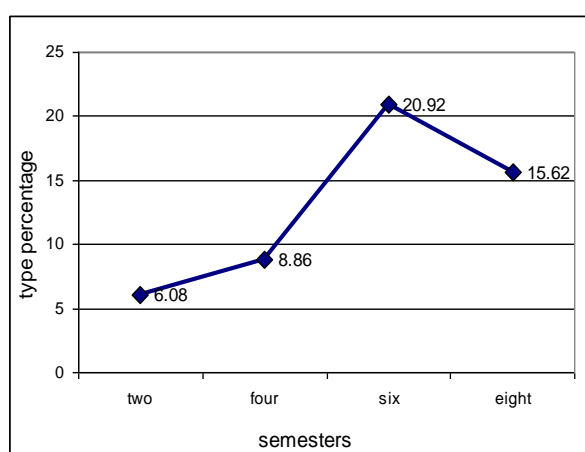


Figure 7. Type results of semesters 2, 4, 6, &amp; 8 based on word list 3

### A profile for EFL students

Having written text samples of students studying at semesters 2, 4, 6, and 8, we built up a profile for total EFL students studying at semesters two, four, six, and eight. Table 7 shows a thorough description of the three available word lists in terms of word families, tokens and types used by EFL students attending this study.

TABLE 7.  
OVERALL RESULTS OF WRITTEN TEXT SAMPLES OF EFL STUDENTS BASED ON WORD LISTS

Word list	Tokens	%	Types	%	Families
One	34213	82.17	1433	44.94	732
Two	1822	4.38	481	15.08	316
Three	3532	8.48	438	13.73	247
Not in the list	2070	4.97	837	26.25	????
total	41637	-	3189	-	1295

According to this table there are 41637 tokens in the total samples used by EFL university students. Out of this number 34213 tokens are from word list one, which make up 82.17%, 1822 tokens belong to word list two, which make up 4.38%, 3532 tokens are from word list three, which make up 8.48%, and 2070 tokens do not belong to any list, which make up 4.97% of the running words.

This table also shows that there are 3189 types in the total samples used by EFL university students. Out of this number 1433 types are from word list one, which make up 44.94%, 481 are from word list two, which make up 15.08%, 438 types belong to word list three, which make up 13.73%, and 837 types do not belong to any list, which make up 26.25% of the running words.

This table indicates that there are 1295 word families in the total writing samples of EFL students which 732 word families belong to word list one, 316 word families are from word list two, and 247 word families are from word list three. Since the program works on the 3 frequency levels, it is not able to categorize any words that do not appear in these lists into their word families.

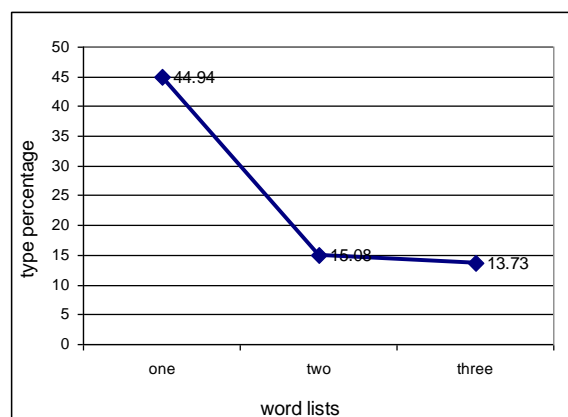


Figure 8. Types results for total written samples in EFL students by word lists

As figure 8 shows EFL learners use the first 1000 most frequent words more than other words based on frequency word lists. It indicates that there is a rapid fall in usage of words from word list two and word list three.

## V. DISCUSSION

The results obtained from this analysis showed the frequency levels of the texts of each group. Each figure has compared with available word lists on the program.

Nation (2002) believes words from word lists one and two are necessary for real language use at the beginning of the language courses. On the other hand, words from word list three are useful for reading authentic texts. With regard to word list one, the findings of this work indicated an almost equal status in lexical richness of students in semesters 2, 4, 6, and 8, that is, there is almost the same percentage of words from word list one in their writings. According to Laufer and Nation (1999) the most frequent 1000 words account for around 75% of the running words in formal written texts.

However, at the second word list level, the results showed that there was a significant fall after semesters two and four. In other words at the second 1,000 most frequent words the trend of growth was not significant after semester 4 productively. At the word list three, contrary to the word list two, there was a significant rise after semesters 2 and 4. It showed that there were some degrees of growth in learners' lexical richness after the forth semester.

Laufer and Nation (1995) argued that the texts produced by learners at different levels of proficiency have characteristically different profiles, and that the text profiles change in predictable ways as learners' vocabularies grow. As the results showed in this work the profiles of the students changed at different levels of proficiency and to some extent the changes were predictable. Students in semester 8 who are able to read and understand authentic texts can produce words from word list three as well. Therefore, this view is supported by this study.

To sum up, the evidence presented in the study would indicate that EFL students not only add to their vocabulary knowledge during the years of study, as they are exposed to different sources of English vocabularies, but also use this knowledge in their productive tasks.

### A. General Conclusion

A general study of word frequency counts shows that knowledge of the 2,000 most frequent word families constitute a threshold of the words required for basic oral communication (Laufer, 2005). These 2,000 word families make up about 87% of written texts and about 80% of typical academic texts (Nation, 1990).

According to Nation (2002) words from word list one and two are appropriate for real language use at the beginning of the language and words from word list three are useful to read authentic texts. He believes the 2,000 and 3,000 word levels consist the high frequency words that all language learners need to know in order to function effectively in English.

In general, for English a threshold of 3,000 word families is needed for minimal comprehension and 5,000 word families for reading for pleasure (Laufer, 1992 & Schmitt et al., 2001). In order to be successful in academic studies, Nation (1990) believes that it is necessary to be familiar not only with the high frequency words of English, but also with the general academic vocabulary which is common to different academic disciplines. It has been argued that the knowledge of 5,000 word families is required before one can begin to guess the meaning of unknown words in context (Laufer, 1998).

Bearing these notions in mind, this research set out to build up a profile of lexical richness of productive vocabulary from Iranian EFL university students. The results of the study showed an almost significant growth in productive vocabulary of EFL students, though this knowledge is under the suggested threshold (87%) proposed by other studies in the field. Therefore, the results support the hypothesis which claimed EFL university students add to their productive vocabulary knowledge throughout years of study while they are exposed to various English courses.

The evidence presented in the study indicated that EFL students increase their vocabulary knowledge while they are studying different courses and they are able to use this knowledge in their productive tasks. It is obvious that learners

with a large number of words are more competent in a wide scope of language skills than learners with smaller vocabularies, and there is more evidence to be in favor of the view that word skills make an important contribution to almost all aspects of L2 proficiency.

Nation (2002) underlies the critical importance of developing an adequate dependent on the number of vocabularies learners know, especially in the early stages of learning a foreign language with around 3,000 word families being a vital threshold. He believes that a systematic, principled approach to vocabulary development results in better language learning.

Everyone has learnt that the more often a learner encounters a vocabulary item the higher the chances for him to acquire the word. Consequently exposure of learners to rich and varied input is crucial.

According to the results of this study, students attending semesters 6 and 8 possess and use words from word list three more than students in semesters 2 and 4. It indicates that students add to their academic vocabulary knowledge through various input which are available for them each semester. One of these resources is the books that are presented for every individual course. It has been argued that most if not all vocabulary development (in L1 & L2) takes place as learners attempt to comprehend written input (Krashen, 1989, 1993). The increase in productive vocabulary knowledge of students as they get to higher levels of education reveals their ability to control and use of receptive items which is shaped by acquiring a complete set of information of those words. This mastery is obtained by a number of repetitions, practices, and exposures of the lexical items. However, language teachers and program developers should pay more attention to the ways of promoting vocabulary more effectively among language learners. This study suggests that the high frequency words are worth special attention and thus should be taught directly. The findings suggest a more prominent position for vocabulary instruction in foreign language teaching programs.

### *B. Pedagogical Implications*

The findings of this study can also be useful in the field of language pedagogy. Such findings can be used by language teachers and administrators in a pedagogical context to make decisions concerning whether or not learners have enough lexical resources necessary to function effectively in the target language.

According to Meara (2005) once it is understood how language learners learn language through the different mediums by which language is received or created, then teachers will be better able to provide timely and appropriate interventions. The evidence presented in this study indicated that EFL students expand their vocabulary knowledge when they get to higher levels of proficiency and they are also able to control and use this knowledge in their productive tasks. This ability indicates that the learners take advantage of the input available for them throughout different courses at university.

With regard to resources available for learners at university, they contain different kinds of lexical items which vary each semester depending on the subject of the course without considering the level of proficiency of the learners. At higher stages of education the content of these resources seems to be more important than the language itself, so the academic needs which demand rich and varied input have been ignored.

To improve and develop learner's vocabulary knowledge, teachers and language programmers should pay more attention to both the content and the vocabulary needs of learners when they select related resources in higher levels of education. These resources need to have the necessary lexical items for the learners which include high frequency words, low frequency words, and academic words.

Hazenberg and Hulstijn (1996) calculated that foreign students reading university texts need to have 10,000 word families at their disposal. At higher levels of education in addition to explicit learning, a learner should learn vocabulary autonomously. Learners can expand their vocabulary through reading, combined with the development of a raised awareness of vocabulary learning strategies. And it is the teacher who can create this awareness among students by developing appropriate tasks for them. Therefore, the teachers should be conscious of the feedback they need to have from the learners first. Then they need a pedagogical plan for this purpose which demands systematic presentations of lexical items to students in each semester.

Nation (2005) believes teaching can effectively deal with only a small amount of information about a word at a time. The more complex the information is, the more likely the learners are to misinterpret it. We need to see learning any particular words being a cumulative process where knowledge is built up over a series of varied meetings with the word. At best, teaching can provide only one or two of these meetings. The others involve deliberate study, meeting through meaning focused input and output, and fluency development activities.

As discussed earlier, if vocabulary is accepted as an essential building block of language, then it naturally needs to be assessed in some way. Meara (2005) believes instead of trying to practice receptive items as much as possible, which may only serve to reinforce existing links, a more effective strategy would be to stress associations from already (productive) known words to new or receptive items. The teachers can involve students with vocabulary learning by different methods, such as quiz, composition, and discussion, interactively. Teachers should increase reading and writing tasks and draw their attention to the importance of vocabulary knowledge in these tasks.

Lexical knowledge and lexical use take different paths of development. Therefore, the selection of resources for each semester should be investigated thoroughly which includes the classification of lexical items according to their levels of frequency and the focus on both content and language skills. The distinction between high and low frequency words is

important for teachers because it makes it necessary for teachers to know what stage their learners are at in their vocabulary development.

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# Investigating the Employment Profile of Graduate Students of Persian and English Literature

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**Abstract**—The issues of job and entrepreneurship have been always the concerns of students as well as every academic environment in Iran and other countries. University degrees are no longer sure fire formulas for high profile employment. The current study tries to investigate the employment rate of two university majors, namely Persian Literature and English Literature as a comparative analysis. A questionnaire was employed to investigate the related factors. Due to unavailability of the graduates, they were contacted via phone and asked to give their response to questionnaire items. The results of the study showed a big contrast between the two groups. English graduates have a good place in the Iranian labor market, while Persian graduates have a hard time finding employment.

**Index Terms**—Persian literature, English literature, entrepreneurship, TEFL, alumni, job, Iran

## I. INTRODUCTION

There is no doubt that jobs have a pivotal role in the lives of people. Psychologists and Sociologists have stated that jobs help individuals structure their time, form identity and self respect, and be accepted as members of the society capable of making contributions (Roberts, Noble & Duggan, 1982). Harmful effects of unemployment and underemployment have been pointed out in different lines of research (e.g. Bruwer, 1998).

Until recently, higher education used to guarantee professional success. However, this is no more the case. Nowadays, many university undergraduates and graduates are incapable of finding a job. And those who manage to find a job may resort to professions that are hardly related to their major field of study or may have to stoop to underemployment. Instances of highly educated people working as shopkeepers and secretaries are not very rare these days in Iran and other countries.

## II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Our work is a practical study of graduate employment rates in Iran and as such it is a localized project. We couldn't find many works directly related to our project but the following studies are similar to our research and cast light on similar issues.

Cardoso and Ferreira (2002) tackled the issue of graduate unemployment and came up with findings that did not lend support to the popular notion that the rate of unemployment and underemployment of university graduates has made it too risky to continue education. The researchers used a longitudinal data set matching workers and their employers in the Portuguese private sector from 1986 to 1997. Analysis of the data revealed that the commonplace view that employers are no longer willing to recruit university graduates is a misleading one. The results of the study showed that although finding job opportunities had become difficult for Portuguese university graduates since 1990s, the rate of job creation had been increasing ever since.

Working along a similar line of research, Bruwer (1998) tried to investigate the impact of graduates' education on their job placement, job satisfaction, career advancement, earnings and intellectual development. He developed a detailed-structured questionnaire and sent it along with a self-addressed postage-paid envelope to a sample of 3208 alumni who had graduated from the Cape Technikon, a medium-sized higher education institution situated in Cape Town, South Africa. Bruwer found that 5.9% of the institution's graduates were in unemployed occupational situation. However, the incidence of underemployment among the graduates was found to be much higher i.e. 40.2%. He concluded that alumni unemployment or underemployment was a result of the mismatch between the ambitions of graduates and employment opportunities available to them. The researcher finally proposed that "an intermediate



adjustment mechanism must be developed to relate the development of higher education to the development of the graduate employment market, and the expectations and attitudes of students” (p. 26).

Taking a somewhat different perspective, Nabi (2003) investigated the problem of graduate employability. He chose recent business graduates from a large higher education institution in the UK as his participants. A pack of questionnaires including an explanatory covering letter and reply-paid envelope were sent to the participants and responses were obtained from 203 graduates in full-time posts. The sample comprised 71 males and 132 females who had graduated 3.4 years ago, on the average. The findings of the study showed that underemployed university graduates tended to give a more negative picture of opportunities for skill use compared to their appropriately employed counterparts. As an important implication of his study, the researcher proposed that underemployed graduates should find opportunities to develop more skills that are related to their majors. It is also argued in this study that higher education should focus on the quality of employment rather than merely looking at the number of student who have found employment after graduation.

Focusing on Europe, Nunez and Livanos (2010) examined the effect of an academic degree on short and long-term unemployment. Their study also investigated the effect of 14 academic subjects and country-specific effects on unemployment which do not pertain to the topic of the present study and will not be discussed. Nunez and Livanos used data from the 2005 European Union’s Labour Force Survey which is designed to obtain information related to market data in Europe. The data consisted of information on a total of half a million individuals from 15 member states of the European Union. Analysis of the data revealed that academic degrees improve the individuals’ chances of both short and long-term employment; however the effect on avoiding long-term unemployment is more moderate.

Among Asian researchers, Bai (2006) focused on graduate unemployment conducting a study to investigate the historical and socio-economic conditions for China’s project to raise the level of participation in higher education, and the resulting graduate unemployment. The main focus of the article was to establish whether large scale expansion of China’s higher education sector (a project started in 1999) should continue. The researcher pointed out that although the achievements gained by expansion of higher education sector is undeniable, the increasing rate of graduate unemployment and its associated problems which are a result of the educational expansion should not be overlooked. The rapid expansion of higher education in this country could not serve the country as much as it was predicted because as Blaug, Layard, and Woodhall (1969) stated in their seminal work some 40 years ago “poor countries can have too much education, and the manpower shortage of yesterday can become the manpower surpluses of tomorrow” (p. 1).

In the Iranian context, Biabani (2003) tried to explore the causes of graduate unemployment in his study. He identified Iranian unemployment as a structural one defining it as a form of unemployment resulting from a mismatch between the sufficiently skilled workers seeking employment and demand in the labor market. Biabani argued that in the context of Iran, lack of cooperation between universities and governmental organizations, a high proportion of youth population, the increase in the participation of women in the labor market, the staying of the elderly in the labor market, and the incapability of the private sector in providing job opportunities for university graduates are among the causes of graduate unemployment in the country. The study also claims that in 1375 – 1380 the government, as the biggest employer of graduated workforce, acted inefficiently in providing job opportunities. The researcher proposed that the structure of the labor market should be reconsidered in Iran in such a way as to comply with theories of structural unemployment. This will help, the writer argued, overcome the mismatch between workforce demand and the number of university graduates.

In another Iranian study, Katooli and Rahmani (2005) tackled the issue of challenges facing the employment of university graduates in Iran. The researchers argued that lack of coordination between universities and government bodies has resulted in surplus university graduates. They claimed that lack of trustable statistics, lack of strategic views in government and private sectors, managerial incapability in determining demand for workforce based on development macro-strategies, lack of efficient mid-term and long-term plans, arbitrary selection of policies, and changing of designed programs after any changes in governmental bodies are among the factors contributing to the mismatch between workforce demand and the capacity of universities across the country. They proposed that the capacity of universities should be based on the demand for workforce. It is also argued that the contents taught in university majors should be revised so that skills required for related professions will be acquired in each major.

There seems to be a convergence of findings between the last two studies in the context of Iran which is also the focus of the present study. Although stating rather different issues as causes of graduate unemployment in Iran, They both refer to lack of coordination between universities and policy-making governmental organizations as a major factor contributing to the high rate of graduate unemployment in Iran.

According to Khayyat (2007), the rate of graduate unemployment in Iran amounts to a high 20% which is utterly unacceptable. Unfortunately, there are conflicting reports making it difficult to trust these numbers. However, a high rate of graduate unemployment in the country is undeniable. Research in this area has been limited and insufficient, and this calls for government-funded nation-wide studies that can help us deal with this crisis.

Although the issue of graduate employability is of utmost importance, there is a lack of research in this area in Iran. A thorough scrutiny of the list of theses written by graduates of social sciences was useless and no thesis related to the topic of our discussion was found.

### III. METHODOLOGY

In order to investigate the employment rate of the Persian and English graduates, we chose a sample of 230 English graduates and 160 Persian graduates. The English students were graduates of 1384 to 1387 and the Persian majors had graduated in 1384 to 1385. We tried our best, but we could not balance the sample. Since we had to contact the participants through phone, we faced many problems. Some of the phone numbers were changed and we had to call different people to get the participants numbers. In some cases, we couldn't finally get a number.

The items on the questionnaire were answered by the participants on the phone. We also made further inquiries in order to add depth to our research. For example, when participants said that they had non-governmental jobs, we asked some of them what their jobs were so that we could analyze their career success more carefully. Finally the answers given to the items on the questionnaire were analyzed one by one.

### IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, answers given to the questionnaires are analyzed one by one. Each table in this section presents the answers given to an item on the questionnaire by the two groups under study. Each table is then followed by our analysis of the related item on the questionnaire. Wherever necessary, we made further inquiries from the participants in order to add depth to our analysis. For the purpose of clarity, the items on the questionnaire were chosen as the title of the tables i.e. each table heading is actually an item on the questionnaire.

TABLE 1.  
DID YOU HAVE A JOB WHILE YOU WERE A STUDENT?

Major field of study			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
English Literature	Valid	yes	131	57.0	57.0	57.0
		no	99	43.0	43.0	100.0
		Total	230	100.0	100.0	
Persian Literature	Valid	yes	19	11.9	11.9	11.9
		no	141	88.1	88.1	100.0
		Total	160	100.0	100.0	

A quick look at the table above shows us that English graduates mostly held a job while they were doing their B.A. This is in sharp contrast with the employment rate of the graduates of Persian Literature which didn't rise above 11.9%. The high rate of employment among English graduates is related to the nature of the English major. English language provides a lot of job opportunities for graduates and non-graduates alike. Students majoring in English Literature had almost invariably studied English in language institutes for years before entering the university. This gave them a good chance of working in those institutes as language teachers and their admittance in a university only boosted that chance. However, Persian graduates had a difficult time finding any job because their major only allowed them to apply for a number of positions which were already occupied.

TABLE 2.  
WAS THIS JOB GOVERNMENTAL OR NONGOVERNMENTAL?

Major field of study			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
English Literature	Valid	nongovernmental	130	56.5	100.0	100.0
	Missing	System	100	43.5		
		Total	230	100.0		
Persian Literature	Valid	nongovernmental	19	11.9	100.0	100.0
	Missing	System	141	88.1		
		Total	160	100.0		

Table 2 shows that all the employed students in our sample only held non-governmental jobs. This is to be expected because English majors could always find employment as language teachers in language institutes and Persian majors had to turn to jobs unrelated to their field of study. English majors were mostly teaching at the same institutes they were studying at some time ago, while Persian majors had to stoop to underemployment because there was no need for teachers of Persian language anymore. This limited nature of the jobs held by students of may be interpreted as negative because their job opportunities were narrow and without scope. However, the high availability of this limited position may lessen the negativity of the narrow job opportunities, especially because university graduates are finding it increasingly difficult to find job opportunities even after graduation (e.g. graduates of Persian Literature). This problem is seen in many countries including industrial countries.

TABLE 3  
HOW MUCH DID THE JOB PAY?

Major field of study			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
English Literature	Valid	100	32	13.9	24.8	24.8
		120	3	1.3	2.3	27.1
		150	8	3.5	6.2	33.3
		200	17	7.4	13.2	46.5
		250	13	5.7	10.1	56.6
		300	7	3.0	5.4	62.0
		350	1	.4	.8	62.8
		400	2	.9	1.6	64.3
		50	3	1.3	2.3	66.7
		60	2	.9	1.6	68.2
		70	4	1.7	3.1	71.3
		80	3	1.3	2.3	73.6
		90	2	.9	1.6	75.2
		insufficient	31	13.5	24.0	99.2
		very insufficient	1	.4	.8	100.0
		Total	129	56.1	100.0	
	Missing	0	101	43.9		
Total			230	100.0		
Persian Literature	Valid	100	7	4.4	36.8	36.8
		120	1	.6	5.3	42.1
		50	1	.6	5.3	47.4
		60	2	1.2	10.5	57.9
		70	4	2.5	21.1	78.9
		80	3	1.9	15.8	94.7
		90	1	.6	5.3	100.0
		Total	19	11.9	100.0	
	Missing	0	141	88.1		
Total			160	100.0		

The above table presents the rough incomes of the employed students in our sample. It should be noted that some of the students were unwilling to discuss their incomes specifically and only told us that their incomes were insufficient or very insufficient. 35.7% of the English majors reported their incomes to be low, insufficient or very insufficient, while most of the Persian majors (58%) also reported their incomes to be low. You can see a significant difference here between the incomes of the two groups. Most of the Persian majors had a low income while a lower percentage of the English majors had the same range of salary. A higher percentage of Persian majors (36.8% vs. 24.8% of English majors) reported acceptable incomes, while good salaries belonged mostly to English majors (39.6% vs. 5.3% of Persian majors). These statistics show that students of English Literature major have a good place in the Iranian labor market, while students of Persian Literature have to accept jobs with lower incomes.

TABLE 4  
DO YOU CURRENTLY HAVE A JOB?

Major field of study			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
English Literature	Valid	yes	166	72.2	72.2	72.2
		no	64	27.8	27.8	100.0
		Total	230	100.0	100.0	
Persian Literature	Valid	yes	55	34.4	34.4	34.4
		no	105	65.6	65.6	100.0
		Total	160	100.0	100.0	

The most dramatic difference between the two groups of Persian and English Literature graduates was seen in their employment rate after graduation. As you can see in the above table, English graduates enjoyed a high 72.2%

employment rate after graduation, while only 34.4% of Persian literature graduates managed to find jobs. The remarkable employment rate for English literature graduates is a result of the high demand for English language teachers, while the low employment rate for graduates of Persian literature is caused by the lack of demand for teachers of Persian literature. Apart from teaching, there are only a few other positions available for graduates of Persian literature, while English graduates can seek employment as teachers, translators, correspondents, etc. another factor influencing the employment rate of the two groups is the previous experience of English graduates as learners of English in language institutes. This experience helps them with their employment, while graduates of Persian literature had no such experience and had a hard time finding a job related to their major field of study. Another important factor affecting these graduates' employment is their degree completion. For graduates of English literature, completion of degree increased their employment rate by 13.2% which is only modest. For graduates of Persian literature, degree completion increased their employment rate by 22.1% which is better than English graduates.

TABLE 6  
IS THIS JOB GOVERNMENTAL OR NONGOVERNMENTAL?

Major field of study			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
English Literature	Valid	governmental	7	3.0	4.2	4.2
		nongovernmental	159	69.1	95.8	100.0
		Total	166	72.2	100.0	
	Missing	System	64	27.8		
	Total		230	100.0		
Persian Literature	Valid	governmental	14	8.8	25.5	25.5
		nongovernmental	41	25.6	74.5	100.0
		Total	55	34.4	100.0	
	Missing	System	105	65.6		
	Total		160	100.0		

The above table shows that a big majority of the English literature graduates (95.8%) and a majority of Persian literature graduates (74.5%) held non-governmental jobs. This is a result of the fact that all the governmental positions related to these majors were already filled. Because of this, Universities no longer guarantee employment as they used to before. Until some 10 or 12 years ago almost all graduates of both English and Persian literature had safe governmental jobs as language teachers in schools and universities. However, since higher education has recently become almost a must for everyone we are facing a high rate of universities graduates who have employment problems. Today, only graduates of Tarbiat-e Modarres universities can seek employment as school teachers. There aren't many other positions available for Persian literature graduates, but English graduates can seek employment as translators and they will not face a big vacancy problem. Only a small minority of the participants (3% of English graduates and 8.8% of Persian graduates) reported that they had a governmental job. Some of these jobs were not even remotely related to their major field of study.

TABLE 7  
HOW MUCH DOES THE JOB PAY?

Major field of study			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
English Literature	Valid	100	9	3.9	5.5	5.5
		110	1	.4	.6	6.1
		120	4	1.7	2.5	8.6
		150	14	6.1	8.6	17.2
		200	14	6.1	8.6	25.8
		250	12	5.2	7.4	33.1
		300	27	11.7	16.6	49.7
		350	15	6.5	9.2	58.9
		400	27	11.7	16.6	75.5
		450	7	3.0	4.3	79.8
		50	1	.4	.6	80.4
		500	10	4.3	6.1	86.5
		550	2	.9	1.2	87.7
		60	1	.4	.6	88.3
		600	8	3.5	4.9	93.3
		650	1	.4	.6	93.9
		700	1	.4	.6	94.5
		insufficient	9	3.9	5.5	100.0
		Total	163	70.9	100.0	
	Missing	0	67	29.1		
	Total		230	100.0		
Persian Literature	Valid	100	2	1.2	4.1	4.1
		150	6	3.8	12.2	16.3
		200	16	10.0	32.7	49.0
		250	6	3.8	12.2	61.2
		300	10	6.2	20.4	81.6
		350	1	.6	2.0	83.7
		400	5	3.1	10.2	93.9
		450	2	1.2	4.1	98.0
		500	1	.6	2.0	100.0
		Total	49	30.6	100.0	
	Missing	0	111	69.4		
	Total		160	100.0		

As you can see in the above table, there is a considerable increase in the income of the English graduates compared to their income while they were students. Persian literature graduates also saw a boost in their salaries. One of the reasons for this increase is degree completion. Obviously, both groups in our sample found many more positions available to them once they finished their studies. Another reason which mostly affected English graduates is their experience. As in any other jobs, the teaching profession requires experience. English graduates increased their experience while they were teaching as university students. All language institutes, as much as other organizations employing these graduates, value experience and increase their payments based on experience. However, the income increase after graduation was considered insubstantial by many graduates.

Especially Persian graduates many of whom were receiving small or very small salaries complained about their payments and lack of job opportunities. Although their biggest problem was finding employment, even those who did find a vacancy received very low salaries. Many of these graduates (Persian literature) believed that there were too many graduates in their field and this affected their employment rate. On the other hand, English graduates didn't have a hard time finding a job. Their salaries were also acceptable although some of them complained about their salaries and claimed that they needed to make more money. Some of the participants in our study (especially Persian graduates) claimed that they couldn't even think of marriage with the salaries they were receiving.

TABLE 8  
I LIKE MY JOB.

Major field of study			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
English Literature	Valid	completely agree	17	7.4	10.2	10.2
		agree	123	53.5	74.1	84.3
		neither agree nor disagree	21	9.1	12.7	97.0
		disagree	5	2.2	3.0	100.0
		Total	166	72.2	100.0	
	Missing	System	64	27.8		
	Total		230	100.0		
Persian Literature	Valid	completely agree	5	3.1	10.2	10.2
		agree	6	3.8	12.2	22.4
		disagree	27	16.9	55.1	77.6
		completely disagree	11	6.9	22.4	100.0
		Total	49	30.6	100.0	
	Missing	System	111	69.4		
	Total		160	100.0		

Table 8 presents the results related to item 7 in the questionnaire. As you can see, 84.3% of the English majors liked their jobs, while only 22.4% of Persian majors liked their jobs. This is a sharp contrast which is mostly a result of the relatedness of their jobs to their majors. Many Persian graduates had to seek employment as shopkeepers, taxi drivers, secretaries, etc. These are low profile jobs that even affect the graduates' self-respect. We cannot expect a taxi driver with a B.A in Persian literature to like his job. English graduates, on the other hand liked their jobs because they were related to their field of study and they enjoyed great popularity and respect as language teachers.

TABLE 9  
MY JOB HAS MET MY EXPECTATIONS.

Major field of study			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
English Literature	Valid	completely agree	2	.9	1.2	1.2
		agree	82	35.7	49.7	50.9
		neither agree nor disagree	30	13.0	18.2	69.1
		disagree	50	21.7	30.3	99.4
		completely disagree	1	.4	.6	100.0
		Total	165	71.7	100.0	
	Missing	System	65	28.3		
	Total		230	100.0		
Persian Literature	Valid	completely agree	2	1.2	4.1	4.1
		agree	9	5.6	18.4	22.4
		disagree	26	16.2	53.1	75.5
		completely disagree	12	7.5	24.5	100.0
		Total	49	30.6	100.0	
	Missing	System	111	69.4		
	Total		160	100.0		

As you can see in table 5.8, 52.1% of English graduates in our sample reported that their job expectations were met, while only 22.4% of Persian graduates claimed that their job expectations were met. Again, we see a big contrast which is rooted in the nature of the jobs held by our participants. Many of Persian graduates gave a negative response to this item because their job had nothing to do with their field of study. English graduates, on the other hand knew that they were going to become language teachers even before graduation. They knew their jobs and they knew what to expect of their jobs. Therefore, most of them saw in their jobs exactly what they expected.

TABLE 10  
MY JOB IS IN LINE WITH MY MAJOR.

Major field of study			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
English Literature	Valid	completely agree	97	42.2	58.8	58.8
		agree	55	23.9	33.3	92.1
		neither agree nor disagree	2	.9	1.2	93.3
		disagree	8	3.5	4.8	98.2
		completely disagree	2	.9	1.2	99.4
		22	1	.4	.6	100.0
	Total		165	71.7	100.0	
	Missing	System	65	28.3		
Total			230	100.0		
Persian Literature	Valid	completely agree	5	3.1	10.2	10.2
		agree	3	1.9	6.1	16.3
		disagree	27	16.9	55.1	71.4
		completely disagree	14	8.8	28.6	100.0
		Total	49	30.6	100.0	
	Missing	System	111	69.4		
Total			160	100.0		

Table 10 shows that 92.1% of the English graduates either agreed or completely agreed that their jobs were in line with their major field of study, while only 16.3% of Persian literature graduates claimed that their jobs were related to their major field of study. This contrast can be explained by the lack of job opportunities for Persian graduates. As mentioned earlier, governmental teaching positions are already filled and Persian graduates have to seek employment in other places. Some of them had to become taxi drivers, secretaries, shopkeepers, etc. It is obvious that Persian literature as a major field of study cannot provide job opportunities in Iran. Surprisingly, many of these graduates claimed that they already knew this major could not provide them with a job. They claimed that the only reason for continuing their education in this field was getting a degree which is becoming increasingly important these days. Unlike, graduates of Persian literature, English literature graduates mostly found jobs related to their major.

TABLE 11  
I RECEIVE A FAIR SALARY BASED ON MY WORKLOAD.

Major field of study			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
English Literature	Valid	agree	40	17.4	24.1	24.1
		neither agree nor disagree	54	23.5	32.5	56.6
		disagree	66	28.7	39.8	96.4
		completely disagree	6	2.6	3.6	100.0
		Total	166	72.2	100.0	
	Missing	System	64	27.8		
Total			230	100.0		
Persian Literature	Valid	agree	6	3.8	12.2	12.2
		neither agree nor disagree	5	3.1	10.2	22.4
		disagree	27	16.9	55.1	77.6
		completely disagree	11	6.9	22.4	100.0
		Total	49	30.6	100.0	
	Missing	System	111	69.4		
Total			160	100.0		

Table shows that some of the English graduates (42.4%) and most of the Persian graduates (77.5%) in our sample didn't think they were receiving a fair salary based on their workload. It is not surprising that Persian graduates complain about their salaries. They usually work in areas unrelated to their field of study and requiring no expertise, so their salaries are low. However, since most English graduates work as professionals in the language teaching profession they are expected to receive a fair salary. On the contrary, these graduates are paid only modest salaries and have a right to complain. Language institutes are owned by individuals in the private sector who only think of their own profit. As a result, teachers receive low salaries.

TABLE 12  
I DON'T HAVE ECONOMIC PROBLEMS.

Major field of study			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
English Literature	Valid	completely agree	1	.4	.6	.6
		agree	60	26.1	36.1	36.7
		neither agree nor disagree	43	18.7	25.9	62.7
		disagree	61	26.5	36.7	99.4
		completely disagree	1	.4	.6	100.0
		Total	166	72.2	100.0	
	Missing	System	64	27.8		
Total			230	100.0		
Persian Literature	Valid	agree	3	1.9	6.1	6.1
		neither agree nor disagree	5	3.1	10.2	16.3
		disagree	28	17.5	57.1	73.5
		completely disagree	13	8.1	26.5	100.0
		Total	49	30.6	100.0	
	Missing	System	111	69.4		
Total			160	100.0		

The above table presents the results related to item 11 in our questionnaire. This item is an inquiry about the participants' economic problems. As you can see in the table, 36.7% of English graduates reported that they didn't have economic problems while only 16.3% of Persian graduates agreed with this item. The fact that a big majority of Persian graduates faced economic problems (83.6%) is rooted in their employment problems. Since they have difficulty finding employment, they are expected to have economic problems. As for English graduates, although they did not have a difficult time finding their jobs, many of them received low salaries as indicated in table. Therefore, those who only worked as English language teachers and had no other source of income did face economic problems.

TABLE 13  
I HAVE JOB SECURITY.

Major field of study			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
English Literature	Valid	completely agree	7	3.0	4.2	4.2
		agree	88	38.3	53.0	57.2
		neither agree nor disagree	22	9.6	13.3	70.5
		disagree	45	19.6	27.1	97.6
		completely disagree	4	1.7	2.4	100.0
		Total	166	72.2	100.0	
	Missing	System	64	27.8		
Total			230	100.0		
Persian Literature	Valid	completely agree	6	3.8	12.2	12.2
		agree	4	2.5	8.2	20.4
		disagree	37	23.1	75.5	95.9
		completely disagree	2	1.2	4.1	100.0
		Total	49	30.6	100.0	
	Missing	System	111	69.4		
Total			160	100.0		

Table is related to item 12 in the questionnaire which inquires about participants' job security. As you can see, a majority of the English graduates (57.2%) reported that they had job security, while only 20.4% of Persian graduates enjoyed job security. English graduates are secure in their jobs, because they are hired as academically trained professionals and they will not be replaced easily. However, Persian graduates are insecure in their jobs because many of them had jobs unrelated to their field of study. Furthermore, many of them have jobs with unimpressive requirements. This makes them vulnerable and easily replaceable, so they feel insecure in their jobs. As for English graduates, those who do get fired or replaced for whatever reason will be able to seek employment elsewhere. Therefore, they feel secure in their jobs.



TABLE 14  
HOW LONG DID IT TAKE YOU TO FIND A JOB AFTER GRADUATION

Major field of study			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
English Literature	Valid	1-3 months	120	52.2	72.3	72.3
		3-6 months	32	13.9	19.3	91.6
		6-12 months	12	5.2	7.2	98.8
		more than 12 months	2	.9	1.2	100.0
		Total	166	72.2	100.0	
	Missing	System	64	27.8		
	Total		230	100.0		
Persian Literature	Valid	1-3 months	6	3.8	12.2	12.2
		3-6 months	21	13.1	42.9	55.1
		6-12 months	12	7.5	24.5	79.6
		more than 12 months	7	4.4	14.3	93.9
		5	3	1.9	6.1	100.0
		Total	49	30.6	100.0	
	Missing	System	111	69.4		
	Total		160	100.0		

As you can see in the above table, a majority of English graduates (72.3%) had a job almost right after graduation (took them 1 – 3 months or even less), while most of Persian graduates (81.7%) had to look for their jobs for more than 3 months. The explanation for English graduates' success in this area is very simple. Many of them were already language teachers and the rest were easily hired as English language teachers because of their degree. Language institutes don't even require work experience as long as the individual has a good command of English. As for Persian graduates, they had to look for employment for a longer period of time because jobs requiring their expertise were already filled.

TABLE 15  
IN YOUR OPINION, WHAT IS THE CAUSE OF GRADUATES' UNEMPLOYMENT?

Major field of study			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
English Literature	Valid	nonstandard Konkoor	60	26.1	26.1	26.1
		not working on applied knowledge at universities	16	7.0	7.0	33.0
		lack of coordination between universities and government institutions	61	26.5	26.5	59.6
		inefficient analysis of workforce demand by organizations in charge	93	40.4	40.4	100.0
		Total	230	100.0	100.0	
Persian Literature	Valid	nonstandard Konkoor	39	24.4	24.4	24.4
		not working on applied knowledge at universities	23	14.4	14.4	38.8
		lack of coordination between universities and government institutions	72	45.0	45.0	83.8
		inefficient analysis of workfrce demand by organizations in charge	26	16.2	16.2	100.0
		Total	160	100.0	100.0	

Table 15 presents the results related to item 14 in the questionnaire which asked the participants about their opinions regarding the cause of graduates' unemployment. Five choices were provided based on the literature (Jahangir Biabani, 2003; Katooli and Rahmani, 2005) and the participants were asked to pick one of these causes.

40.4% of the English graduates chose "inefficient analysis of workforce demand by organizations in charge" as the main cause of graduate unemployment in the country. The next highly picked cause for graduate unemployment by this group was "lack of coordination between universities and government institutions" with a percentage of 26.5% and a "non-standard Knokoor" was chosen by 26.1% of English graduates. Lack of emphasis on applied knowledge in universities was also chosen by 7% of the English majors as the main cause of graduate unemployment in Iran.

In the case of Persian majors, a majority (45%) of them chose lack of coordination between universities and government institutions as the main cause of graduate unemployment. 24.4% chose non-standard Konkoor (university entrance exam) as the main cause and 16.2% picked inefficient analysis of workforce demand as the main cause of graduate unemployment. Finally, lack of emphasis on applied knowledge in universities was chosen by the lowest percentage of Persian majors (14.4%).

## V. CONCLUSION

The present study tried to investigate the employment rate of university graduates in Iran. The students had all graduated in 1384-1388. The English sample was a little bigger mostly because of the availability of the participants in this group. These participants were not available in person because they had all graduated and we had to contact them through phone calls.

We used a questionnaire that was compiled from different questionnaires used in Job satisfaction studies. Unfortunately, we couldn't find studies quite similar to ours and this forced us to turn to job satisfaction studies.

The results of the study revealed that English literature graduates have a high employment rate in Iran, while Persian literature graduates had a low rate of employment. Even those Persian graduates who did manage to find a job, did so by accepting underemployment. Some of them became taxi drivers, shopkeepers, secretaries, etc. English graduates, on the other hand, could always find employment as teachers in language institutes. English is a universal language which is much in vogue anywhere in the world. Many people in Iran want to learn English and this has led to the burgeoning of English language institutes. As a result, anyone with a command of English can easily find a job as English language teacher. The fact that our participants held a university degree in this field only increased their chances of employment.

The sharp contrast in the employment rate of these two groups (English vs. Persian graduates) is very alarming. Authorities should find ways of improving the employment opportunities of Persian graduates and many other university graduates who have to stoop to underemployment. Another way to avoid underemployment is careful choosing of university majors. Those of us who do have a choice in our field of study should consider our future jobs when making this choice.

We also dealt with lack of job opportunities in Iran although very briefly. Several reasons for this lack of employment were investigated. The participants in our study chose two main reasons for graduate unemployment. The first one is lack of coordination between universities and governmental institutions. The second reason is inefficient analysis of workforce demand by organizations in charge. Two other reasons were also identified for graduate unemployment but they were only chosen by a minority of participants.

Thorough investigation of the reasons behind lack of job opportunities in Iran has to be done in a separate research project with much more time and resources than available to us. This is an under-researched area which needs particular attention because of its critical importance. University degree was once a gem not available to everyone. Nowadays, it is abundant and losing value. A higher rate of highly educated individuals in the country is desirable, but big problems arise when these highly educated individuals find it difficult to get a job.

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# A Feasible Study on Cooperative Learning in Large Class College English Teaching

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**Abstract**—As one of the creative and efficient teaching model, cooperative learning is widely applied to modern English language classroom. However, its feasibility and effectiveness still need further research, especially in large class English teaching for non-English majors. In the paper, two large classes with more than 100 students are involved in this research. In order to make the experiment as practical and persuasive as possible, the author employs some research techniques of questionnaire, data collection and analysis, pre-test and post-test and findings. Eventually it indicates that cooperative learning is effective to a certain degree in large class English teaching and promotes the academic achievement of learners.

**Index Terms**—feasible study, cooperative learning, large class English teaching

## I. INTRODUCTION

With the great development of higher education in China, the number of college students has gone up at an overwhelming rate in the past fifteen years. This mainly leads to shortage of English teachers and students' number increase. It's impossible for most of colleges and universities in China to organize small classes with the ideal class size of less than 30 students for English language teaching and learning and so large classes with more than 45 students become inevitable. The students have to sit together in a large classroom and quietly listen to the teachers without interaction and communication. Though problems with large-size class appear and teachers and students dislike teaching and learning in a classroom with large size, especially in English language teaching and learning, large classes certainly exist in the present situation and can't be altered in a long period in China. But the only alternative is to improve the approaches in the current classroom context. To improve college English teaching in large classes, teachers have turned to some appropriate teaching approaches, of which the strategy of cooperative learning is quite practical. The paper explores whether or not cooperative learning is feasible or effective in college English classroom with large size in China through questionnaires and findings.

## II. LARGE CLASS COOPERATIVE LEARNING

Cooperative learning is defined as group learning activities organized so that learning is dependent on the socially structured exchange of information between learners in groups and in which each learner is held accountable for his or her own learning and is motivated to increase the learning of others. (Yuan Ximing, 2003) As one of the creative and efficient teaching model, cooperative learning not only draws attention to group work or task-based interaction, but also drives learners to participate in a certain learning task actively. Moreover, it is a kind of teaching strategy to develop the students' abilities to learn independently and autonomously in order to meet their need of learning in the form of group work. During the process of cooperative learning, students generally work together in face-to face groups. They spend a large amount of time participating in discussing and assisting one another. So it is called "the most successful teaching reform". Many educators propose some wonderful ideas of cooperative learning in large class.

David Johnson, Roger Johnson, and Holubec (1990) assert that "what we know about effective instruction indicates that cooperative learning should be used when we want students to learn more, like school better, like each other better, like themselves better, and learn more effective social skills."(p.5)

Richard Felder has said, "Cooperative learning is especially important for large classes, where getting students engaged is usually a challenge. The larger the class, the more imperative it is to use cooperative learning." (Guo Xiangju, 2004)

Johnson's research also indicates that getting students to do things in small groups is the only conceivable way for students participating in teaching and learning activities in large classes. In small groups, a teacher can immediately make everyone in a large class participate in learning activities. Shy students are more likely to ask and answer questions in a small group. The same is true of low-skilled students. The benefit of cooperative learning is obvious in language classroom.

Though many experts tell us more about cooperative learning in language teaching, we still need do further research on its feasibility and effectiveness, especially in large class English teaching for Chinese non-English majors. These will be the main concerns of my paper.

### III. QUESTIONNAIRES AND ANALYSIS

This study aims at exploring whether or not cooperative learning is feasible or effective in a large class college English teaching. To this point, two large classes with more than 100 students participate in this research. In order to make the experiment as practical and persuasive as possible, the author employs some research techniques of questionnaire, data collection and analysis, pre-test and post-test and findings.

#### A. Subjects

The subjects include non-English undergraduates from two different classes in two different departments of Guangxi University of Science and Technology (GXUST). They are all from Grade 2013. Appointed to act as their English teacher, the author has a chance to do research on the two classes. To carry out the experiment, the author regards 78 students from Financial Management Department as the experimental class which is exposed to the cooperative learning approach and 98 students from Computer Engineering Department as the control class which receives conventional competitive and individual learning methods.

#### B. Data Collection and Analysis

##### 1) Data Collection of Questionnaire 1

Two questionnaires are used at the beginning and the end of the experiment respectively. The questions are designed by the author in relevance to cooperative learning and large class teaching references. 176 questionnaires are delivered to the above two classes. At last 170 effective questionnaire ones are received (except six students asking for leave) at the beginning of the experiment.

##### 2) Data Analysis of Questionnaire 1

Questionnaire 1, including 10 questions is administered for the experimental class as well as the control class. The purpose is to mainly get a thorough understanding of students' learning experience which consists of learners' English language learning environment, learning behavior in English language classroom, and expectation of large class English learning and some main factors that influence students' English language learning before the experiment.

The following investigation problems come from Questionnaire 1 that is filled out by students in both the experimental class and the control class. It provides useful information about students' English language learning before the experiment.

TABLE 1:  
STUDENTS' LEARNING ENVIRONMENT IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

Questions	Items	Number	Percentage
The class that you have had	teachers' professing	127	74.69
	students' cooperative learning	4	2.48
	both of them	39	20.03
You have a chance to answer questions in class	not often	139	81.72
	often	27	15.80
	never	4	2.48
Under which conditions you will feel the most nervous	answering questions in public	137	80.68
	answering questions after discussing	10	5.26
	preparing ahead	23	14.06
The general classroom environment	anxious	119	70.20
	serious	42	24.78
	relaxed	9	5.02

Table 1 indicates in large class most students are mainly (74.69%) dominated by the teacher's professing. 81.72% of students don't often have a chance to answer questions in class, and 80.68% learners think of answering questions in public as the most nervous situation. The general classroom environment falls into three categories: anxious, serious and relaxed. But 70.20% of students feel anxious. Therefore even if the teachers talk more about knowledge in classroom environment, the students are not sure whether they learn more or not. What's more, the general classroom environment makes students feel anxious.

TABLE 2:  
STUDENTS' LEARNING BEHAVIOR IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

Questions	Items	Number	Percentage
You often do what in the large English class	listen and answer question actively	18	10.30
	listen and don't answer questions	120	70.60
	feel absent-minded	32	19.10
How you solve some difficulties in English learning	think about questions by myself	110	64.56
	discuss with other classmates	6	3.68
	ask for teachers	54	41.76
How you do exercises assigned by teachers	do exercises by myself	136	80.13
	discuss with other classmates	21	12.43
	don't care	13	7.44
What you do when other students answer questions	listen seriously	69	40.54
	don't listen	19	11.2
	would like to listen but easily absent-minded	82	48.26

From the above table, 70.60% of the students listen to the teachers but are not willing to participate in answering questions. Moreover 19.10% of the students even always feel absent-minded during classroom time. Interaction seldom happens between teachers and students. What's more, when they have some difficulties in English language learning, 64.56 of them usually think about questions by themselves. Even when others answer questions, 48.26% of them could not understand clearly and are absent-minded for not listening. It indicates that English language learning in large class lacks of cooperation in group work.

TABLE 3:  
THE MAIN FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE STUDENTS' ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING

Questions	Items	Number	Percentage
The main factors that influence your English language learning	English level	26	15.25
	character of being shy	75	44.26
	environment of being nervousness	69	40.49

Table 3 emphasizes although individual English level influences their English language learning, the main two factors that influence students' English language learning include students' character of being shy and environment of being nervousness. Therefore, the ways on how to solve these emotional questions are to make use of cooperative learning in group work in large class.

TABLE 4:  
STUDENTS' EXPECTATION OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING IN LARGE CLASS

Questions	Items	Number	Percentage
You expect what classroom model in the future English language learning	teachers' professing	38	22.16
	student-centered activities	129	75.60
	don't care	7	2.24

From table 4, we may see that students hope the classroom model could be changed in the future. The majority (75.60%) of them expect more student-centered activities. Cooperative learning is most likely to embody student-centered ideas. In the student-centered activities, students will feel independent and autonomous so that they could stimulate their motivation and interests of English language learning by cooperating in group work in large class.

### 3) Data Analysis of Questionnaire 2

Questionnaire 2 is administered only for the experimental class. Through the questions, the researcher intend to have a clear picture of students' impressions of the cooperative learning (CL) classroom environment, cooperative learning behavior, cooperative learning emotion and cooperative learning effectiveness in English language classroom. The main purpose is to prove whether or not there are significant changes in the terms of motivation and emotion such as interest and confidence in order and whether cooperative learning is effective or not. 78 questionnaires are delivered to the experiment class. At last 76 effective questionnaire ones are received (except two students asking for leave) at the end of the experiment.

TABLE 1:  
STUDENTS' COOPERATIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

Questions	Items	Number	Percentage
The general environment of English language teaching in large class after implementing cooperative learning	active	62	81.21
	boring	3	4.27
	not obvious	11	14.52
How many chances you make use of oral English in large class	many	61	80.62
	few	4	5.53
	no	11	14.85

English learning environment is necessary for students to learn English well. If there is a better environment students are willing to participate in the activities organized by teachers and don't feel bored. From the above results, under the circumstances of cooperative learning 81.21% of the students think the general class environment is active and relaxed

and beneficial for students' English language learning and few students feel bored. Moreover, 80.62% of them have more chances to speak in English.

TABLE 2:  
STUDENTS' LEARNING BEHAVIOR IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

Questions	Items	Number	Percentage
The activity of learning English compared with before	passive	66	86.82
	negative	6	8.18
	not clear	4	5.00
The performance of your answering question in English language learning	Listening and not actively answering	8	10.74
	actively answering more times	68	89.26
The information that other classmates provide in the course of group work	more productive information you don't know	59	77.23
	the same as ones you know	3	4.28
	Some information you know and others you don't know	14	28.49
How you solve some difficulties in the process of group work	group members offer many ways	68	90.13
	the suggestion that group members offer is not helpful for you	8	9.87

During the process of cooperative learning in classroom, its ideas have an effect on students' behavior. The above table illustrates that 86.82% of students tend to be more active in English learning when they have a cooperative learning. 89.26% of them are active participants in classroom and vote in favor of the cooperative learning environment. Moreover it indicates that group work, to a considerable degree, produces an information gap between students, which motivates learning. When talking with each other, they could actively offer productive information, suggestions and error correction. Meanwhile 90.13% of students feel that they can solve some difficulties in the process of group work and at the same time they improve greatly in their English listening and speaking.

TABLE 3:  
STUDENTS' LEARNING EMOTION IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

Questions	Items	Number	Percentage
The sense of anxiety during the process of communication with other classmates	increasing	2	3.16
	reducing	61	80.36
	not obvious	13	16.58
The interest of learning English compared with before	increasing	66	86.53
	reducing	3	4.13
	not obvious	7	9.34
The confidence of learning English compared with before	increasing	63	82.68
	reducing	3	4.16
	not obvious	10	13.16

Emotion plays an important role in English language learning. If they have no interest or confidence in English language learning, the students aren't willing to speak in English or use English. During cooperative learning experiment the author finds that students believe that cooperative learning helps reduce their anxiety level and motivate their learning interest and increase their confidence. 80.36% of students' anxiety decreases in an English classroom. Most of them believe their interest and confidence are improved considerably. Thus it greatly proves that cooperative learning is beneficial for students' learning emotion.

TABLE 4:  
STUDENTS' COOPERATIVE LEARNING EFFECTIVENESS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

Questions	Items	Number	Percentage
How you think of cooperative learning in large class	very effective	61	80.18
	not very effective	9	12.16

Value of cooperative mainly embodies its effectiveness. From questionnaire results it reveals that 80.18% of the students think of cooperative learning as a suitable and effective teaching method which provides more opportunities for students to practice English and interact with other classmates. Students feel they have progressed especially in speaking and listening with the cooperative approach.

#### 4) Data Analysis of Test Scores

At the beginning of the first semester the author gives a pre-test for every student in both the experiment class and the control class. The pre-test consists of five parts: listening comprehension, reading comprehension, vocabulary and structure, cloze, and writing. The main purpose of organizing the pre-test is to understand the students' past English learning and find out some factors on how to make more progress in learning English for the classes involved in the experiment. After the first semester is over, a post-test is held by the Foreign Language Department of GXUST. Certainly, all the students are required to take part in the post-test, which aims at measuring whether the students are up to the requirements of band one after English study of one semester and whether the experiment class performs better than the control class by comparing the two tests.

TABLE 3:  
PRE-TEST SCORES

Average Score	Experimental Class	Control Class
Total scores	68.39	67.48
Listening/speaking	10/5	10.13/5.12
Reading	20	19.62
V&S	10.21	10.36
Writing	9.31	9.25

(V&S=Vocabulary and Structure)

TABLE 4:  
POST-TEST SCORES

Average Score	Experimental Class	Control Class
Total scores (Average)	74.69	65.23
Listening/speaking	12.20/9	8.54/6
Reading	26	24
V&S	13	8
Writing	12	11.68

(V&S=Vocabulary and Structure)

From pre-test score, there is almost no difference between the experimental class and control class. However, from post-test score we find that the experimental class performs better than the control class with cooperative learning for one semester. In the above two tables, the total score of the experimental class's final (74.69) is higher than that of control class's (65.23). The listening and speaking ability of the experimental class (12.20/9) is better than control class's (8.54/6) in the test. But although the score of the experimental class's (12) in writing ability is slightly higher than that of control class (11.68), there is no significant difference between the two classes.

Hence, according to the above analysis, cooperative learning is feasible or effective to a certain degree in large class English teaching and promotes the academic achievement of learners.

#### IV. FINDINGS

Having carried on the large class English language teaching and learning with the cooperative learning approach for one semester, the author feels different from the small class in English language teaching and learning and experiences many benefits during the process of cooperative learning in college English language teaching and learning as follows:

1) Cooperative learning in large class college English teaching stimulates students' interest in English learning and improves students' language comprehensive abilities.

Piaget, a famous psychologist, has said all intellectual work depends on interest. However, in traditional language classroom teacher often teaches instead of students learning. Teachers usually pours their own designed content into students and don't think about students' interest and what knowledge students need. As time goes on, class becomes more and more boring, and students gradually lose their own interest in language learning. Therefore, English teachers should highlight cooperative relationships in teaching and learning. Teachers should build an active learning environment, inspire students' individual interest in learning and boost communication and interaction between teachers and students or among students in large classes. Group work is usually regarded as basic cooperative learning. Students are reasonably divided into groups according to different levels and each group should be approximately the same. Generally speaking, four or five students in a group are better because too many students in a group easily cause the problems in order and discipline in spite of abundant information. Cooperation in the same group and active competition among groups greatly improves teamwork spirit and the ability to explore problems and motivates interest in learning.

For example, during the process of teaching the article entitled "Environmental Protection Throughout the World" (*Unit 2, Book 2, New Horizon College English*), the author uses cooperative learning into teaching as the follows:

**dividing groups → interaction between students and computer → task driving → cooperative learning**

Firstly, the author divides the students into many groups, and then presents the content of the text in the form of pictures of the polluted Liujiang River with PPT. With the teacher's explanation, the students naturally enter study of the new text. Meanwhile, this kind of presentation also motivates students' interest in learning the text. Then, the teacher asks one question such as "How do we protect the Liujiang River?". To answer this question, students begin to discuss it actively. So the class becomes enlivened. With the help of the group, even some students who are poor in English speaking can speak out some sentences such as "Before Liujiang River is clean. Now it's polluted." Some better students would say more like "Liujiang River is our mother river. She offers us rich water resource. Without her we couldn't live. So we should take effective measures to protect it in order not to be polluted."

2) Cooperative learning in large class college English teaching enlarges the student s' participating number and makes teaching more effective.

Once a teacher has the basic ideas of modern teaching such as student participation, group cooperation, experiencing success and diverse development, students' participation comes first and exists in any form of teaching. Moreover,



group cooperation changes students from negative accepters into active participants, and encourages all the students to devote themselves to English learning. However, in traditional language teaching, the teacher often asks questions in front of the whole class, and later just arranges one or a few “good students” to answer these questions. This teaching model of “teacher asking - student answering” seems to show that the students have taken part in the course as the active subject, but the fact is that most students just listen without thinking. Most students actually don’t participate in the teaching and learning or don’t get the benefit from teaching. This results in a breakdown between teaching and learning, which isn’t suitable to the principle of students-central.

For instance, here is one paragraph from “Time-Conscious Americans” (*Unit 1, Book 2, New horizon College English*):

*Americans believe no one stands still. If you are not moving ahead, you are falling behind. This attitude results in a nation of people committed to researching, experiencing and exploring. Time is one of the two elements that Americans save carefully, the other being labor.*

At the beginning, the author doesn’t ask the students to answer questions like these “What is the usage of the word ‘result’? What structure is ‘the other being labor?’” Instead, the teacher requires the divided groups to discuss these questions together and encourages them to find out more questions. With task driving, the groups begin to discuss questions cooperatively and actively, which naturally makes the course active. As a result, many groups not only could find out the difference between “result in” and “result from,” but also they could know the usages of other phrases such as “as a result”, “as a result of”.

Through cooperative discussion, the students learn to emphasize the meaning of language besides the word itself. Also, different students with different English levels have the chance to take part in the discussion. All the actions is very helpful in finding the key to the questions and the improvement of practical language ability. In the end, the teacher should ask a representative of every group to answer the questions to examine the teaching effect and discover problems that still exist. To sum up, it is necessary to use cooperative learning in college English teaching. It is better to inspire students’ interest in English learning, expand student participation, and improve students’ cooperative spirit and language communication competence.

3) Cooperative learning in large class college English teaching reaches the aim of changing the teaching model from the traditional teacher-centered model to the student-centered model.

College English Curriculum Requirements (2007) points out the objective of College English will be able to enhance students’ ability to study independently and improve their cultural quality so as to meet the needs of China’s social development and international exchanges. The reasons for these are as follows. Firstly, the students lack ability to study independently. They depend excessively on teachers instead of learning knowledge and skills voluntarily and get used to relying on teachers’ explanations. In addition, traditional thoughts and teaching methods have influenced the teachers. In class, they focus on their own teaching and even take forceful measures to sustain the process of class teaching. Because of this method, students hardly develop abilities of using language and independent study. In recent years, researchers in self-reliant learning all over the world highlight the interaction among students (or groups) and suggest that students be encouraged to learn independently in the form of group work or cooperative study, etc. This means that students should solve the problems by communicating with other group members, negotiating and cooperating with the teacher’s help. In this way, students are stimulated to study independently. At the same time, the traditional teaching model of teacher-central has been changed into the new one, in which the teacher acts as a real guide, cooperator and supervisor rather than an authority in students’ study.

For example, checking the exercise “Marriage Across the Nations” (*Unit 3, Book 2, New Horizon College English*), the author invites one of the students to act as a teacher. At first, this student is told to read the sentence of the exercise. **“I firmly believe that this agreement will be for our \_\_\_ benefit.”** Then he asks other students to fill in the blank, and later he presents the right answer. In this way, the teacher is liberated from teaching activities in the class. Meanwhile, he or she leads the students to try to explore the question and answer it independently. Besides, the students are encouraged to learn actively, and also they can experience the feeling of achievement in the process of learning. On the other hand, they can discover that they should stimulate themselves to improve their own ability of learning independently. With this new method, the traditional teaching model of teacher-central has been changed into the ability of students’ self-reliant learning completely.

The effects of cooperative learning are too numerous to be stated one by one. But it’s not hard to find implementation of cooperative learning in large English teaching is feasible and effective.

## V. CONCLUSION

In the new century, there are many requirements for college graduates including at least mastery of a foreign language, competence in IT(Information Technology) and ability of cooperation and creation. Cooperation in large college English classes not only can enable students to develop a sense of cooperation to strengthen their competitiveness in their future work, but also it can help them to develop learning skills. As a new teaching and learning approach, cooperative learning will undoubtedly have a bright prospect in the field of second language teaching, especially in large class college English teaching for non-English majors.

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# Needs Analysis: An Effective Way in Business English Curriculum Design

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**Abstract**—As one of the most important branches of ESP (English for Specific Purposes), Business English has nearly sixty years' history in China. Needs analysis is the most important stage of ESP teaching and is a widely used tool to study the validity and relevancy of all curriculum design activities in Business English teaching. It assures a flexible curriculum responsive to the needs of various stakeholders of education. Under the guidance of Needs Analysis Theory, this paper aims to discuss whether and how needs analysis can be implemented in Business English curriculum design and the results may shed light on the improvement of the Business English teaching.

**Index Terms**—need analysis, Business English, curriculum design

## I. INTRODUCTION

China's growth is felt in nearly every corner of the globe. The prosperous of business have been a great driving force for the development of Business English and the demand for Business English grows dramatically. Even though Business English teaching has become popular, for years the instruction has been limited to an approach which fundamentally focuses on the drill of language skills and ignores the social needs and learners' personal interests. This often leads to students' low motivation in Business English study and their poor performance of language use in their future profession. However, due to the influence of traditional teaching opinions and limited knowledge of needs analysis theories, course designers and language teachers in China either neglect needs analysis or cannot carry out it effectively. As a result, Business English teaching in colleges and universities is facing many challenges including optimizing course design, setting teaching goals, updating teaching concepts, training teachers and compiling textbooks. Based on needs analysis theory, this essay discusses Business English, need analysis theory and the ways of how to apply need analysis into the curriculum design of Business English courses.

## II. NEED ANALYSIS AND ITS MODELS

### A. Need Analysis

Needs analysis has existed in the world of language education for two or three decades. The role of needs analysis in any ESP course is invaluable. It is considered as a prerequisite in any course design (Richerich and Chancerel, 1987). "It is also considered as one of the key stages in ESP, the others being the syllabus design, selection and production of materials, teaching and learning, and evaluation." (Dudley-Evans and St John, 1998, p 125). Johns (1991) also regards needs analysis as the first step in curriculum design for it can provide validity and relevancy for all the follow-up curriculum design activities. Needs analysis refers to the activities involved in gathering information that will serve as the basis for developing a curriculum that will meet the learning needs of a particular group of learners. Once identified, needs can serve as the basis for designing tests, compiling materials, designing teaching activities, and evaluating strategies, as well as for reevaluating the precision and accuracy of the original needs analysis. It is regarded as an indivisible part of systematic curriculum design. (Brown, 2001). Nunan (1994, p 54) argues that "needs analysis is a set of procedures for specifying the parameters of a course of study. Such parameters include the criteria and rationale for grouping learners, the selection and sequencing of course content, methodology, course length, and intensity and duration."

### B. Models of Need Analysis

Scholars have put forward various models of needs analyses. However, the four models of needs analysis are gaining much recognition by researchers, each model can identify language needs from different perspectives.

#### 1. Target Situation Analysis (TSA)

Target situation is the situation in which the language learners will be using the language they are learning (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). Target Situation Analysis (TSA) is a kind of needs analysis which mainly focuses on students' needs at the end of a language course (Robinson, 1991). The "target needs" are the "product" of a target situation analysis. The identification of the target situation is a prerequisite for the Business English course designers. Then a rigorous analysis of the linguistic features of the designated situation should be carried out. The identified features, accordingly, will form the syllabus of the Business English course. The information collected in the target

situation includes the language application information, communicative skills, and the cognition of the teaching objectives of the learners, working institutions and societies.

It is commonly agreed by all ESP practitioners that Munby is the first specialist who have the systematic and influential ideas about target situation analysis. He formulated the famous "Communication Needs Processor (CNP)", which consists of a range of questions about key communication variables (topic, participants, medium, etc.) (Munby, 1978). These variables can be used to identify the target language needs of any group of learners (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987). As Coleman (1988, p105) illustrates: "Probably the most influential of all needs analysis procedures currently available is Munby's "communication needs processor". The most useful feature of Munby's model is its comprehensive data banks, for example: the micro-skills and attitudes, which can be used as checklists for the resultant syllabus. The instrument he proposed is supposed to enable the needs analyst to draw up an accurate profile of an individual language learner.

There are two stages involved in Munby's Model of Need Analysis: Communication Need Processor(CNP) and the profile of needs which is derived from the CNP in terms of micro-skills and micro-functions. The CNP is set out under eight variables, namely the purposive domain, setting, interaction, instrumentality, dialect, target level, communicative event, and communicative key, which are organized as parameters and are dynamically related with each other. The operation of CNP begins with the processing of its "inputs", the information regarding the identity and language of the foreign language participants. Then the information of the eight variables are required. In the second stage of the model, the user must take the activities with their communicative keys and decide which of three alternative ways of processing them is appropriate. "The alternatives are: (i) specification of syllabus content by focusing on micro-skills. (ii) specification by focusing on micro-functions (iii) specification by focusing on linguistic forms. Munby explored thoroughly every aspect relating to learner's needs"(Munby, 1978, p95). Munby thinks of the unthinkable and is very thoughtful in his work. His work proves to be the most detailed ,complex and informative and is illustrated by Zhao(2005) as follows:

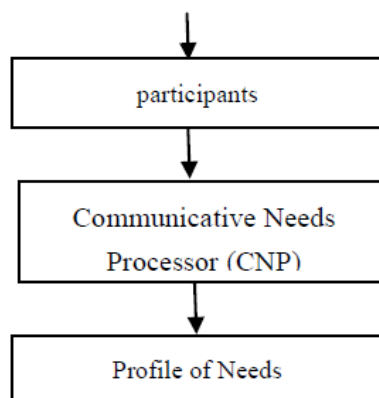


Figure 1 .John Munby's Model of Needs Analysis (Zhao, 2005)

## 2. Present Situation Analysis (PSA)

While Target Situation Analysis deals with the analysis of learner's targets, without which it is difficult to design a syllabus to achieve them. Present Situation Analysis (PSA), on the other hand, analyses learner's present situation and shows the gap between the present and the target. When emphasizing the learner's motivations in the process of studying, the needs that the students' self-perception about learning cannot be neglected. PSA explores to find out the language proficiency of the students when the language course begins and their strengths and weakness (Robinson, 1991). Three basic sources of information are suggested by Richterich and Chancerel in 1980: the information about the students themselves, the language-teaching organizations and the user-institution. This is in accordance with Jordan's (1997) opinion: the sources of information in the needs analysis are: the students themselves, the academic institution and the prospective employer. Hutchinson & Waters (2002) gave some examples and states that no necessary relationship are showed between what the learners want or feel they need and the necessities, which are perceived by the sponsor or ESP teachers. Richard Mead's (as cited in Hutchinson & Waters, 1980) carried out a research about the motivation of students following ESP courses, he found that sometimes the needs perceived by the teacher may conflict with the students' needs and thus produce a de-motivating effect.

Bloor (1984) maintained that a needs analysis may be "target-centered" or "learner-centered". A target-centered need analysis focus the learners' future role in the target situation and seeks to specify the language skills and linguistic knowledge the learner need to know. A learner-centered need analysis, on the other hand, emphasis what the learner "can do" at the beginning of the course and the problems the learner may encounter during the learning process. The "target-centered analysis" and "the learner-centered analysis" named by Bloor are the counterparts of TSA and PSA. Bloor further pointed out that in order to specify an adequate teaching syllabus, it is almost certainly desirable to operate both "target-centered" and "learner-centered" needs analysis.

## 3. Hutchinson and Waters' Model

Hutchinson and Waters (1987) first put forward the learning-Centered Approach needs analysis model. In the model, needs analysis consists of two parts: target situation needs and learning needs. Target needs include "necessities", "lacks" and "wants". "Necessities" are determined by the demand of the target situation. They are the necessary needs that enable the learner to use effectively in the target situation. "Lacks" are the gap between "necessities" and what the learner already knows, that is the existing proficiency of the learners. "Wants" are learners' subjective needs, which has no direct relationship between the objective needs perceived by the teachers and course designers. Learning needs, on the other hand, are how learners learn the language.

Learning needs are about the learners' motivation of learning the language, the way they prefer to learn, the available resources, the time and place the course will take place and the learners' personal information. Hutchinson and Waters compare the Business English course to a journey (Figure 2). The starting point of the journey is the "lacks" and the destination is the "necessities". Learning needs are how the learners get from the starting point to the destination. Sometimes the "destination" may be deviated because the "necessities" perceived by the sponsors may be different from what the learners want or feel they need.

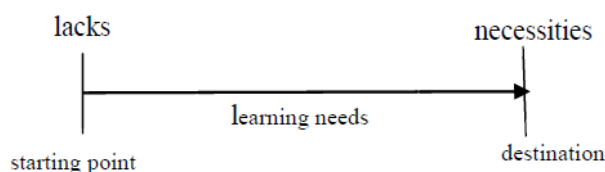


Figure 2. Business English Course "Route" (Wang, 2007)

#### 4. Dudley-Evans and St John's Model of Needs Analysis

Dudley-Evans & St John (1998) and Dudley-Evans (1998) established a model for Business English courses which contain the following aspects illustrated in the figure:

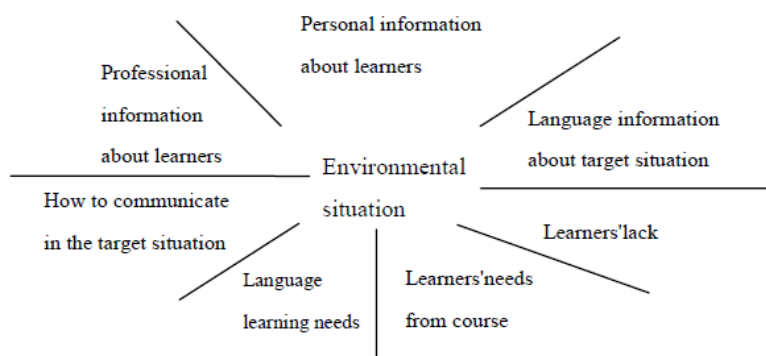


Figure 3. Dudley-Evans & St John's Model of Needs Analysis

In the model, professional information are the tasks and activities in which learners are using or will be using English for, this is the Target Situation Analysis and objective needs of the learners; while personal information concerns about the factors that might affect the way when learners learn, such as their previous learning experiences, cultural background, attitude to English, or even their reasons and expectations for taking the course, this can be called as the learners' subjective needs, which includes learners' wants, means and strategies. The English language information about the learners' is their current skills and language uses, this part belongs to the Present Situation Analysis and this is the effective way to assess the learners' lack, which is the gap between "the English language information about the learner's" and "professional information about the learners". The main concern of the Present Situation Analysis is the current language proficiency of the learners. Learning needs Analysis seeks to find out the effective ways of learning the language and skills of the lacks. Professional communication information concerns the how the language and skills are uses in the target situation.

With the progress of the course, the attitudes and approach of students may change accordingly. Need analysis, therefore, is recommended to be conducted during the whole process of the course. (Richterich and Chancerel, 1987; Robinson, 1991) Moreover, need analysis can be carried out at different stages during the curriculum design process and the identification and analysis of needs should be a continuous process (Richterich and Chancerel, 1987; Knox, 1987). This is helpful to both the course designers and teachers to make necessary changes. Moreover, need analysis can take many forms, whatever the forms is, the basic purpose should be the to find the wants and needs of learners. If the teaching approaches and teaching contents match the determined needs, the learners' motivation will be enhanced.

### III. ESP & BUSINESS ENGLISH

The definitions of ESP (*English for Specific Purposes*) as conceptual term appeared in the literature only in the 1960s.

Halliday, McInash and Strevens first put forward the definition of ESP: "English for civil servants; for policemen; for officials of the law; for dispensers and nurses; for specialists in agriculture; for engineers and fitters." (1964). Currently, the most frequently cited ESP book may be Hutchinson and Waters' *English for Specific Purposes*, in which they hold the opinion that "ESP is an approach to language teaching in which all decisions as to content and method are based on the learner's reason for learning." (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987, p.19). According to them, ESP is defined as an "approach" rather than a product, and ESP does not involve a particular type of language, teaching materials or methodology.

Business English had been discussed in the western world in the late 1960s and early 1970s, but in China, it is only after the opening up to the outside world that Business English had aroused the attention of the domestic researchers. Up to now, there exist three major perspectives to define Business English.

- (1) Business is a variety of ESP.
- (2) Business English is a social functional variety of English.
- (3) Business English is viewed as a major or discipline.

Chinese researchers and researchers abroad have reached a common view that Business English is a variety of ESP. Owing to the increasing growth of international business and globalization, Business English has become a major expansion of ESP. In China, Business English is viewed as a major or discipline, the best example may be the fact that over 30 universities and colleges were approved by the Ministry of Education to set up Business English Major since 2007. Different from the practice in other countries where ESP (including Business English) are considered as teaching systems or profession, Business English is seen as a major or discipline in China. Chinese researchers spend efforts on the scientific research of the way how to cultivate the talents. So it is recognized in China that discipline, major become the proper perspective to learn Business English. According to Hutchinson & Waters, what distinguishes the ESP learners from the learners of General English is need analysis, which is the irreducible minimum of an ESP approach to course design. The study of Business English should follow the framework of ESP. This thesis will regard Business English as a major by using the approaches of ESP.

#### IV. APPLICATION OF NEED ANALYSIS INTO BUSINESS ENGLISH CURRICULUM DESIGN

Need analysis must be reliable, efficient and usable. Need analysis can be conducted through three steps: plan, information collection and information analysis. Plan is of great importance to effective need analysis. Before the research, designers should make it clear the following questions:

- (1) What kind of information is needed?
- (2) Why the information is needed?
- (3) How to acquire the information?

After answering the above three questions, the next step would be to design the research questions according to these questions. When the plan is made and the questions are designed, the information can be collected. When applying the need analysis theory into the Business English curriculum design, course designers should study the needs of learners, society and the school.

##### A. *The Analysis of the Present Situation*

As has mentioned above, the three basic sources of information is the students, and language-teaching establishment and the user-institution. During this information collecting process, a lot of information should be collected: the learners' learning background, their concept of teaching and learning and their preferred methodology and techniques, their wants, either objective or subject, and the resources available etc. For a Business English student who is studying at a university, the courses are compulsory and their attitude toward the Business English courses varies. There are relatively large number of professional teachers, whose knowledge of and attitude to the subject content varies a great deal. The attitudes of the students and the teachers should be investigated and determined accordingly. The learning materials are available and students can get aids from various sources. On the other hand, the course designers are usually the Business English teachers, it is comparatively easier for them to collect information from the students and the teaching institutions. When doing present situation analysis, learners' subjective need, objective needs, learning needs, learning motivation and language proficiency should be considered. If the present situation is finished, all the parties involved will benefit from a proper analysis of the present situation and this will pave the way for the final accomplishment of curriculum design.

##### B. *The Analysis of the Target Needs*

Target needs are determined by the needs of the target situation. The target needs analysis is in fact a matter of asking information about the target situation and the learners' attitudes of that situation. These questions are about the reason why the language is used, the way the language is used, the content areas of the courses, the relationship between the learners and the time and place where language will be used.

For Business English students, their motivation of learning English might be to work in a business-related institution. It is advisable for the course designers to analysis the needs of the employer's anticipation and demand. The language learned by a Business English student might be to understand business emails, to talk via telephone, to communicate

effectively at an trade fair and so on. During the learning process, the corresponding language skills should be highlighted. When doing this, questionnaires, interviews, observations, case studies can be used to inquire the target need. If necessary, some other ways may be used to acquire the complete and accurate information.

What should be noted is, when the curriculum design is done, the curriculum designers should again solicit views from foreign trade companies, joint ventures, foreign department of banks, foreign insurance companies and other companies where the Business English students work to re-evaluate the curriculum and further better the curriculum.

### *C. The Analysis of Localized Features*

The goal of the Business English teaching is to cultivate interdisciplinary talents. Owing to the different features of different provinces, districts and schools, such as the regional economic development levels, the developing level of disciplines in different schools, the guiding ideology for university management and the school-running characteristics, the content of courses, teaching mode, training objective and standard, are not estimated to be the same. It is suggested that needs analysis should be established not only on the basis of target needs and learning needs, the district features, suggestion from experts, school-running orientation and features, guidelines for running universities, should be also be considered. Examples like the main subjects in financial universities may be international finance or international payment; while in marine universities, the courses such as international shipping, international logistics should be emphasized. As is famous for large number of "student bosses", Yiwu Industrial and Commercial College may set its main courses as "E-business or international logistics" based on Yiwu's local characteristics.

### *D. Procedures of Needs Analysis*

When conducting need analysis, a variety of procedures can be used and the type of procedures selected determines the information acquired. (Richards, 2002). Schutz and Derwing (1981), offered eight elaborative steps to conduct a needs assessment. These steps are: to define purpose, to delimit target population, to delimit parameters of investigation, to select information gather instrument, to collect data, to analyze results, to interpret results, and to critique the project.

(1) Defining the purpose involves identifying the goals of the study precisely in order to achieve useful results.

(2) Delimiting the target population refers to defining the target population of the study in order to make practical decisions about monetary, position and time considerations.

(3) Delimiting the parameters of investigation includes the planning of the limitations of the study in order to raise its effectiveness.

(4) Selecting the information gathering instrument refers to choosing the appropriate data collection instruments. Selecting the information gathering instruments depends on the conditions, scope and objectives of the study.

(5) The collection of the data is directly related to the data collection instruments that will be used in this process. Different types of data gathering instruments, such as distributing questionnaires, conducting interviews, or doing observations require different processes to follow up.

(6) Analyzing the results, the researcher may benefit either from computer-assisted analysis techniques or the observations and interpretations. Using computer-assisted analysis techniques to analyze data is more reasonable for the sake of time and effort, compared with observations and interpretations that require extended contact with the target situations and qualitative interpretations of the data.

(7) In the interpretation of the results section, the researcher explores what s/he had derived from the process of data interpretation. There, the researcher attempts to draw implications about the learners' language needs by using the data analysis results.

(8) Finally, the critique of the project section includes drawing out implications for further studies and explains the limitations of the study.

## V. CONCLUSION

Curriculum design is a process, during which the basic principle of a teaching plan is been conveyed, supervised and put into practice. Needs analysis is the premise of the other phases. A well-established curriculum design should first have a thorough investigation of the needs of learners, teaching organization and the society. As one of the most important branch of ESP, Business English is developing at an unprecedented speed. Over 1000 universities and colleges have Business English courses to help English majors or Business English majors to meet the competition in future career. In order to cultivate multi-discipline Business English talents and offer better Business English courses, it is necessary to take need analysis theory as a guideline the put the needs of various stakeholders into consideration when designing Business English curriculum. Need analysis is no doubt an effective way for the Business English curriculum design.

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# Teaching-A Probe to the Culture Teaching in Teaching of Chinese as a Foreign Language Based on Pierre Bourdieu's Cultural Theory.

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# Micro-strategies of Post-method Language Teaching Developed for Iranian EFL Context

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**Abstract**—This paper is intended to develop some micro-strategies for macro-strategies proposed by Kumaravadivelu's post-method framework. In his framework, he suggested ten macro-strategies, for each of which he suggested one or two micro-strategies. Some of those micro-strategies cannot be used or applied in Iranian context. The researchers decided to select 24 language teachers randomly to participate in the study. First, the macro-strategies proposed by Kumaravadivelu were taught along with the micro-strategies for each macro-strategy. However, the micro-strategies did not match the Iranian EFL context. Therefore, the researchers requested the participants to reflect and come up with some applicable micro-strategies for each macro-strategy. Then the micro-strategies suggested by the participants were trimmed and modified for better feasibility.

**Index Terms**—macro-strategy, language awareness, micro-strategy, learning opportunity, heuristics

## I. INTRODUCTION

Language teaching has undergone many changes throughout its history in the world of sciences. Some of the changes have been considered beneficial and others in vain. However, at the beginning of the nineteen decade of this century, the changes came to an end due to proposal of post-method by some scholars of the field. Scholars such as Allwright (1991), Stern (1992), and Kumaravadivelu (2003) wrote on the death of methods and alternative to methods rather than alternative methods. This initiated a new era in language teaching which is called Post-method. The proposal of post-method era started more than two decades ago. Nevertheless, based on the result of a survey conducted by the researcher, in many foreign language institutes post-method was rarely implemented in their language teaching. The survey indicated that a number of English teachers were not familiar with the concepts and some who knew something about them were not aware of how to apply the tenets of Post-method in language teaching.

This study attempts to familiarize EFL teachers with the principles and later to guide them to manipulate the principles in their teaching. In other words, the present study wishes to educate and train post-method language teachers.

Originally Kumaravadivelou's framework consisted of five macrostrategies which were all supported with classroom data. Later, he added five more macrostrategies to his framework. In order to come up with the idea of Post-method, he started reading about poststructuralism, postmodernism, and postcolonialism. His framework contains two sections: (a) macrostrategies, and (b) micro-strategies. Kumaravadivelou (2007) stated that "Macrostrategies are general plans derived from currently available theoretical, empirical, and pedagogical knowledge related to L2 learning and teaching" (p. 201). As it has been stated, a macrostrategy is a broad guideline based on which teachers can construct their location-specific, need-based microstrategies or classroom procedures. In other words, macro-strategies are operationalized in the classroom through microstrategies. It should be noted that macrostrategies are considered theory-neutral, because they are not confined to the assumptions of any one specific theory of language, learning, and teaching which exist in different methods. They are also considered method-neutral because they are not conditioned by a single set of principles or procedures associated with language teaching methods. Macrostrategies comprise ten types of strategies, each of which owns two to three macro-strategies adjusted for Iranian context.

## II. MAXIMIZE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

This macro-strategy reiterates that teaching is a process of creating and utilizing learning opportunities. Teachers are seen both as creators of learning opportunities for their learners and users of learning opportunities created by learners. Teachers need to produce a balance between their role as planners of teaching acts and their role as mediators of learning acts. Kumaravadivelou (2003) believed "the best way we can maximize learning opportunities in our classes is through meaningful learner involvement" (p. 48). Learner involvement helps both the learners and the teachers to make informed choices. Norton (2000) proposed the notion of 'learner investment' as a facet of learner involvement and believed that "when language learners speak, they are not only exchanging information with target language speakers, but they are constantly organizing and reorganizing a sense of who they are and how they relate to the social world.

Thus, an investment in the target language is also an investment in a learner's own identity, an identity which is constantly changing across time and space" (cited in Kumaravadivelou, 2003, p. 48). When learners pose a question or say something, even if it appears to be removed from the topic of discussion, they might possibly be creating learning opportunities.

Now the study is intended to propose some micro-strategies for five macro-strategies out of total ten of them.

#### ***Suggested micro-strategy 1: Competition game***

Competition game is one of the most intriguing ways of maximizing learning opportunities. Learners prefer to be silent and inactive when they are solely asked to do different tasks. However, if they are requested to do game and finish a task or activity, they will be more interested in participating in the activity. There is a variety of competition games which can be played in English classes such as word knowledge game, function game, reading comprehension game, listening comprehension game, and many other games. For example, one session the teacher can ask the learners to establish two volunteer groups to contest a word knowledge game. The group should have a leader or head. Then, the teacher asks the first group to pose a vocabulary question which should be answered by the members of the second group. If the second group members could give the meaning of the word, then they are given one positive point and the first group should ask their second question. The questions are successively asked by the first group if the second group can answer the questions. If not, it goes to the second group turn to ask their question and now the first group members should answer the questions. The total number of questions should already have been assigned by the teacher at the beginning of the game so that the group which had more chances of answering, would be the winner of the game.

#### ***Suggested micro-strategy 2: Cyberspace***

This micro-strategy is best applicable for all four skills and both vocabulary and grammar learning. Teachers can request the learners to follow the following steps to maximize their learning opportunities in reading skill and vocabulary:

First, ask the learners to surf the net and find an English magazine or a daily newspaper. Next, they are required to provide you with a number of new vocabularies with the guessed meanings. They should not look the new words up in dictionaries. The teacher can randomly check the text with the underlined new words and guessed meanings. By doing so, learners learn that as soon as they see a new word in a text, they are to guess the meanings.

Now for reading comprehension, the teacher asks learners to follow a top-down approach and decipher the whole idea of the text rather than word by word, or sentence by sentence of the text. Variety plays a crucial role here. The teachers should ask the learners to read a variety of texts ranging from political texts to sports and classified advertisements. Then, the learners are given time to talk about the text they read.

There is a fundamental problem permeating into majority of English classes in Iranian context. Most Iranian teachers (no idea about the foreign countries) ignore the techniques of reading comprehension while they are teaching reading skill. In reading section of their classes, they prefer to ask learners to read the text word by word and sentence by sentence loudly. When they are asked to utter their logic for doing so, they say they want to check learners' pronunciation and the meaning of new words. What they do for improving the reading skill of the learners is nothing. This can be the main reason of reading comprehension problem of Iranian learners. When nothing has been done for beefing up the reading comprehension skill, why should we expect them to have good reading comprehension skill?

In order to maximize learning opportunities for listening skill, cyberspace can be beneficial as well. Some news websites such as CNN, VOA, BBC, and other news agencies can be introduced to learners to visit and download pieces of news. Then, they are asked to write or tell the whole story without transcribing word by word of what they have heard.

#### ***Suggested micro-strategy 3: Technology in use***

Technology has one major application and that is for the betterment of life. In the world of language teaching, technology can also be utilized for teaching the foreign or second language. The most frequent technological appliances are cell phones and MP3 or MP4 players. Teachers can take advantage of these technological instruments in the best way. For instance, the learners can be asked to use their cell phones for improving the listening skill. They can download different speeches of famous people and listen to them while walking or sitting aimlessly. The other use of technology might be the use of tablets for developing reading skill. They can download websites of their favorite magazines or newspapers and read them to find hot subjects to talk about them in their classes.

### **III. FACILITATE NEGOTIATED INTERACTION**

This macro-strategy refers to meaningful learner-learner, learner-teacher interaction in class where the learners have the freedom and flexibility to initiate and manage talk, not just react and respond to it. However, the type of interaction is *negotiated interaction* which means that the learner should be actively involved in interaction as a textual, interpersonal, and ideational activity.

Halliday (1985) categorized interaction into three classifications: textual, interpersonal, and ideational. Interaction as a textual activity refers to the use of linguistic and metalinguistic features of language necessary for understanding language input. The linguistic dimension deals with phonological, syntactic, and semantic signals that enable learners and their interlocutors to understand input and transmit messages as intended. The metalinguistic dimension deals with the language awareness necessary to talk about language structures and mechanics. Interaction as an interpersonal

activity refers to the use of language to promote communication between participants. Consequently, it involves sociolinguistic features of language required to establish roles, relationships, and responsibilities. It focuses on the nuances of interpersonal understanding, especially those necessary to open and maintain conversational channels and to identify and repair communication breakdowns.

And finally, interaction as an ideational activity refers to an expression of the participants' own experience of the processes, persons, objects, and events of the real or imaginary world in, around, and outside the situated learning and teaching context. Specifically, it focuses on ideas and emotions participants bring with them based on their life experiences, past and present. It also involves a cognitive awareness of, and a sociocultural sensitivity to the external world and its impact on the formation of individual identities.

Kumaravadivelu (2007) believed that micro-strategies for facilitating negotiated interaction should provide opportunities for learners to stretch their linguistic knowledge, improve their conversational capacities, and share their individual experiences.

The following micro-strategies which are applicable in Iranian context are proposed:

***Suggested micro-strategy 1: Striking a bargaining***

As the title sends signals, the main objective of this micro-strategy is to promote negotiated interaction through a cooperative decision-making activity that facilitates talk and topic management on the part of the learners. There are different ways to do so.

One way of enhancing negotiated interaction is through bargaining. Teachers can construct contexts in which compromising, agreeing, and negotiation are needed to achieve the goals. For example, teacher might ask learners to play roles as shop keepers and customers. One learner can act the part of a shop keeper who is hard to get bargain from and the other learner plays the role of a customer who is intended to haggle and buy the goods much cheaper. Throughout this negotiated interaction, a number of techniques should be used to maintain the negotiated interaction.

***Suggested micro-strategy 2: Hardtalk***

In this micro-strategy, teacher selects a hot potato to talk about in a free discussion panel for each week. It is highly recommended that teachers have a list of interesting topics for themselves and select one or two for each week. The class can be divided into two groups. The member of first group should support the topic and the members of the other group can disagree on the topic. The learners are to think and improvise the reasons for being pros and cons. Teachers can teach the learners the techniques and strategies for putting forth the best deduction and reasoning and the way they believe in some ideas despite their real feeling.

***Suggested micro-strategy 3: Critical thinking***

Being a critical thinker in education is not an easy job, especially, in Iranian context. Iranian learners grow up in such a way that they prefer to accept whatever they are told or written to. Teachers may ask the learners to choose a story book and read it completely. Then they are told to write their reflection on each chapter of the book. In the beginning it might sound difficult, but after some sessions the learners would learn how to do it in the best way.

#### IV. MINIMIZE PERCEPTUAL MISMATCHES

All agree that there is a gap between teacher and learner understanding and appreciation in the objectives and activities of classroom events. Although this distance might sometimes be unbridgeable, teachers should attempt to reduce it to minimum.

Block (1996) focused on the similarities and differences between learner and teacher perceptions of learning purpose and examined the ways in which learners describe and attribute purpose to the activities that teachers ask them to do. He found that while the teacher attached great importance to the job ad activity, which took too much class time, the learners "tended to write it off" (1994, p. 483). The learners spoke most highly of the news reviewing task, which, from the teacher's perspective, "hardly deserved mention." This study pointed "not only to the autonomy of learner thought but also to the existence of a gap between the way teachers and learners 'see' the classroom and all that occurs within it" (Block, 1996, p. 168).

In another study Barkhuizen (1998) focused on the students' perceptions of learning and teaching activities they encountered in their classes and found out that students' perception of classroom aims and events did not match those of their teachers. The teachers involved in the study were frequently surprised to learn about the thoughts and feelings of their students that, of course, were very different from theirs.

Kumaravadivelu (2003) identified ten sources that have the potential to contribute to the mismatch between teacher intention and learner interpretation: (1) cognitive mismatch which refers to the general, cognitive knowledge of the world that adult language learners bring with them to the classroom, (2) communicative mismatch which refers to the communicative skills necessary for the learners to exchange messages or express personal views, (3) linguistic mismatch which refers to the linguistic components such as syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic knowledge of the target language, (4) pedagogic mismatch which refers to the teacher and learner perceptions of stated or unstated short- or long-term instructional objectives of language learning tasks, (5) strategic mismatch that refers to operations, steps, plans, and routines used by the learner to facilitate the obtaining, storage, retrieval, and use of information, (6) cultural mismatch which refers to the knowledge of the cultural norms of the target language community expected to be minimally required for the learners to understand and solve a problem, (7) evaluative mismatch which refers to

articulated or unarticulated types of self-evaluation measures used by learners to monitor their ongoing progress in their language learning activities, (8) procedural mismatch that refers to stated or unstated procedure or steps chosen by the learners to do a task, (9) instructional mismatch which refers to instructional guidance given by the teacher or indicated by the textbook writer to help learners carry out the task successfully, and (10) attitudinal mismatch that refers to participants' attitudes toward the nature of L2 learning and teaching, the nature of classroom culture, and teacher-learner role relationships.

***Suggested micro-strategy 1: Hand in hand***

Cooperative learning is the type of learning which is highly appreciated in language learning. Teachers are requested to divide the class into some groups, in which there is one weak learner and one top student. This is done to teach learners that all should get improved and linguistic mismatches should be eliminated from among them. The type of question the teacher might ask should be indirect and groups are to answer the questions, not the individual learners. Even if a topic for research is given to learners, all members should seek the answer or solution.

***Suggested micro-strategy 2: Being on the same boat***

It has frequently been seen that some teachers try to lengthen the differences between themselves and learners. This manner sometimes turns out to be boastful for the purpose of indicating the superiority of the teacher over learners. That is not correct. If the objective of teaching is transferring knowledge and also morality and humanity to the learners, then extending the differences between teacher and learners cannot be appropriate. Teachers are requested to diminish cultural, cognitive, attitudinal, and procedural mismatches. They can choose topic for discussion but should not emphasize on their own beliefs and opinions. Learners' viewpoints can be right too. Even in language knowledge, teachers can pretend not to be the master of knowledge and sometimes they might show that they learn from their students. This would motivate learners to be more interested in the process of language learning. Teachers can show that the learners and they are all in the same boat for learning.

***Suggested micro-strategy 3: Think aloud***

In this micro-strategy, teachers give some minutes to learners to brainstorm the differences between themselves and the teacher or they might be asked to utter what they think of the differences and utter it with their own wordings. Then based on the utterances, the teacher can have the best sources of mismatches for those particular learners. Consequently, teachers try hard to minimize those mismatches to minimum status.

## V. ACTIVATE INTUITIVE HEURISTICS

Heuristics refers to the process of self discovery on the part of the learner. It also refers to a method of teaching allowing the students to learn by discovering things by themselves and learning from their own experiences rather than by telling them things.

In the world of language learning and teaching, it means that an important task facing the language teacher is to create a rich linguistic environment in the classroom so that learners can activate their intuitive heuristics and discover the linguistic system by themselves. It is believed that language is systematic and rule-governed. For example, grammar which is a major component of language can be taught inductively. The inductive method of teaching is well suited to activate the intuitive heuristics of the learner. In inductive teaching, learners have an opportunity to encounter a grammatical structure or a language expression "several times in contexts where its relationship to the design of the language may be observed, and its meaning (structural, lexical, and socio-cultural) inductively absorbed from its use in such varying situations" (Rivers, 1964, p. 152).

*Consciousness-raising* and *noticing the gap* are two ways to attract the attention of the learners to language specifications, both of which have a direct impact on activating learners' intuitive heuristics. Consciousness-raising refers to a deliberate attempt to draw the learner's explicit attention to features of the target language, particularly to its grammatical features. Noticing gap refers to learners' ability to notice the gap between what they already know and what they need to know. Schmidt and Frota (1986, p. 311), who proposed what is called the "notice the gap principle," categorically state that "a second language learner will begin to acquire the target-like form if and only if it is present in comprehended input and 'noticed' in the normal sense of the word, that is consciously." For the purpose of noticing the gap, learners have to first recognize that there is something to be learned. Teachers can help learners in their cognitive act of connecting the known to unknown or new material by making linguistic features noticeable or recognizable.

***Suggested micro-strategy 1: Seeing is learning***

Learning vocabulary is sometimes considered the most difficult part of language learning. Accidental vocabulary learning can be regarded as a better way of vocabulary learning according to some scholars. For the purpose of improving intuitive heuristics, teachers are requested to ask learners to open their eyes and write down whatever word they do not know the meaning from class to home. Learners usually think that they must learn the new words within the class context. By this type of task, step-by-step, learners are acquainted to be new word conscious.

***Suggested micro-strategy 2: Research topic of the week***

It is not bad to pretend you have little or no knowledge about something. Teachers can sham they do not know something and can ask learners to search different books or people to find out the answer to those questions. For instance, teachers can give a topic to each learner to search and come up with enough information about it. Some minutes should be allotted to learners for the presentation of their findings.

### ***Suggested micro-strategy 3: Surf the net***

The Internet is also a good and an easy source of obtaining information. Teachers can ask learners to search on the Internet to find some pieces of information about different issues such as the biography of some famous people, new places, new discoveries, state-of-the-art inventions, and other pieces of information. One thing which should be borne in mind is the follow-up procedure the teacher should be conscious about.

First, the teacher highlights names of people, places, and occasions which are considered as proper nouns, and then asks the learners to surf the net and find out what they mean. In this way, the learners would be familiar with some websites such as Wikipedia, Google, Yahoo, Mama's, and other search engines. They will learn where and how they should seek for their needed information. Moreover, they would quench their thirst of knowledge by searching on the Internet.

## **VI. FOSTER LANGUAGE AWARENESS**

There are different strands of thought about how language awareness can be fostered. They can be classified into two major types of awareness: (a) general language awareness, and (b) critical language awareness. The former refers to an awareness of linguistic and sociolinguistic features governing language usage, while the latter treats it primarily as an awareness of social and political factors governing language use. Language awareness was defined as "a person's sensitivity to and conscious awareness of the nature of language and its role in human life" (Donmall 1985, p. 7, cited in van Lier, 1996).

Language awareness is largely focused on the properties of language structure and language usage with particular reference to literacy skills (reading and writing). In addition, the efforts were mostly directed at language classes since these classes easily lend themselves to metalinguistic activities through which participants can objectify a language and talk about it. The efforts showed that there are interesting ways in which learners' attention can be explicitly drawn to the logic of a linguistic subsystem be it spelling, intonation, or grammar.

### ***Suggested micro-strategy 1: Speech act practices***

How various kinds of speech acts are said in target language in comparison with the native language of the learners can best represent language awareness. For instance, learners can be asked to say how a polite request is uttered in Persian and then watch some English movies and find out how it is said in English. In this way an array of language functions such as inviting, ordering, excusing, persuading, apologizing, and other functions can be worked out in the classroom.

### ***Suggested micro-strategy 2: Spell it out***

You have undoubtedly experienced a number of odd spellings and pronunciations in English language. Teachers are requested to draw the attention of the learners to these strange and idiosyncratic spellings and pronunciations. For instance, language awareness of the learners can be raised to spelling of words such as *cannot*, *maybe*, *of course*, *grammar*, and *conquer*, the pronunciations of words such as *chic*, *chandelier*, *pressure*, *driven*, *obligatory*, and *iron*, the change of the meanings of words when part of speech is altered in words such as *exhaustion* (*tiredness*) and *exhaustive* (*vast*), *refuse* (*reject*) and *refuse* (*rubbish*), *content* (*amount*) and *contented* (*satisfied*). By virtue of this consciousness raising, the learners would be alerted that some parts of any language are not rule-governed and special attention.

## **VII. CONCLUSION**

Language teaching has entered a new era and consequently the new era and its principles should be introduced to language teachers. The researchers felt committed to do the task of introduction in Iranian context of language teaching. To do so, the researchers attempted to hold post-method courses in different language teaching centers in various cities in Iran. The courses were flooded by many English teachers, but due to lack of space, some highly motivated teachers were selected and categorized in different classes. While teaching Kumaravadivelu's Post-method framework, the participants (English teachers) were requested to propose some micro-strategies for each macro-strategy. The micro-strategies should have met the criteria needed for Post-method language teaching in Iranian context. In this study, the researchers decided to propose the micro-strategies the students suggested with some modifications their suggestions needed. Therefore, English teachers can easily use these micro-strategies in English classes all over Iran.

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# English-Chinese News Headlines Translation from a Skopostheorie Perspective

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**Abstract**—In this informative society, newspaper, websites, broadcasts, TV, and magazines are all important media, which provide news to our daily life. Therefore people have the opportunity to view the events happened all over the world. People can get access to the news of everywhere in this world and regard them as their topic when talking with each others. How can a piece of news get out of others successfully? The headline is the most important elements of it. There are many studies about the translation of the news headline, but these studies are mainly focused on the features of the news headline and the skills of translation. This paper discusses how to express the original meaning of the news headlines according to the Skopostheorie and make the headlines localized as well as interesting, in order to grab the readers' attention.

**Index Terms**—news headlines, Skopostheorie, English-Chinese translation

## I. INTRODUCTION

In this modern society, news has become a very common thing in our daily life. We are confused by thousands of news and the information they are carrying as we are all exposed on this world where the massive information is surrounding. There is no doubt that some news is ignored as the amount of news we can read is too much. Therefore, a proper headline is the most important element which can be regarded as the only way to attract the target readers. The headline of the news must be interesting, dramatic and brief. Thus the readers can notice the news from others after seeing it.

Journalistic English is significant when the promotion of communication is concerned. With the gradual deepening of the opening policy and the other events happened these years, Chinese people are becoming more and more eager to keep in touch with the world. Translating of news stories from English media has become a daily-must for many people, which is widely regarded as a way to widen one's horizon so as a bridge for more information. Therefore, the translation of the English news is important as the people's desire. According to the above discussion, news headlines hold a key position. What is more, the language of newspaper headlines is the model of language that is intensively compact and cleverly designed to serve the major purposes of telling the news, drawing attention and establishing character. The news headline plays such an important role to light up the interest of the reader, so its translation should be concerned. However, not too many scholars and translators pay their attention to the news headline. The relevant research is far from enough.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The translation of English news headlines is to make the translated headlines perform the same functions in Chinese as those the original headlines performed in English. Thus an introduction to this theory is needed.

During the 1970s to 1980s, more and more scholars change their focus from strict linguistics to dynamic functionalism in translation studies. They are called the "Germany school" of functional theories of translation. From the perspective of functional theories, translation is conceived as a communicative act with an aim, whose end product is a text which is capable of functioning appropriately in specific situations and context of use. Skopostheorie is the most important theory of this school. Reiss and Vermeer play key roles in building of the theory and Christiane Nord's role is crucial for a further development of the Skopostheorie. (Baker, 2004) Based on the theory of action, Hans J Vermeer develops his general theory of translation called Skopostheorie. Breaking with traditional linguistic translation theory, Vermeer views translation as an intercultural action. It is not the transcoding of words or sentences from one language into another, but a complex action in which someone provides information about a text under new functional, cultural and linguistic conditions in a new situation. (Baker, 2004) In Vermeer's opinion, translation is a form of translational action based on a source text. Any action has an aim or purpose. So Skopostheorie is a theory of purposeful action. The essence of Skopstheorie is the principle that determines any translation process is the aim of the overall translation action (Nord, 2001). A translational action has various translation Skopos, related to each other in a hierarchical order and determine the translation strategies.

Skopostheorie was first introduced by Hans J. Vermeer. The main rule determining any translation process is the purpose of the overall translational action. (Nord 2001) We will look at the basic viewpoints of Skopostheorie and its Skopos rule in the following section.

Skopos is the Greek word for “purpose”. In Skopostheorie, Skopos is a term usually referring to the purpose of the overall translational action. The term Skopos usually refers to the purpose of the target text. (Nord, 2001) The prime rule for any translation is the Skopos rule, saying that a translational action is determined by its Skopos. (Nord, 2001). We can understand the decisive role of Skopos in a translational action in this way: Skopos is the dominant rule; it determines the course of the action. Skopos determines why the source text is translated in one way other than another, so it is the intention of the mode. Skopos is the goal of the translation process; so it is the function of the translation.

After expatiating upon the basic concepts of Skopostheorie, Vermeer further more advances the Skopos rule. Skopos rule is the top-ranking rule in Skopostheorie which says translational action is determined by its Skopos that is the ends justify the means. According to Nord, the Skopos rule has solved the eternal dilemmas of dynamic vs. formal equivalence, free vs. faithful translation, good interpreters vs. slavish translators, and so on, because all the strategies in translation depend on the purpose for which the translation is needed. (Nord, 2001).

Another important rule of the Skopostheorie is the coherence rule, which means that a translation should be acceptable in a sense that it is coherent with the receivers' situation. A communicative interaction can only be successful if the receivers interpret it as being sufficiently coherent with their situation. Fidelity rule is considered to be subordinated to intratextual coherence. Such a kind of fidelity is embedded in the very concept of translation in the Skopos theory. It concerns intertextual coherence between the translation and the source text.

In the theoretical framework of Skopostheorie, translation means producing another version of the pieces for the target readers or audience in the target language under the target cultural environment. Thus, the source text will be in the subordinating position (Nord, 2001). In other words, the source text is not in the central and authoritative position, but in an unbound system. It is only one of many information sources employed by the translator. One of the reasons why the translator chooses the source text as his object of translation is that he thinks much information in the source text can reach certain destination in the target cultural environment. Generally speaking, each translating action aims at a given purpose, and the translator achieves the destination as possible as he can by using all kinds of means.

In summary, the translating strategies are determined by the purpose and function of the translation. No matter what strategies to choose, it is of primary significance to achieve the concrete destination of translation effectively. Traditional translating comments fall in between empty admiration and concentrative error correction. The Skopostheorie provides a theoretical foundation and guidance for some translating strategies which disobey the traditional translating theories but is successful in guiding practical translating activities, especially in news headline translation. This causes more relevant experts to reevaluate those translating strategies which are not advocated traditionally but indispensable in practical translating activities from the perspective of function.

In light of all the above-mentioned, news headline translation sometimes can be astray from the traditional equivalent translation principles by following the reader-oriented translating theory if needed, which makes the translating strategies of adaptation and abridged translation possible and reasonable. Moreover, we also find theoretical guidance for those news headline translations which are unexplainable by the traditional translating theories.

### III. THE FEATURES AND FUNCTION OF THE NEWS HEADLINE

Now in this information age, media plays a significant role in people's daily life, There are different categories of news headlines in a broad sense, so news headlines fall into TV news headlines, radio news headlines, newspaper headlines, Internet news headlines and so on. In this day and age, newspapers and websites are both important news media. Both provide news to the public. Therefore, this paper will choose the headlines on newspapers, magazines and the headlines on the websites as examples.

#### A. *The Feature of News*

The journalistic language, which is a special category of language, has its features: concreteness--the description and narration of events or happenings claim concrete wording and details; accuracy--it is the lifeline of news, and inaccurate news is worthless; brevity--the timeliness of journalistic reporting and the limited space of news media require that news should be brief; popularity---journalistic languages are easily comprehensible to people of different educational levels; and likeliness---journalistic languages are vivid and touching. (Newmark, 2006)

Headlines in newspapers vary from one to another, whereas the formulation of news headlines has to meet fundamental requirements prescribed by journalistic conventions. The news headline has those features: Shortness: news headlines must always be downsized, with redundant information cut off and awkward structures smoothed, because the space for news coverage is too limited. What is more, to get an upper hand in competing with counterparts, media have to simplify and shorten their language to guarantee minimum loss of time in collecting and distributing news. Truthfulness: as it is one part of news, a news headline should theoretically take on news qualities such as timeliness and truthfulness, the most valuable journalistic features. Besides, to tell truth but the fabricated information is the very responsibility of each news reporter and editor. For instance, it is due to the truthful report on the Tsunami of Indian Ocean that the world makes a quick response to launch worldwide donation campaigns for those devastated areas. Variousness: media have been constantly investing efforts into seeking fresh and novel appearances of news headlines. Even aiming at the same news event, different media may adopt sharply diversified headlines rather than uniformed formats. A headline must give the essence of the story. While explaining the story accurately, the story accurately, the



headline must fit into a limited space. A good headline should be attractive, and be able to catch the reader's attention once his eyes falls upon it. Therefore, the appeal of story largely depends on headline. The language of news headline is special and has its own characteristics on the lexical, grammatical and syntax level. It is characterized by its brevity, attractiveness, and clarity. The key to a good headline is the use, whenever possible, of strong action verbs. Headline writers use verbs in historical present tense, thus can describe the actions that had happened just now. This tense can express the feel of immediacy. English news headline often use short words, such as abbreviations and acronyms, and the articles, personal pronouns, are often omitted. The new words are very common in the news headline as the technology develop; people have to use new words to describe the new things.

In the news headline writing, the use of tense is flexible. Different tenses can express the freshness of the news. But the present tense is the most widely used tense in the English headline because it can describe the things which are happening in the present or in the past. The sentence of the news headline tends to be clear and simply. A sentence is more likely to be clear if it is a short sentence conveying only one thought, or a closely connected range of ideas. However, that is not to say that the headline must be simple sentences, to use a subordinate clause can state relations more precisely and more economically than a string of simple sentences or compound sentences joined by "and", "but", etc.

#### B. *The Function of News Headline*

The function of news headlines can never be underestimated. Concise and creative headlines will more often than not leave readers with such deep impressions that news details have faded into memory while headlines remain fresh in their mind.

Headlines are described as the "eyes" or "windows" of newspapers, through which readers can have the key information in news reports.

Generally speaking, news headlines in the modern time have the following major functions in application: First, news headlines sum up news content, enabling readers to enjoy much convenience and save considerable amounts of time while reading newspapers. Time is so precious in the modern society that people cannot be patient enough to go over all news details. Instead, only by browsing through news headlines can readers easily pick up the information for individual preferences. This kind of readers is called "Headline Readers". It is for this function that major Western newspapers intentionally set a special column named "Headline News" on their cover pages, in which news is short, brief and just like a headline. This kind of news enjoys wide popularity among readers for it sets them free from tedious and aimless reading. Second, news headlines are printed in varied fonts, sizes, colors and structures to decorate or beautify newspaper pages. In the process of newspaper production, special printing crafts are very often practiced to enhance the visual effect of newspapers thus magnetizing readers' attention.

As far as language functions are concerned, there has been no commonly acknowledged views either in the territory of linguistics or translation. Halliday articulates that social communication is the most important function of language because language serves as a communication tool; Hu Zhuanglin, a Chinese linguist, proposes seven language functions: phatic, directive, informative, interrogative, expressive, evocative and performative; Eugene Nida puts forward two basic language functions: the psychological function, which is internal or subjective means by which people can negotiate with reality, and the sociological function, which is external and interpersonal means by which people can negotiate with others. (Newmark, 2006) The aforementioned three functions are intertwined with each other--the informative function is the prerequisite of the other two, without which news headlines will lose the news quality or newsworthiness; the expressive function makes headlines look compelling and arresting to optimize the process of information dissemination; the vocative function prompts reactions among readers in case that editors can accordingly improve the quality of headlines.

#### IV. A CASE STUDY OF THE TRANSLATION OF ENGLISH NEWS HEADLINE ACCORDING TO THE SKOPOSTHEORIE

A further discussion of news translation by adopting the Skopostheorie introduced will be made in this part. By making a detailed analysis of the typical characteristics of the new, this chapter will attempt to illustrate the applicability of Skopostheorie by the concrete exemplifications and make a verification of how these rules contained in Skopostheorie function well in the news headline translation. The Skopostheorie is an optional theoretical guidance for news translation such as the headline, the lead and the body and in this paper, only the translation of the news headline is concerned.

The most important function of news headline is to express the information. Thus it must be translated correctly. The translators should pay attention to all the aspects in order to ensure there is no mistake in the headline. Sometimes the headlines may be translated unfriendly, to translate those headlines, the translator must insist on the political believe and try to protect the national esteem. For example, "Sino-US Talks: Result, Gap". In this headline, Gap means "cha ju", while some people translated it into "ju li", "ge he". That expression is negative, but the writer wants to express a friendly atmosphere between the two countries. So it should be "zhong mei hui tian, you jie guo, you cha ju". If the word "gap" was mistranslated, the wrong information would be express to the readers.

There is another example: "Annoyed by Cell-phones? Scientists Explain Why". This is the news is publish on China Daily. We don't know what is "Annoyed by Cell-phone" really means. However, the translated headline explained it

clearly: wei shen mo ting bie ren da dian hua hui nao xin?

The headline is the eye of a piece of news, so the accuracy of the diction is the most important point. Thus the readers can get a general idea of the news. For example: When the North and South Korea started to communicate, the headline of the 21st Century is: "Korean Talks to Started". Some news media translated it into "han guo tong yi yu bei chao xian ju xing fu bu ji hui tan", but it contains too many information, and which is not concerned by the readers. It can be translated into "nan bei chao xian kais hi dui hua", this translation did not mentioned the background of this talk, but the most important information was expressed.

The headline has the obligation to attract the readers' eyes, so the brilliant point is necessary. The dictions must be interesting and humorous. Let's use some examples to explain it. Barcelona Moves to Keep Bikinis off the Streets. There is no doubt that the word "bikinis" can attract most of the male readers successfully. Nearly every man loves the girl who wears bikini. However, in this headline, there is a verb phrase "keep off". If translate it into "qu zhu", it is a kind of mistranslate. Actually, it means people who wear bikini are not welcomed in Barcelona. So it was adjusted into ---ba sai luo na bu huan ying yong yi ke. Seven-year Itch? First You Must Survive the Seven-month Slouch. The same with the example above, this topic is also an interesting one. This headline can appeal to the couples whose love is becoming boring. Therefore, the translator used a slang in it to light it up: "qing lv zhi jian ye you qi nian zhi yang"?

The English headline has it unique connotation, a good headline often uses the proper rhetorical. To translate these kinds of headlines, the translator must understand the headline clearly and try to give a harmony translation. For example, "Desperate Need, Desperate Deed", in this headline, the word "need", and "deed" share the same rhythm. So it is hard to translate. It can be translated into "ran mei zhi ji, shi wan huo ji". Thus the rhythm is "ji" and this problem had been solved perfectly.

From the above analysis, we can take the criteria of the news headlines translation, namely fidelity, readability, adaptability and rapidity. Fidelity refers to the precise of the translated part concerning the content. As we all know, the translator must take the content of the news into the consideration when he is translating the news. The first and foremost task for him to do is to be loyal the original content and translate it in a proper way because news is required to reflect the in an objective way. So fidelity is the main principle for translating news headlines. Readability means that the translated version should be smooth for reading. To be more specific, the translation should be accessible both to the readers and translators. To arouse the interest of the readers' interest is the main purpose for the news headlines and translators, or it will reach the audiences even though it is a breaking one. Adaptability means that the translated version should be in a proper writing style which is related to news language, that is to say, the matching of the TL to the SL in the light of the style. Apart from the content and form, news headline has its specific style. Thus in translation the issue style is an essential and important. Every translator should take the grammar and diction of the Chinese counterpart in translation job, trying to ensure the news styles is suitable. As have been mentioned, translation content, translation form and translation style are the three elements for translating. And apart from the three rules or principles we have mentioned above, there is another rule, namely, the rapidity or translation speed. It means that the news headline translation must be done as quickly as possible. Because the news translation should be done at the required limited time without any delay. Thus the time interval between the happening and reporting is shorter, the news is more valuable. For this reason, the news will become useless even though it is translated well without the rapidity. All in all, timeliness of the news requires the rapidity of the news headlines.

## V. CONCLUSION

A well-wrought headline can pack an emotional punch or spark a rush of insight. Readers can be moved, angered, entertained or simply informed by the half-dozen words. It is without a doubt one of the most important jobs in journalism. A headline's value is that it helps organize the news on the page for readers mentally by organizing it visually. Without ever reading a story or looking at a photo, readers can glance at a newspaper page or a home page on website for a few seconds and know, in a general way, not only what information is on that page, but the importance of each one in relation to others as well.

On the one hand, the translation of journalistic English including that of English news headlines plays a crucial role in our daily life. On the other hand, to translate news reporting is absolutely no easy job. Special translation methods are required according to different grammatical features of headlines. Since news headlines are a kind of practical text genre, the translation purpose of attracting target readers is achieved to a certain extent by their function. To translate it efficiently, feasible and applicable translation strategies should be employed to facilitate the performing of functions of news headline in target language.

The skopostheorie is a considered to be effective guidance to analysis the translation of the news headlines. Under the guidance of this theory, translators can tackle the problems with different methods, but with one spirit. The most important thing is to transfer and convey the original sense of the source language, not every single word, phrase and their combination. Although the wording in English news headlines is usually simple, the translation work is by no means a piece of cake. Translators are often confronted with more problems of culture than those of language itself. They should always consider whether readers can understand and in the end accept the translation. Since, there is no formula in headline translation; translators should always tackle the each problem respectively. Headlines will continue to enhance the readability to receptors. Closeness is the future trend of headlines and more and more pop and modern

cultural elements and oral phrases will be added into headlines. Readers will be able to sense the breath of their life in headlines. Translators and researchers should keep focus on the study of western mainstream cultures and related elements, in order to keep pace with them. Thus, they can well understand the headlines.

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# On the Characteristics and Translation Method of the Chinese Verb “Jinxing”

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**Abstract**—The verb “Jinxing” has been frequently used in contemporary Chinese language. Normally, it is mainly used in political, scientific and economic articles and on some solemn occasions, but it appears rarely in daily conversation and literary works. According to the statistics of *Modern Chinese Corpora*, the frequency of the usage of “Jinxing” is nearly 0.116%. Based on its language usage, it could be divided into transitive and intransitive verbs. Based on its part of speech, it could serve as functional verb and dummy verb. As “Jinxing” has so many complicated usages, translators often feel confused during the English-Chinese translation process. Therefore, this paper will introduce examples to help readers to understand the usage of “Jinxing” so as to become capable of distinguishing functional verb from dummy verb and translating it into English properly under different contexts, which leads readers to think deeply of the differences between Chinese and English translation.

**Index Terms**—method of translation, “Jinxing”, dummy verb, functional verb

## I. INTRODUCTION

There is a kind of verb whose objects are usually the verbs or polarization phrase in modern Chinese language. This kind of words has syntactic and grammatical functions. In other words, they just make the objects of a verb carry specific information but they themselves have no particular meanings. Generally speaking, the common dummy words include “加以”, “给予”, “给以”, “予以”, “进行”, “作” and so on. We call them as dummy words. In recent years, linguists have paid more attention to them, giving them many different names as well as doing many researches. The earliest person to study the dummy words is Mr. Zhu Dexi. In his work *The Dummy Words and Noun-verbs in Modern Written Chinese* (1988), he made a clear definition of “dummy verbs”. As we can see, after the publication of Mr. Zhu’s works (ibid), the name and the usage of dummy words have taken great changes in the past years. Therefore, before we start our research, it’s necessary for us to review their different names and definitions made by various linguists. So far, the names of the verb “Jinxing” are as follows:

- 1) dummy verb: Lv Shuxiang (1980) named such words as “dummy verbs”.
- 2) forerunner verb: Fan Xiao (1987) put forward this term in his book *An Introduction to Chinese Verbs*. The verbs “jiayi”, “yuqi”, “geiqi”, “geiqi” and “zhiyu” have no statement functions like predicates and they are just act as the agents of the real verbs.
- 3) colorless verb: Song Yuke (1982), in his book, *Grammatical Functions of the Verb “Jinxing”*, argued that the function of colorless verbs were not mainly for meaning but for grammar.
- 4) “wei-bin” verb: In the book *Modern Chinese Language* edited by Huang Borong and Liao Xudong (1991), they used that term.
- 5) functional verb: this term was first used in the book *The Discussions on De-lexical Verbs* by Yuan Jie and Xia Yunyi(1984).
- 6) functional verb: Zhu Dexi (1985) used that term in his book *functional Verbs and Gerunds in Modern Written Chinese*.

Those different terms reflect people's different understanding of the word “Jinxing”. To a certain extent, those terms all sound reasonable and have much in common. However, the main purpose of this paper is to discuss the translation method of the word “Jinxing” rather than rectifying its name. Therefore, in order to avoid misunderstanding, I chose the term “dummy word” as its English translation because the usage and influence of that term is relatively large. According to a large number of articles, we found that the researches made by many experts and scholars were usually concentrated on its grammatical features and objects, but they rarely studied its English translation. So in this paper I will use examples to help readers to understand the different translation methods of the word “Jinxing” in different contexts, guiding them to have a more profound thinking of the Chinese-English translation method.

## II. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE VERB “JINXING”

We know that the translation of a verb could be different based on its characteristics. So before we analyze the Chinese-English translation method of the verb “Jinxing”, it’s necessary for us to have a clear understanding of its characteristics so as to translate it properly in different contexts.

#### A. *Dummy Verb*

The term “dummy verb” was first introduced by Lv Shuxiang in 1980, and it is also called “de-lexical verb”, “forerunner verb”, “colorless verbs”, and “wei-bin verbs” and so on. According to Zhu Dexi (1988) and Fan Xiao (1987), the lexical meanings of this kind of verbs have gradually become illusory. In sentences, they form the predicate-object structures whose objects are verbs or focus on verbs. Those structures can make the verb objects bear specific behaviour information and these verb objects will not affect the original meaning of the sentence if we remove them. Therefore, there are three important standards to judge whether “Jinxing” is a dummy word or not. The first standard depends on whether its meaning becomes illusory or not. The second one is whether the object of the verb “Jinxing” is a verb or focuses on verbs as objects or not. The third is whether the verb “Jinxing” will affect the basic meaning of the original sentence if we remove it. So far, there are six dummy verbs which are publicly known by people: “jia-yi”, “gei-yi”, “gei-yu”, “yu-yi”, “zuo”, “jin-xing”. Liu Yunfeng (2004) said in the book “*Dummy Verbs and Its Object*” that the word “Jinxing” can have noun objects as well as verb-objects but the verb-objects can not be added with objects.

#### B. *Functional Verb*

Consequently, “Jinxing” can have noun objects as well as verb objects. Normally, these objects include three kinds: double syllable verb, compound phrase and verb objects with modifier. “Jinxing” can be used as a transitive verb as well as an intransitive verb; it also serves as a predicate in a sentence and expresses the meaning of persistent activity. In addition, it undertakes the syntactic and semantic functions. From this point of view, “Jinxing” can be used as a functional verb (including transitive and intransitive verbs) and dummy verb. When it is followed by the noun object or complement, it is the functional verb; when it is followed by the verb object, it’s the dummy verb.

#### C. *Examples*

Now let’s illustrate their uses by the following examples taken from *Modern Chinese Corpus* and *Chinese-English Parallel Corpora* made by Shaoxing College of Art and Science (2009).

- 1) 将爱情进行到底。
- 2) “培根完全抛弃了、拒绝了经院哲学的方法，即根据一些极其遥远的抽象的概念进行推理，作出论断，建立哲学理论，面对摆在眼前的东西视而不见”。
- 3) 例如，我国宪法第四十一条第三款规定，人民法院审判案件，除法律规定的特殊情况外，一律公开进行；我国婚姻法第二十五条第二款规定，人民法院审理离婚案件，应当进行调解。

In example 1, the complement “dao-di” is added behind “Jinxing”. In this case, the word “Jinxing” is served as a functional word.

In example 2, the verb “tui-li” is added behind “Jinxing”, so “Jinxing” is a dummy word in this sentence.

In example 3, the first “Jinxing” belongs to the intransitive verb of functional verbs while the second “Jinxing” is a dummy verb as it’s added with a verb.

- 4) 中国男子排球队今晚在这里同欧洲劲旅波兰队进行第二场比赛，以三比一获胜。
- 5) 中国和古巴女队，是在沿海的中等城市富山进行比赛。

In these two examples, they all contain the word “bi-sai”. However, in example 5, the word “bi-sai” is a verb as the meaning of the whole sentence would not change after removing the word “Jinxing”. Therefore, in this sentence, “Jinxing” is a dummy verb. But in example 4, the word “bi-sai” is a functional verb and it becomes a noun phrase modifier, while the word “Jinxing” serves as predicate in this sentence, so it’s a functional verb.

From the above examples, we can see that the verb “Jinxing” has many different identities in sentences. Therefore, it is very important to translate it from Chinese into English and have a clear understanding of its function in different contexts.

### III. THREE TRANSLATION METHODS OF THE VERB “JINXING”

According to the above passage, we know the verb “jinxing” could be divided into “dummy verb” and “functional verb”. So we have to choose the translation methods properly in order to translate the two kinds of verbs.

#### A. *Omission of Dummy Verb “Jinxing”*

In this part, the translation method of omission will be introduced on how to translate the dummy verb “jinxing” under different contexts.

##### 1. “Jinxing” +double syllable verb

A double syllable verb could be added at the end of “Jinxing”. In this case, although “Jinxing” works as a predicate, its semantic meaning has become virtual. As a result, the main information of the whole sentence focuses on the objects behind “Jinxing”. For example:

1) 农业生产获得好收成, 种植结构开始进行调整。(There was a good harvest, and preliminary improvements were achieved in the pattern of farming.)

In this sentence, the verb “tiao-zheng” is added behind “Jinxing”. If we remove the verb “tiao-zheng”, the sentence is still reasonable. So in this sentence, “jinxing” is a dummy verb. Adding the word “Jinxing” is to make the sentence become complete and grammatically right, but it has no practical meaning. Therefore, we could omit it and don’t have to translate it.

2) 虽然未作前瞻性随机试验, 将治疗及未治疗的小儿进行对比, 但大部分研究者的印象是: 如果给予适当抗生素治疗, 临床病程可以缩短。(Although no prospective randomized trials have been done to compare treated and untreated children, it is the impression of most investigators that there is a shortened clinical course if an appropriate antimicrobial is prescribed.)

In this sentence, if the original sentence doesn’t add the dummy verb “Jinxing” but linking-up the action-object “治疗及未治疗的小儿”, then the object will look too long and the whole sentence structure would become asymmetric. So we need the verb “Jinxing” to establish the sentence which is led by the prepositions like “对、把、将、就”.

The same examples are as follows:

3) 依法向国有企业派出监事会, 检查企业财务, 对董事、经理的职务行为进行监督, 维护国有资产所有者权益。(Boards of supervisors should be assigned to state-owned enterprises according to law to examine the financial dealings of enterprises, exercise supervision over the members of the boards of directors and managers performing their duties, and safeguarding their rights.)

Sometimes, intransitive verb is added behind “Jinxing”. Generally speaking, the intransitive verb can not take objects. But in some cases, in order to emphasis its action, the sentence needs to use dummy verbs to construct sentences. Here are the examples:

4) 我们不断对各种颜色进行实验, 直至调配成功。(We experimented until we succeeded in mixing the right color.)

In this sentence, “shi-yan” is an intransitive verb, it needs to emphasize its action object, “ge-zhong-yan-se”. But in Chinese, we can’t say “shi-yan--ge-zhong-yan-se”, so we have no choice but use dummy verb “Jinxing”. As a result, when translating we should ignore the grammatical function of dummy verb and focus on the verb object.

## 2. “Jinxing” + compound phrase

Let us have a look at the following examples.

1) 资产重新配置: 将公司的资产重新进行策略分配, 以提高盈利能力。(Asset Play: An incorrectly valued stock that is attractive because its combined asset value greater than its market capitalization.)

2) 围绕制定国家中长期科学和技术发展规划, 组织 2000 多位专家对若干战略问题进行研究论证。(We organized over 2,000 experts to study and discuss a number of strategic issues bearing on the formation of a national medium and long-term program for scientific and technological development.)

In the two sentences, compound phrases are added with “Jinxing” and the sentences are still correct after removing “Jinxing” so we just need to translate the phrases behind the dummy verbs “Jinxing”.

## 3. “Jinxing” + verb objects with modifier

Sometimes, there will be various modifications in front of verb objects. These modifications could be nouns, adjectives, verbs, locative phrases, numeral phrases, subject-predicate phrases, verb-object phrases, prepositional phrases and adverbs. According to the study of Song Yuke, when these modifications are added behind verbs, the verbs are turned into nouns. For example, “商代的王室和大贵族使用大批奴隶进行农业生产”. In this sentence, “sheng-chan” is added with the noun “nong- ye” and the verb “sheng-chan” can not work as a predicate after it’s added with noun modification but it serves as subject or object. However, we know that a complete sentence must have a predicate, so in the above example, we need a predicate which just has grammatical function but without adding more information to the original predicate. In that case, the dummy verb “Jinxing” is the only choice to make that sentence become complete. Consequently, we know that the dummy verb “Jinxing” just undertakes grammatical function and has no practical meaning, so when we translate we don’t have to translate it but just focus on the phrases behind “jinxing”. For example:

1) 宜于实行股份制的国有大中型企业, 要利用股票市场, 抓紧进行股份制改革。(Large and medium-sized state-owned enterprises to which the stockholding system is applicable should make use of the stock market and quickly implement stockholding system reforms.)

In this sentence, the verb “gai-ge” can no longer work as predicate after it’s added with the modification “gu-fen-zhi” although it indicates concrete action. Therefore, we must use the dummy verb “Jinxing” to substitute predicates. When translating this sentence, we still pay our attention to the verb of the verb-object phrase “gai-ge” while the noun modification “gu-fen-zhi” serves as object in this sentence.

The similar examples are as follows.

2) 我们要加快推进行政管理体制的改革, 进一步转变政府职能。(We will accelerate reform of the administrative system and further transform government functions.)

3) 以前的病例研究对评价持续阻塞性黄疸的实验室检查已进行过一定程度的讨论。(The laboratory studies performed in the evaluation of prolonged obstructive jaundice have been discussed to some extent in the prior case

study.)

4) 继续加强文化市场和互联网的建设与管理, 坚持不懈地 *进行* “扫黄”, “打非”斗争。(We will continue to strengthen the development and management of the market for cultural products and the Internet, fight unremittingly against pornographic and illegal publications.)

In the last two sentences, the the verbs “*tao-lun*” and “*dou-zheng*” are added with the adjective “*yi-ding-cheng-du-de*” and verb-object phrase “*sao-huang-da-fei*” and they turned into nouns and can no longer be regarded as predicates. So we need to use “*Jinxing*” to build up this sentence and have no need to translate “*Jinxing*”.

From the above examples we could draw the following conclusion. Based on the dummy verb’s syntactic and grammatical functions in Chinese, we could omit the translation of “*Jinxing*” and focus on the verb-object phrase. Further more, not only does this method measure up to the expressional manners of English language but also presents the original information completely.

#### B. Functional Verb “*Jinxing*” as Corresponding Verbs

The Chinese verb “*jinxing*” means undertaking some certain activities in *Modern Chinese Dictionary* (2006). But in *A New Century Chinese-English Dictionary Chinese-English Dictionary* (2009), this verb can be translated as “underway, progress, go on, proceed, do, carry out/on, conduct, make, hold, take” and so on. In the following, examples will be given to analyze the various English expressions of the verb “*jinxing*” which are quite common in our life.

##### 1. As “do”

1) 然后 *进行* 手术性胆管造影以观察远端胆道系统。(Operative cholangiography is then *done* in order to observe the distal biliary system.)

2) *进行* 这项调整, 要综合运用经济、法律和必要的行政手段, 充分发挥市场机制的作用。(To *do* this, we will use a combination of economic, legal and necessary administrative means, and take full advantage of the role of market forces.)

In the above examples, we use the verb “do” to translate the functional verb “*jinxing*”. According to the *Oxford Advanced Learner’s English-Chinese Dictionary* (2010), the verb “do” refers to work at or perform an activity or a task. Therefore, we can use “do” to translate the verb “*jinxing*”.

##### 2. As “take”

1) 在体外循环(完全性心肺分流术)下, 为患儿 *进行* 了手术, 用一种涤纶片封闭了膜部室间隔缺损。(The patient was *taken* to surgery where, under total cardiopulmonary bypass, her membranous ventricular septal defect was closed using a Dacron patch.)

2) 治疗开始 4 周后, *进行* 胸部 X 线检查显示心脏体积缩小。(The chest x-ray *taken* 4 weeks after the beginning of treatment reveal marked reduction in heart size.)

In the above two sentences, “take” means using a particular course of action in order to deal with or achieve something. From its definition, we could see that using the verb “take” to translate the verb “*jinxing*” mainly aims to achieve something.

##### 3. As “process” and “proceed”

1) 重视农村卫生设施建设, 稳步 *进行* 新型农村合作医疗制度试点。(We put a lot of effort into building health facilities in rural areas, a new system of rural cooperative medical and health care services *progressed* steadily.)

2) 他们一直被告知说救援工作 *进行* 得很顺利。(They have been told that rescue operations *are progressing* smoothly.)

3) 大型招待会正在 *进行*。(A great reception *is in progress*.)

4) 这项工作, 当然要有步骤地 *进行*, 但是太慢了不行。(We should, of course, *proceed* with this work methodically but not too slowly.)

5) 灾区群众生活得到妥善安排, 恢复生产和重建工作有序 *进行*。(As a result, proper living arrangements were made for people in disaster-afflicted areas, production resumed and reconstruction *proceeded* in an orderly way.)

6) 邮政体制改革顺利 *进行*, 电力、电信、民航、铁路等行业改革取得积极进展。(Reform of the postal service system *proceeded* smoothly, and encouraging progress was made in reforming the power, telecommunications, civil aviation and railway industries.)

7) 中国农业银行和国家开发银行股份制改革顺利 *进行*。(The transform of the Agriculture Bank of China and China Development Bank into joint stock companies *proceeded* smoothly.)

In these sentences, the verb “progress” and “proceed” are synonyms as well as intransitive verbs. But the former means improving or developing over a period of time, making progress while the latter means carrying on or continuing any action or process. Therefore, when the verb “*jinxing*” bears those meanings and serves as intransitive verb, we could use the verbs progress and proceed in translation

##### 4. As “conduct”

1) 对此患儿在学校及邻居中的接触者 *进行* 了广泛的检查。(An extensive testing of this patient’s contacts at school and in the neighborhood was *conducted*.)

2) 我们愿意在这个原则基础上, *进行* 海峡两岸的对话与谈判, 什么问题都可以谈。(On the basis of this principle, we are willing to *conduct* cross-straits dialogue and negotiations on any matter.)

3) 今年各地要对最低工资制度和小时最低工资标准的执行情况, 普遍进行一次检查。(All local governments should *conduct* a general survey of compliance with the minimum wage system and minimum wage standards for part-time workers.)

Among these sentences, *conduct* means organizing or doing a particular activity. Therefore, when the verb “*jinxing*” is added with phrases which means some certain particular activities, we could use the verb “*conduct*” in translation

#### 5. As “perform”

1) 给患儿进行了经皮肾穿刺活组织检查, 并确定为微小病变型肾病。(A percutaneous renal biopsy was *performed* and minimal change nephropathy was identified.)

2) 但此时进行的健康婴儿检查未观察到黄疸。(However, a well-baby examination was *performed*, and no jaundice was noted at that time.)

3) 医生选择立即进行如下实验。(The physician elects to *perform* the following tests immediately.)

When the phrase behind the verb “*jinxing*” means a piece of work, task, or duty, we could use the verb “*perform*” in translation.

#### 6. As “undertake”

1) 买入对冲: 商品投资者就期货合约牵涉商品价格上升进行对冲的交易。(Buying Hedge: A transaction that commodities investors *undertake* to hedge against possible increases in the prices of the actual underlying the futures contracts.)

2) 申请注册为专门承建商的人须令建筑事务监督信纳他具备所需的经验及(如适当)专业与学术资格, 以进行专门类别的工程。(An applicant for registration as a specialist contractor must satisfy the Building Authority that he has the necessary experience and, where appropriate, professional and academic qualifications, to *undertake* work in the specialist category.)

3) 处长收到第4条所述的报告后, 可授权一名特派调解员发起或承担进行特别调解。(On receipt of a report under section 4, the Commissioner may authorize a special conciliation officer to initiate or *undertake* special conciliation.)

4) 第(2)款并不禁止第1或2级注册承办商由同一级别的注册承办商代他承担进行任何工程。(Nothing in paragraph (2) shall prohibit any work *being undertaken* on behalf of a registered contractor registered in class 1 or 2 by another registered contractor registered in the same class.)

“*Undertake*” means making yourself responsible for something and start doing it. In the above sentences, the verb “*jinxing*” are all containing this meaning. So it’s suitable to use the verb “*undertake*” in translation.

#### C. Conversion of the Part of Speech of Functional Verb “Jinxing”

With the differences between Chinese and English in grammar and expression manners, sometimes we need to change the part of speech of words but also need to guarantee that those changes having no effect on the original meaning. This translation method includes nouns converted into verbs, prepositions into verbs, adjectives into verbs, adverbs into verbs, verbs into nouns, adjectives into nouns, pronouns into nouns, verbs into prepositional phrases and so on. In this part, the method as verbs converted into prepositional phrases will be given to analyze the following sentences.

1) 积极推进农村税费改革, 从根本上减轻农民负担, 今年将在安徽省进行试点, 总结经验后再行展开。(We must promote reform of taxes and charges in rural areas to substantially lighten the burden on farmers. Experiments will be *carried out* in Anhui Province this year so that the work can be done in other parts of the country after the results of the experiments are analyzed.)

2) 依法打击民族分裂活动、宗教极端势力、暴力恐怖活动、邪教和利用宗教进行非法活动。(We must use legal means to *combat* ethnic separatist activities, religious extremist forces, violent and terrorist activities, cults, and illegal activities *carried out* under the guise of religion.)

3) 按计划进行。(Go forward as planned.)

4) 试验将在地下400米处进行。(The test will *take place* 400metres below the ground.)

5) 进行抵抗。(Put up a resistance.)

In the above examples, the verb “*Jinxing*” serves as different verbs in those sentences. However, after being translated into English, it’s served as prepositional phrases in the translation. So it’s the application of the conversion of the part of speech. This kind of translation method flexibly changes the part of speech of the verb in target language. That is to say, we don’t have to translate every word from source language into target language. On the contrary, we could make some adjustments accordingly.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Translation is a cross-cultural communicative activity whose task is to regenerate the significance of the source language. The meaning and the grammatical function of the same verb “*Jinxing*” is different when it’s put into different contexts. Therefore, we can not just simply use one or several equivalent words in the target language to translate it. From the above analysis on the translation methods of the verb “*Jinxing*”, we have drawn some conclusions.



1) When translating the verb “Jinxing” from Chinese into English, the first step we should do is to judge and analyze its characteristics, that is to say, whether the sentence is still reasonable or not after removing the verb “Jinxing”. If it’s so, then the verb “Jinxing” is a dummy verb. Otherwise, it’s a functional verb.

2) After we’ve known about its characteristics, the next step is to choose a suitable translation method. If the verb “Jinxing” is a dummy verb, we use omission method to translate it, as this method could make the translation become suitable for the syntactic structure of target language and present the original meaning. If the verb “Jinxing” is a functional verb, we could use the corresponding words in target language like “carry out, do, conduct, perform, progress, undertake, proceed” to translate it.

3) Conversion of the part of speech is also one of the methods used in translation when the verb “Jinxing” is a functional one. With the differences between Chinese and English in grammar and expression manners, sometimes we not only need to change the part of speech of words but also guarantee that those changes having no effect on the original meaning.

So far, we have discussed and analyzed mainly about the classification on the part of speech of the Chinese verb “jinxing” and the three kinds of translation methods (omission, translating into corresponding verbs, and conversion of the part of speech). However, we should know that these methods are not almighty. Therefore, further research and studies should be done on it and more translation methods will be discovered and found for sure in the future.

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# On the Relationship between Learning Style and the Use of Pictures in Comprehension of Idioms among Iranian EFL Learners

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**Abstract**—The use of pictures in modern textbooks, multi-media programs and CALL packages seems to be an ever increasing phenomenon. As the individual learners differ in the way they pick up new material, this study aimed to investigate the relationship between the learning styles of the learners on the one hand and the use of pictures in comprehension of idiomatic expressions on the other among Iranian EFL learners. To this end, a total number of 39 B.A University students in two intact classes, majoring in English translation and English literature, received different instructions on a number of opaque idioms. Both groups were provided with definitions and examples for idioms; however, the picture group also took advantage of pictures for the target idioms. The findings revealed that a positive correlation existed between the participants' learning styles and their comprehension of idioms in the picture group.

**Index Terms**—opaque idioms, learning styles, EFL learners

## I. INTRODUCTION

Formulaic language and pre-fabricated patterns have multiple names such as: collocations, popular sayings, phrases, greetings, idioms and proverbs. It is assumed that formulaic language bridges the gap between grammar and vocabulary. Pre-fabricated chunks appear in clauses like 'How's everything going?' which is an entity learned by language learners as a whole without paying further attention to its structure (Nattinger & DeCarrio, 1992). As Weinert (1995) observed in several studies, memory treats multi-words (How's it going?) or multi-form strings (can't) as entities that resemble single words. In this sense, the meaning resembles to that of single words. For example, the simile 'as happy as a clam' can be substituted by a single word. Knowledge of formulaic language contributes to idiomaticity of language which is essential for having native-like proficiency and comprehension. Lack of knowledge about which words collocate with one another (like: ladies and gentleman, friend or foe, needle and thread) does not impede understanding. However, lack of knowledge about expressions like 'kick the bucket', 'a duck soup', 'a cool cucumber', etc. impedes comprehension. The same is true for expressions like 'I don't think so', 'I'm afraid not', 'never mind'. Therefore, it can be claimed that regardless of the learners' proficiency level, all learners can take advantage of pre-fabricated chunks for the facilitation of comprehension and learning (Nattinger & DeCarrio, 1992).

Learners' fluency and successful communication is much in debt to collocational knowledge to the extent that positive relations are claimed to exist between this kind of knowledge and proficiency level of the students. The role of collocations in SLA has been widely acknowledged today. Pawly and Syder (1983) point to collocational knowledge as an indispensable element for having fluency. Lewis (2000) also points to the difficulty learners face to acquire sufficiently large vocabulary which contains pre-fabricated chunks of different types called collocations. Moreover, he believes in the priority being given to teaching collocations in every language course. A considerable part of this collocational knowledge consists of idioms.

The learning of new words as a sure sign of all living languages is a never-lasting, continuous process discernible both in first and second language. However, learning the genius of languages is deemed pointless without learning idioms. Demoting the significance of idioms leads to a bookish, stilted language with an unimaginative tone (Cooper, 1999). For some EFL learners, learning idioms is just a child's play while others find it 'swimming against the tide' and therefore struggle hard to learn and comprehend these gems of culture, imageability and creativity. Furthermore, while the application of idioms by native speakers creates a feel of innovative understanding, EFL students often find them problematic and thus in many ways idioms are not just a 'piece of cake' for them.

An idiom is roughly defined as a conventional multi-word unit which is structurally fixed and semantically opaque. There are a few ways to recognize multi-word expressions as figurative language; first, is the possibility for being re-interpreted for the intended meaning. In other words, something like a mental picture enables us to make sense out of non sense for the realization of figurative language. Second, knowledge of the fact that figurative language may be

compositional (they smiled sheepishly), non-compositional (He's been shooting the breeze) or partly compositional (He had a long face when the game was rained off). While figurative language can be undone for the intended meaning, an idiom cannot be unpicked to work out the target meaning. Idioms therefore, refer to fixed multi-word units whose meaning cannot be understood from the sum of their parts (Mantyla, 2004).

## II. REASONS FOR THE INCLUSION OF IDIOMS IN INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAMS

Reasons for the inclusion of these chunks in instructional programs are abundant in second language acquisition field; some of which are pointed below.

Levorato (1993) points to the intriguing nature of idioms to engage imagination which finally facilitates the transformation of abstract meanings in to more concrete ones. According to Ferdinando (1996) and Moon (1998), idioms are highly useful in performing informative and evaluative functions which is related to the learner's imagination.

Idioms develop socio-linguistic and pragmatic competence and therefore enhance learner's communicative competence and increase learner's confidence in the appropriate use of language with native-like characteristics.

Yori (1989) relates learner's mastery of idioms to second language proficiency level. Research has shown that there is a contribution between storage of suitable multiword units in a learner's repertoire to their native-like selection and proficiency. In support of the mentioned claims Cowie (1992) claims that it's impossible to perform at an acceptable level, unless a mastery of an appropriate range of multi-word units has been assessed.

Understanding the processes involved in the first language acquisition of idioms can provide insights for learning them in a second language. With regard to teaching idioms in first language five main models has been proposed, preparing the grounds for further research and analysis (Glucksberg, 1993).

- a) The idiom list hypothesis
- b) The lexical representation hypothesis
- c) The direct access hypothesis
- d) The compositional hypothesis
- e) The dual representation model

Some of these models view idiomatic meaning as haphazard and arbitrary, while others believe in the historical roots and the potentiality for pragmatic interpretation. Among the five models proposed, "the dual representation model" is regarded as the comprehensive framework for idiom processing by building on notions provided in previous models and adding linguistic processing as well as memory retrieval as necessary elements for the comprehension of idioms (Glucksberg, 1993).

## III. LEARNING STYLES

Learning styles can broadly be defined as the learners' consistent ways of employing certain stimuli in pedagogical contexts. From another view, learning styles are closely connected with educational conditions under which learners are most likely to learn (Keefe, 1979). In yet another view, learning styles are viewed as the correspondence between the learners' fit and comfort and different methods of instruction (Renzulli & Smith, 1978).

Although the notion of learning styles is widely accepted, no agreement is reached over the best way to measure the trend (Coffield et al. 2004). Some notes of caution must be mentioned in that learning styles just allocate learners along a continuum with some hints to discover the various forms of mental representations.

The shifting sands in the history of learning styles encompass a large number of models and theories with an attempt to take individual differences in pedagogical contexts in to account.

Kolb (1984) explains learning styles in terms of the process of the transformation of experience for the creation of knowledge. As he points out, knowledge is the outcome of the grasped experience which is then transformed by a complex mental process. Kolb (1984) further indicates active experimentation and reflective observation as two main components through which perceived information converts to knowledge. Kolb (1984) sets out a learning theory grounded on a four-stage cycle of learning. In this regard, his model offered an advantage over previous ones in that it represented both a way to perceive individual styles which he termed "learning styles inventory" and also a description of a cycle called "experiential learning" which is applicable to all learners. He considers four main types of learning at the core; (a) the concrete experience and the typical question "what is it?", (b) reflective observation based on the question "what does it mean?", (c) abstract conceptualization with "what follows on?" and (d) active experimentation with "what...if...?". As he asserts despite individual differences, effective learning is the outcome of utilizing the four. In an attempt to formulate a learning style, style differences were investigated among engineering students to gain insights for the most efficient way to fulfill the learning requirements of all the students. To this aim, students were divided into sensing/intuitive, visual/verbal, active/reflective and sequential/ global. The findings alluded to the existing overlaps with previous models as each and every part was analogous to at least one dimension already proposed (Kolb, 1984).

In mid seventies, neuro-linguistic programming made an attempt to devise an instrument to make a true estimation of one's learning styles. The model took an interest in psychology, language and computer programming having high hopes for helping people to program their brains. As the NLP claims, the primary representational system (PRS) is what

allows individuals to think in one of the four specific modalities; visual, kinesthetic, auditory and olfactory. Creativity was regarded as the individual's ability to replicate the modified version of other peoples' strategies with his own design. In this sense, NLP acts as a creative tool to help learners invent new things. As thus, NLP was defined as the magic that allows individuals to perceive how verbal and non-verbal communication applies to the human brain and therefore has its share to gain control over the presumed automatic functions of one's neurology (cited in Šabatová).

The typology put forward is the visual, auditory and kinesthetic type which is still the most celebrated model nowadays. As Ormod (2008) argues, while some learners benefit best from information presented through words (verbal learners), others learn best when it is introduced through pictures (visual learners). However, we should keep in mind that while learners take advantage of all the three modalities, the dominance of one or two is evident in filtering new information to be learned. In other words, the dominant style is what accounts for the best way to learn new information by adjusting the material to be learned (Messick, 1994).

- Visual learners are differentiated from others in terms of their tendency to describe their surrounding world through their own eyes. They learn best through visual aids such as diagrams, charts, graphs, maps and pictures. These learners mainly process information with their eyes.

- Auditory learners have a tendency to obtain information mainly through their ears benefiting most from sounds, music, teaching and discussion. These learners apt to record lectures, listen to oral presentations and appreciate tape-recorded books.

- Kinesthetic learners or tactile learn best through actually doing things; moving, touching and acting out. These learners are fed up with sitting for long hours in class but enjoy performing tasks, exploring and conducting experiments.

Various studies have documented proof on the existing relationship between the learners' academic achievement and their preferred styles of learning. Nevertheless, little attention has been paid to the role of the learners' learning styles in the process of comprehension and acquisition of new idioms. Boers et al. (2009) conducted a study to examine the relationship between learning style variables and the effectiveness of pictorial elucidation as a mnemonic aid. To this end, thirty eight students aged 19 to 21 with varying proficiency levels were introduced to 100 new idioms. Then, the participants went through a multiple choice test, a gap-fill exercise and a learning style questionnaire. The questionnaire was answered by only 14 students. The results indicated a negative relationship between the students' styles and their recollection of idioms which were introduced by pictorial elucidation. Their study although highly significant, had some shortcomings. Firstly, the participants were not homogenized. Secondly, as Boers et al. (2009) acknowledge the small number of the participants makes it necessary for the findings to be replicated before any firm conclusions could be drawn. It is therefore the aim of the present study to shed more light on the issue by eradicating the limitations of their study.

#### IV. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The general findings among the investigation of facilitative techniques for learning and recall, suggest mnemonics as beneficial for the storage of knowledge in memory for further retrieval. Mnemonics are defined as a group of memory aids that facilitate the easy and quick assimilation and retention of information of all kinds. Mnemonics are what involve imagination in conjunction with all other individual senses, to reconstruct a dull, dry piece of information in to a vibrant memory (Oxford, 1990).

Mnemonic devices can be brought to notice in EFL settings for instructional purposes (White, 2011). Educators have long acknowledged the benefits of presenting information in multiple ways with the mantra " don't just say it; show it" (Nelson, Reed & Walling, 1976). In this regard, it seems essential that teachers and practitioners in the field be aware of the potential benefits of such techniques and identify the most effective ones to apply in pedagogical contexts. Anyhow the way that individual learners sense, interact with and react to the learning environment is believed to be related to their learning styles which are the composite of their affective, cognitive and physiological factors (Keefe, 1979).

It is believed that identifying learners' styles has its share to alter the uncomfortable, boring, and discouraging atmosphere in the class and can lend a hand to the instructor to adopt an approach that satisfies the learning requirements of more students. Many students are deemed to gain knowledge through the teacher's style which offers advantages only to those students whose style matches that of the teacher.

However, studies carried out in the context of Iranian EFL learners have mainly focused on idiom comprehension with no touch on individuals' learning styles. Therefore, the present study has utilized a learning style questionnaire to explore the probable relationship between the individuals' styles and their performance on idiom comprehension tests.

To this aim, the following research question was formulated.

Is there any significant relationship between the participants' learning styles and their performance on idiom comprehension tests in picture and control groups?

#### V. METHOD

##### A. Participants

A total number of thirty nine junior EFL learners in two intact classes at the University of Isfahan participated in the study. The participants were all B.A university students majoring in English translation and English literature with

Persian as their first language. The students were homogenized through an Oxford Placement Test (OPT) and were considered to be at an intermediate proficiency level. The picture group comprised of twenty one and the control group of eighteen students aged 19 to 23.

The participants in the control and picture group received different treatments:

Group 1 (control group): received idioms accompanied by definition and examples.

Group 2 (picture group): received idioms accompanied by definition, examples and pictures.

### B. Target Idioms

Forty three idiomatic expressions were selected from Oxford Dictionary of Idioms. In this study, the term idiom satisfies the following criteria: 1) it is a non-compositional string, 2) it is a structurally fixed unit and, 3) the meaning of the expression is not deducible from the meaning of its constituent parts.

### C. Instruments

#### 1. Oxford Placement Test

The Oxford Placement Test was administered to choose homogeneous groups for experimental and control groups. It consisted of sixty items with the time-limit of thirty minutes. The OPT test as a standardized test is a reliable and valid tool to gain a true understanding of the students' proficiency level.

#### 2. English idioms

The main material presented to the participants was 43 English idioms selected from *Oxford Dictionary of Idioms*, from among which 30 idioms were selected and used in the comprehension test.

#### 3. Test on Idiom Comprehension

The test comprised of thirty items to assess the learners' comprehension of idiomatic expressions. Each item consisted of four options one of which was the correct answer. The allocated time was thirty minutes.

#### 4. A Learning Style Questionnaire

To identify the participants' learning styles, a style questionnaire was adopted from Boers' study (2009). The twenty items on the questionnaire used a four- point scale ranging from almost never to very often. The participants were informed that there was no right or wrong answer and that the information would be kept confidential.

## VI. PROCEDURE

This study made use of non-random purposive sampling. The participants in two intact classes (the picture and the control group) received instruction on forty three opaque idioms. For validity purposes, the same instructor (the researcher) carried out the instruction in both groups. The participants in both groups were provided with a definition and an example for each idiom; the picture group, however, took advantage of pictures illustrating the literal readings of idioms. The instruction was offered in three successive sessions, each session introducing an average of thirteen to fifteen idioms. Immediately after the instruction, a test was administered to assess the participants' scores on the comprehension of idioms. The collected data was then organized and submitted to statistical analysis.

## VII. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data. To discover the possible relationship between the individuals' learning styles on the one hand and their performance on the comprehension test on the other, Pearson Product Moment correlation was employed. The raw data was fed to the computer and the correlation was run by the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 21 software for each group.

The amount of P-value ( $P < 0.05$ ) indicated that a positive relationship existed between the aforementioned variables in the picture group (see Table 6.1).

TABLE 6.1  
CORRELATION BETWEEN STUDENTS' STYLES AND STUDENTS'  
SCORES ON IDIOM ACQUISITION IN THE PICTURE GROUP

		Acquisition	Picture Group
Acquisition	Pearson Correlation	1	.520
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.016
	N	21	21
Picture Group	Pearson Correlation	.520	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.016	
	N	21	21

TABLE 6.2  
CORRELATION BETWEEN STUDENTS' STYLES AND STUDENTS'  
SCORES ON IDIOM ACQUISITION IN THE CONTROL GROUP

		Acquisition	Control Group
Acquisition	Pearson Correlation	1	.049
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.833
	N	21	21
Control Group	Pearson Correlation	.049	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.833	
	N	21	21

However, the amount of P-value in the control group ( $P>0.05$ ) signified no meaningful relationship between the variables under study (Table 6.2). Based on the results, it can be concluded that the use of pictures for the comprehension of new idioms is in congruence with Iranian EFL learners' learning styles.

### VIII. CONCLUSION AND PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

The findings of the present study revealed that a positive correlation existed between the participants' learning style and the use of pictures in comprehension of idioms. However, no relationship between the mentioned variables was found in the control group. Therefore, it can be concluded that Iranian EFL learners stand to gain from the use of pictures and illustrations in the process of idiom comprehension with respect to their learning styles.

The results of this study were not in line with Boers' (2009) study. He reported on the distracting effect of pictures on idiom comprehension and retention among Dutch speaking students of Brussels. It is worth mentioning that despite his findings, Boers acknowledged that it is unrealistic to wean the learners off the use of pictures in pedagogical contexts.

It should be kept in mind that, no style has priority over the other and individuals may utilize different learning styles in different situations for performing different tasks. However, realization and attention to learning styles can provide insights for teachers in adopting different instructional tools for pedagogical purposes and not to rely heavily on a single method of instruction. Therefore, awareness of such preferred trends in learning may finally lead to better outcomes (Schmeck, 1988). Awareness of learners' learning styles can lead to the formation of strategies. As Keefe (1979) claims learning strategies as conscious techniques can affect one's learning outcomes especially taking one's learning styles into account.

### IX. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

A number of limitations need to be considered to assist better research in the future. Firstly, the participants were randomly selected from one university and all were majoring in English. Therefore, the generalizability of findings should be treated cautiously regarding the small number of the participants. Moreover, students' learning styles were taken into consideration on the basis of a questionnaire which may have rendered a self-report on the students' assumed styles of learning. Upcoming studies, can utilize more instruments like observations, dairy notes and interviews to add to the validity of the data.

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# An Application of the Interpretive Theory to the Press Conference Interpreting

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**Abstract**—With opening and reform policies and its entrance into WTO, there are more and more political, economic and culture exchanges between China and the rest of the world. In recent years, the Chinese government holds international and regional press conferences of different kinds. Every March, the press conferences held by the Foreign Ministry during the National People's Congress (NPC) and Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) draw more attention from the world. This does not only raise higher demand for interpreters, but also provides a new research field for interpreting studies. Thus, the subject of this thesis is official press conference interpretation (PCI). On one hand, interpreters are "bridge" for foreign journalists and speakers; on the other hand, the study on PCI is far from being enough. The Interpretive Theory was established on the basis of observation and analysis of interpreting reality. Its starting point and research perspective are completely different from that of the linguistics-based translation theories. In addition, the Interpretive Theory has its own explanation to "faithfulness". This paper, based on the Interpretive Theory, with the concept of "faithfulness" as its starting point, is to discuss and explore what "faithfulness" is, what criteria of "faithfulness" are and what methods the interpreters use in order to be faithful to the speakers at the press conferences during the NPC and the CPPCC sessions.

**Index Term**—press conference, interpreting, the Interpretive Theory

## I. INTRODUCTION

In the modern world of information, all the countries are engaging themselves in the cooperation with other countries. In the increasingly larger Global Village, China has more and more exchanges with other countries. And these exchanges range from politics and economy to science and culture. China has witnessed her entry to the WTO, Beijing's successful host for the 2008 Olympics, the 2010 World Exposition in Shanghai and so on. With the advance of her comprehensive national strength and her international competitiveness, China, as one of the most promising developing countries, plays a more and more significant role in world affairs. The world needs to gain better knowledge of China.

Press conferences, as an important form of international communication, which can help keep a fine relationship with the media. Also, it is an effective means to strive for the objective report by the media and transmit information. Thus press conference serves as a bridge of information between China and the rest of world. (Lefevere & Bassnett, 2004). It is an important way for China to set up a good international image. China and the rest of the world can have a better understanding of each other through press conferences. Undoubtedly, a precondition of its success is the provision of language interpreting and competent interpreters. (Gile, 1991). And the Interpretive Theory was based on the observation and conclusion of conference interpreting practices. As a branch of conference interpreting, press conference interpreting can be properly directed by the Interpretive Theory.

The author also finds that the Interpretive Theory is usually used to deal with culture-loaded problems and realize faithfulness in interpreting. However, it is seldom applied to the interpreting of words and phrases at the press conference. Also, there is lack of evaluation of it from the perspective of the Interpretive Theory. The primary purpose of this thesis is to provide some coping strategies on how to interpret Chinese words and phrases into English more precise, so these coping strategies can be some of the guidance for interpreters in the interpreting field. (Williams & Chersterman, 2004). But this does not mean the research on coping strategies of words and phrases in the situation of the press conference will just stop here. Another purpose of this thesis is to draw more attention of other researchers to the further study.

## II. ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF INTERPRETIVE THEORY

Interpretive Theory, also known as the sense-based theory, came into being with the publication of the doctoral dissertation of Danica Seleskovitch in 1968. With rich experience in conference interpreting, Seleskovitch is regarded as the pioneer of the Interpretive Theory. In 1984, Seleskovitch and Lederer co-authored the *Interpreter pour Traduire*, symbolizing the establishment of the Interpretive Theory. The 1980s was an important period for the Interpretive Theory with the constant appearance of research fruits. The researchers drew on the cognitive psychology, experimental psychology, and neuropsychological research results and established a whole set of interpreting theories, which makes the theory more scientific. The researchers also extended the Interpretive Theory to the written translation of non-literary and to the teaching of translation and interpreting. (James, 2008). The Interpretive Theory considered



interpreting as a communication, not simply a linguistic behavior. It contends that the nature of interpreting is to interpret the non-verbal sense of discourse instead of its linguistic meaning. The Interpretive Theory led the western interpreting research into a new stage and its fresh theoretical perspective made the interpreting studies take on a new look. Although four decades have passed since its birth, the Interpretive Theory still enjoys its popularity and significance in the interpreting studies.

#### A. *Main Contents of the Interpretive Theory*

Seleskovitch and Lederer argue that in a communication, people show great interest in the information the other party transmitted and the thought the other party expressed. (Phelan, 2008). Thus in the view of Seleskovitch, the interpreter is a drawer instead of a photographer because drawing is extracting the meaning and information which match the reality from the performance of the reality from the drawer's point of view rather than pursuing the mechanic equivalence of two languages.

The essence of the Interpretive Theory is as follows: what the interpreters try to understand and interpret is not the linguistic form of the source language, but the sense and idea the speakers want to convey, so the basic task for the interpreters is to de-verbalize, thus the meaning of the source language can be grasped. In Seleskovitch's opinion, the Interpretive Theory may be more proper to be called "communication and interpretive theory". (Franz, 1978). Because first of all, it is a theory for interpreting. It was built up based on the observance and analysis of live interpreting, which leads to its unique standing point and perspective from the normal translation theories of linguistic schools, because it discusses the sense conveyance of interpreting by regarding interpreting as communicative activities, in which language is not the only object to cope with, while to understand, memorize and judge in accordance with the cognition of both the source and target language and the communicative situation are more important. The Interpretive Theory holds that the goal of interpreters is to look for the functional equivalence for the target language speaker.

#### B. *The Triangular Model of the Interpretive Theory-process of Interpreting*

The research on the procedure of interpreting is of vital significance to the Interpretive Theory, to which the researchers of the Paris School led by Seleskovitch and Lederer, have contributed great efforts.

Before this, the procedure of interpreting is generally considered as composed of two phases-comprehension and reformulation. Through years of scientific research and empirical analysis, the Paris School introduced a phase of de-verbalization in between the widely accepted comprehension and reformulation phases. The triangular model finally came into being, which is definitely a breakthrough of the Paris School. The de-verbalization procedure is the phase when "sense" comes into being, which means the reformulation is produced on the basis of the sense that generates by the interpreter's combination of the linguistic meaning and cognitive language rather than the form of the original language. Hence we can tell that in the process of interpreting, the sense is the object of interpreting. (Shuttleworth & Cowie, 2004). Furthermore, the Interpretive Theory not only adds the phase of de-verbalization in the interpreting procedure but also runs a more scientific research on the comprehension and reformulation phases of interpretation and explains both of the phases systematically.

Interpretive Theory believes that translation is not a mere trans-coding operation from one language to another, but as a dynamic communicating process of understanding and reformulating the ideas. The interpreting process is not transforming directly the linguistic meaning from the source language to the target language, but converting the source language to sense and then reformulating the sense in the target language. We will elaborate on the three phases respectively in the following part.

### III. STRATEGIES FOR CONFERENCE INTERPRETING

#### A. *On the Sentence Level*

##### 1. *Restructuring*

Due to the linguistic differences between Chinese and English, a qualified interpreter should be able to use the strategies of restructuring and adjustment to facilitate the understanding of the audiences. As we all know, in English, passive voice and subordinate clauses are commonly used. Meanwhile, longer and more coherent sentences are also frequently adopted. In addition, not like English, many Chinese sentences do not have a clear subject and repetition can be commonly seen in Chinese. Considering of that, during the process of interpretation the interpreter should try to understand the source language thoroughly and restructure the sentences. More attention should be paid to the language differences between the source language and target language. Otherwise, there might be some interpretation which is not in accordance with the manners of expression in target language. Here are some examples as follows:

(1) Wen Jiabao: 本届政府工作走过了四个年头, 它告诉我们, 必须懂得一个真理, 这就是政府的一切权力都是人民赋予的, 一切属于人民、一切为了人民、一切依靠人民、一切归功于人民。 (Han, 2012).

Interpreter: It has been four years since this government took office. These four years have taught us one thing: we must be guided by the fundamental principle that all the power of the government is bestowed on us by the people and that all the power belongs to the people. Everything we do should be for the people; we must rely on the people in all our endeavors, and we owe all achievements to the people. (Han, 2012).

In the above speech, the speaker uses parallel structures in source language. The word“一切”has occurred four times.

However, the interpreter has not used "everything" to convey the sense of the word“一切”all the time. Besides, the interpreter has overcome the influence of Chinese language and restructured the sentences into English expression habit to make the listener more easily understand. Hence, restructuring, as an important strategy in conference interpreting, could be of great help at press conferences.

(2) Wen Jiabao:为什么这两年房地产调控在艰难中看到一点曙光? 有所进展? 首先是我们调控的决心坚定而不动摇; 其次, 我们抓住了一个抑制投机和投资性需求的要害问题, 采取了有针对性的政策措施。(Jiang, 2012).

Interpreter: But why in the past couple of years have we seen a gleam of hope amidst all the difficulties in regulating the housing market? And why have our measures in recent couple of years paid off? It is because first we have a very firm resolve. Second we have been able to put our finger on the cracks of this problem. That is to curb the speculative and investment driven demand, and we have taken focused measures to address this problem. (Fan, 2012).

In this speech, Premier Wen put up a rhetorical question. It is obvious that Premier's remarks follow the loose structure in Chinese expression habit as in the underlined part. Since Chinese language follows a linear structure with few clauses while English language enjoys strict grammatical rules with clauses like branches in a tree, as stated in the underlined part in the above instance, the phrase“有所进展”can be regarded as a complete sentence in Chinese, the subject of which can be inferred from the context. However, because English language requires strict grammar, such expression can't be translated according to its literal structure in target language. So the interpreter has to use the strategy of restructuring to translate this sentence.

## 2. Generalization

During the process of conference interpreting, the interpreter could have difficulty in grasping all the details of the speech for that a flow of information given continuously by the speaker is too overloaded and intensive. There is another situation that the information given by the speaker is so trivial that there is no necessity to interpret it completely and entirely. For example, a long list of items is given continuously with no pause and the interpreter may not be sure of the precise interpretation for each word. Under such circumstance, generalization proves to be an effective strategy.

Generalization mentioned here refers to a general term adopted by the interpreter to represent a series of items given by the speaker. Through generalization, the main idea of the speech will be maintained without affecting the communication between the speaker and the listener. Furthermore, both time and energy of the interpreter can be saved to better fulfill the task of professional interpretation at press conferences. Still it is noteworthy that when the details mentioned by the speaker are insignificant, the approach of generalization can be applied appropriately. Otherwise every detail of the source language should be interpreted accurately and completely into the target language. The following is several examples taken from the government report given by Premier Wen Jiabao.

(3) Wen Jiabao:在这 15 年当中, 香港走过的路也不平常, 遇到了两次金融危机。但是在特区政府领导下, 港人共同努力战胜了金融危机, 香港至今仍保持着国际金融的地位和高度的自由经济。(Fan, 2012).

Interpreter: Over the past 15 years, Hong Kong has experienced twists and turns and encountered two financial crises. However, under the leadership of the SAR government and with the joint efforts of the Hong Kong compatriots, Hong Kong has successfully overcome the financial crises and maintained its status of international financial center and a high degree of free market economy. (Jiang, 2012).

In this speech, the interpreter translated “香港走过的路也不平常” into “Hong Kong has experienced twists and turns” in target language. It is a nice attempt to do so. “不平常”means marvelous or out of the ordinary from linguistic aspect. Nevertheless, in the speech what the Premier intended to address is the hard time Hong Kong has gone through. The interpreter fully understand the Premier's intention and successfully turned“不平常”into “experienced twists and turns” to convey the sense following target language patterns. Based on Interpretive Theory which indicates the subject of interpreting should be the speaker's intention, it is a good example as the result of generalization.

(4) Wen Jiabao:进一步提高城乡低保、农村五保等保障水平, 提高优抚对象抚恤和生活补助标准。(Cao, 2011).

Interpreter: We will extend greater financial support to both urban and rural recipients of cost of living allowances and to childless and infirm rural residents who receive subsidies for food, clothing, medical care, housing and burial expenses, and increase subsidies and living allowances to members of entitled groups. (Cao, 2011).

In the speech above, the word“五保”is a proper noun in Chinese language, which comes from the Chinese policy of social security. In Chinese language,“五保” refers to the aged, the disabled and the minor with no legal guardian, no working capacity and no fixed source of livelihood who receive subsidies and help from the government for food, clothing, medical care, housing and burial expenses. Instead of translating the term detailed, the interpreter has employed two general attributives “childless and infirm” to describe the Chinese phrase“五保”。

## B. On the Text Level

### 1. Summarization

During the conference interpreting, the interpreter may confront a situation that a flow of long and complex sentences without clear logic and structure are presented to the audiences. Thus it is quite difficult for the audiences to follow the speech even if the interpreter has offered a complete and accurate interpretation of what the speaker has said. In this case, the summarization strategy clarifying the logical relations of different parts of the speech could be helpful for

interpreters to do his work at press conferences. Usually, it is up to the interpreters to clarify the logical relations of the speech through the strategy of summarizations, especially from Chinese into English. One of the main features of Chinese language is parataxis in sentences. (Cao, 2011).

Not much logical links are adopted in Chinese language. When complicated long sentences with parataxis are given by the speaker, it is necessary for the interpreter to resort to summarization in conference interpreting to relieve the foreign audiences. The summarization can be realized through words, phrases or sentences.

(5) Wen Jiabao: 社会各界踊跃捐助款物, 广大香港同胞、澳门同胞、台湾同胞以及海外华侨华人奉献爱心, 国际社会伸出援手, 汇成了齐心协力抗击灾害的磅礴力量。(Cao, 2011).

Interpreter: People from all sectors of society in China made generous donations, both in cash and in kind; our compatriots in Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan as well as overseas Chinese contributed generously to the disaster relief campaign; and the international community provided us with earthquake rescue and relief assistance. All this combined to form a boundless source of strength for the Chinese people to overcome the disaster. (Cao, 2011).

In the above speech, we can find that the former parts of the long sentences have similar structure and the last part of the section is presented to the audience as a conclusion. Through the accurate understanding and analyzing of the inner structure of the sentences the interpreter has accurately understand the logical relations of sentences and successfully conveyed the sense of the speech by separating the sentences into two main parts in which the latter part turns out to be an independent one and be started with the subject "all this".

## 2. Parsing

Parsing in interpretation refers to the strategy of segmenting a long and complicated sentence into several short and simple ones. According to the principle of syntactical linearity, the interpreters need to parse the sentences when necessary. Moreover, parsing could be adopted in conference interpreting for reducing the interpreter's pressure and improving the interpretation since the parsing of long sentences could lead to better coherence of sentences. (Roderick, 2008). As a qualified interpreter, he or she should be required to parse long sentences into information items quickly and reasonably as well as reconnect these items naturally. In spite of its critical role in interpretation, parsing is not preferred in written translation, for it will cause a loose structure in the translation.

(6) Wen Jiabao: 我秉承“苟利国家生死以, 岂因祸福避趋之”的信念, 为国家服务整整 45 年, 我为国家、人民倾注了我全部的热情、心血和精力, 没有谋过私利。我敢于面对人民、面对历史。知我罪我, 其生鲜企丛。(Jiang, 2012).

Interpreter: I have devoted 45 years of my life to the service to my country, remain committed to the conviction that I shall dedicate myself to the interests of country in life and death irrespective of personal weal and woe. I have always made utmost efforts with strong passion and energy to serve the country and people and I have never pursued personal gains. I have the courage to face the people and face the history. There are people who will reanimate what I have done, but there are people who would criticize me. Ultimately, history will have the final say. (Jiang, 2012).

In this speech, Premier Wen quoted two sayings “苟利国家生死以, 岂因祸福避趋之” and “知我罪我, 其生鲜企丛” from Lin Zexu (林则徐) and Confucius respectively. In the translation of the former saying, there happens to be correspondent expressions "life and death", "weal and woe" for the phrases “生死” “祸福” in English. Therefore, the interpreter successfully conveyed the sense of the original saying, the parsing of which follows the turn of expression in target language.

However, as for the translation of the second saying, the case is a little different from the former one. In the translation, the interpreter first explained the meaning of “知我罪我” (There are people who will appreciate what I have done, but there are people who would criticize me.) to help the audience fully understand the message conveyed by the Chinese proverb. Then by adopting the idiom "have the final say" which means to make the final decision or to call the shots, the interpreter reproduced the discourse in target language following the expression pattern in English and made the translation quite agreeable to the recipient.

## 3. Logical Integration

Chinese is a language which enjoys tacit sense conveyed while the English prefers explicit logic and explanation. Thus, the logical relation in Chinese is not as clear as that in English. As we all know, Chinese prefers short sentences and less conjunctions are employed between the sentences. In Chinese, the words which display the logical relations between parts of sentences do not appear as frequently as in English. However, in English, the logical relation between sentences is usually clearly reflected by its conjunctions, linguistic form, and subordinate clauses. However, it does not mean there is no logical relation among the sentences.

According to the Interpretive Theory, the sense of the source language must be interpreted in a complete and accurate way. The logic of the sentences, which plays a significant role in the comprehension of sense, must be implied in the conference interpreting. Hence, it is necessary for the interpreters to precisely grasp the logical relation of the source language and make a logic-processing when interpreting it into the target language. The examples are put forward as follows:

(7) 台湾《中国时报》记者: 总理, 您好, 我是台湾《中国时报》记者。我想今天请教的问题是在过去四年两岸实现了三通直航, 有关人员往来和经贸交流合作取得了历史性的高峰。过去台湾媒体评价认为, 过去四年大概是两岸关系 60 年来最稳定、最和平发展的四年。未来四年可能要延续这样的发展机遇。在今年政府最后任期一

年里面, 您所期待两岸文化交流前景是什么样的状况? (2012)

Interpreter: Over the past four years, the two sides of the Taiwan Straits have achieved Three Direct Links, and direct air flights. The business exchanges and the people to people contacts across the Taiwan Straits have reached an unprecedented level. Some people in Taiwan say that the past four years have been the most stable and peaceful period in the development of across strait relations over the past more than 60 years. We expect this good momentum is to continue in the following four years. My question is in your last year in office, how do you see the prospects of the cross Straits business ties and cultural exchanges? (Fan, 2012).

Translating the term“三通直航”, the interpreter not only adopted the phrase "Three Direct Links", but also added the information "direct air flights" to the target language context.“三通直航”means“通航、通邮、通商”in Chinese, the corresponding expressions in English are "direct shipping, direct postal service and direct trading". However,“通航, ’in Chinese boasts a dual meaning referring to both "direct shipping" and "direct air flights". Because of the double meaning, the interpreter added the information as in the underlined italicized part to express the connotation of the term explicitly and completely.

Without logical analysis, the interpreter can't make listeners understand the sentence. By referring to the overall sense of the context, the interpreter added the information "our measures in recent couple of years" as the subject in the translation to convey the messages accurately and completely in target text.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The press conference held after the conclusion of NPC and CPPCC attracted intensive focus from all over the world. The interpreting study on this field is of vital importance for our country to establish a good national image in the world. So we must try our best to study it.

From what has been discussed above, we know that the basic information about the Interpretive Theory, such as its origin and development during the four decades, the essence of the Interpretive Theory is what the interpreters try to understand and interpret is not the linguistic form of the source language, but the sense and idea the speakers want to convey, so the basic task for the interpreters is to verbalize, thus the meaning of the source language can be grasped and its contributions. Then we discuss four features of press conference interpreting, including speech features, content features, functional features, situational features. Then by studying the Press Conference's interpretation of Premier Li in 2013, we find out the influencing factors and strategies for conference interpreting from the perspective of the Interpretive Theory. So we can know how to interpret better on press conference.

The paper may not cover everything and the ultimate purpose of the present thesis is to call for attention to the application of the Interpretive Theory on press conference interpreting. I do hope that it can pave some ways for the beginners of interpreters and give some help to interpretation majors.

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# Similarities and Differences between Fansub Translation and Traditional Paper-based Translation

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**Abstract**—In the paper, fansub translation is compared with traditional paper-based translation. Their differences and similarities are summed up as well. Then there comes the most important part, in which fansub translation is connected to manipulation theory. The manipulation factors which influence the fansub translation and manipulation on fansub translation examples are also presented in this paper.

**Index Terms**—fansub translation, paper-based translation, equivalence

## I. INTRODUCTION

A fansub (short for fan-subtitled) is a version of a foreign film or foreign television program which has been translated by fans and subtitled into a language other than that of the original. (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fansub>) Fansub groups are groups of people who translate and add subtitle to the foreign film or foreign television program.

A fansub group is a team composed by the audiovisual lovers who also know a foreign language. They have the same interests and work together to translate the foreign movies, TV serials or videos, etc. into their own language and then share with each other, as well as publish on the internet for the netizens to download. The purpose for their activities is not to make money, but to enjoy the working process and the happiness it brings about. Besides, the fansub groups are also platforms for many language learners to practice their foreign language.

Currently, the foreign movies and TV series, as well as animations are quite popular in China. Among which the English movies and TV serials are especially popular, such as the Hollywood movies and the latest American TV serials. Thus, it is the fansub groups which are quite well-known to the mass audience, whose members are basically ordinary netizens translate the American TV series and the Japanese animations. And in this thesis, we will focus on the fansubs who translate the American TV serials.

## II. FEATURES OF FANSUB TRANSLATION

The fansub groups mainly translate the latest foreign movies or TV serials into Chinese. The most obvious features of these translations are: almost synchronous with the original, without abbreviation or dubbing, and strictly based on the plot of the original play. Apart from these, the fansub translation also has some unique features.

Since most translators in the fansubs are not professional translators, their translation are not restricted by the orthodox translation standards. The professional translators always talk about what translation principles to follow, or what kind of methods to use. But the fansub members seldom think about that, they just translate any way they want as long as it is “suitable”. All they care is to find the most suitable words or sentences for the original work. Generally speaking, their translations are more flexible and contain a lot of colloquial language and slangs. They are closer to our daily life. (Wang P., 2009)

Example: Original (Monologue): Oh, yeah. The chairs are rocks.

Chinese version: 是啊 椅子硬邦邦的

--Cited from Modern Family, fansubbed by YYeTs.

Observing the translation, we can find that the original word “rocks” is not translated directly into “石头”. On the contrary, the subtitler translated into the phrase “硬邦邦的”, which is always used in oral language. This translation not only transmits the original meaning of the sentence, but also expresses the feeling it brings, which is hard and cold. Also, the Chinese phrase is widely used in the daily life. The choice of this phrase makes the translation closer to the real life and more acceptable by the viewers.

The translators in the fansub groups are of different language levels, and their translation differs from each other. Some of their translations are very good, but some are not. There might exist many mistakes in some translation. Let alone the translation of many difficult materials which include many cultural, historical, or professional terms. Besides, the translation of the subtitle requires the translators to have good listening skills since many of them do have the original scripts. They listen to the original video, and then add the translated subtitle to the screen directly according to what they hear.

One can never forget that the main function of media texts is entertainment and subtitles should serve their purpose without imposing too much of an extra effort on the viewer. The audiovisual audience stands in a completely different situation from that of the reader of a written text. Time constraints are highly determining for reading time is limited and, in most circumstances, the subtitle continuum does not allow to backtrack and reread a part that was not fully understood.

The translation of the fansubs is used to explain each scene of the video. So the length of the sentences is restricted to avoid causing problems of the audience since the human eyes can only view a certain words at a time. Thus, the translators have to make adjustments of the original language to make them short without changing the meaning.

As we can tell, the fansubs produce the translated subtitles for the convenience of the other audiences. So they always finish the translation in a short time because they know the audience is waiting. Sometimes, different fansubs will compete with each other and try to be the first to publish their translation. The first published version always has a larger market since many people are waiting. According to a data showed by Shooter.cn, during the popular season of Prison Break, YDY fansub group was the first to publish their translated subtitle on the internet. The publishing time was two past four p.m., and it was downloaded over 10,000 times. The other translated version by another fansub group was published three hours later, and the download rate was only 10% of the first one. (Shang Q. S., 2007) That's why all the fansubs want to be the first to publish the translated subtitles. As a result, it left the translators little time to think during translation.

Then in traditional paper-based translation, the medium is always papery. The translators do not have to possess good listening skills because it is not necessary while translating. Most of the time, all they have to do is to read the original material and then translate. Nor do they have to consider the length of each sentence to cater for the needs of the readers. The translators will use some translation methods and might follow some translation principles during their translation. And most of the time, the translators have plenty of time to translate. Thus, they can take their time to ruminate over their translation.

### III. MAJOR SIMILARITIES BETWEEN FANSUB TRANSLATION AND TRADITIONAL PAPER-BASED TRANSLATION

Although fansub translation and traditional paper-based translation has so many differences, they have some similarities at the same time. From the perspective of manipulation theory, it can be observed that both fansub translation and traditional paper-based translation are influenced by the popular ideology of the society in which it exists. Besides, the translators' ideology has a reflection on fansub translation as well as traditional paper-based translation. In most cases, the purpose of the translation is to attract other people to read, thus fansub translation and traditional paper-based translation all cater to the poetics of their target readers even though the degrees are different.

#### A. *Expression of the Translators' Ideology and Poetics*

The translators can never avoid putting their own ideology into their translation no matter whether they meant it or not. The words are the expression of the thoughts. The subtitles always express their thoughts in their translation, which are very obvious in the subtitles, for example:

Original (Monologue): I guess I just have to make lemonade out of the two of you.

Chinese version: 我想我只有尽力把你俩变成柠檬水了

生活给了你柠檬(苦难) 你就把它变成柠檬水(幸福)

(If life gives you a lemon, make a lemonade)

--Cited from Big Bang Theory season 6, fansubbed by YYeTs.

The subtitler used annotation here to inform the viewers about the background knowledge. It means that the subtitler thought of the viewers understanding ability while subtitling.

The other example goes like this:

Original (Monologue): Look at that, the problem solved itself.

Chinese version: 你瞧 不攻自破了

--Cited from Big Bang Theory season 6, fansubbed by YYeTs.

The Chinese phrase "bu gong zi po" is an idiom, which contains higher traditional cultural atmosphere. There are also many examples of this type, which can express that they are inclined to use traditional Chinese idioms. As it has mentioned in the beginning of this thesis, most subtitlers are university students or have taken university education and have a great master of English and Chinese. Take TLF fansub group, which is founded in 2002 and focuses mainly on movies and American television serials as an example. It contains over 100 group members, and nearly all of them were born from the 60th to the 80th. Their education background includes middle school, university, master and doctor. As a result they are more inclined to use the civilized idioms (Jiang N., 2011).

As to traditional paper-based translation, this phenomenon is even more common. Every translator has its own preference, and every translation characteristic is the representation of the translator's ideology. Take Lin Shu as an example, he lived in the late Qing period most of his life time and acquired traditional Chinese culture from the very start of his childhood. He believed in and strongly advocated the superiority of traditional culture. He firmly believed that things with traditional culture, such as filial piety, had to be intactly remained. So his translation also contains many traditional words and traditional culture. Another example is Lu Xun, his translation are mainly literal because he held

the view that literal translation is the best. Thus, his translation and translation method are the precise reflection of his ideology.

### *B. Influence by the Poetics of the Society*

Lefevere is aware of the importance of manipulation in translation production and holds the opinion that translations are not made in vacuum. A rewriter or a translator does not translate in the vacuum: he or she is the product of a particular culture, of a particular moment in time, and the writing reflects those factors such as race, gender, age, class, and birth place, as well as the stylistic, idiosyncratic features of the individual. Manipulation is, as we have mentioned before, what the translator exercised on the translated text based on the various constraints he is subject to, such as the constraints imposed by power and ideology.

No matter whether it is subtitle translation or traditional paper-based translation, it can never avoid being influenced by the society. The current popular words, phrases, sentences in the society will have a reflection on the translation. Although the degree might be different, the influence exactly affects the translation. The manipulation school of translation theory holds the view that poetics decides the social status and influences the degree of translated articles.

### *C. Catering to the Poetics of the Target Reader*

According to Kaufmann:

The function of a translation is dependent on the knowledge, expectations, values and norms of the target readers, who are again influenced by the situation they are in and by their culture. These functions determine whether the function of the source text or passages in the source text can be preserved or have to be modified or even changed.

What needs to be reinforced is the fact that subtitler's art is effective editing in order to make the most of turning the spoken word into written strings. The written strings should be rich enough to convey a multitude of meanings and yet simultaneously straightforward and clear, and also should go as unnoticed as possible.

Similarly, translators of the traditional paper-based translation also use some translation methods and techniques to make the target readers better understand and accept their translation. For example, Lin Shu used traditional Chinese while translating the foreign novels to attract more readers. The author herself also considered the poetics and acceptance ability of the target readers while translating the book *Ultimate Guide to Wilderness Living*.

## IV. MAJOR DIFFERENCES BETWEEN FANSUB TRANSLATION AND TRADITIONAL PAPER-BASED TRANSLATION

The fansub translation is quite different from the traditional paper-based translation in several aspects: the history, the translator, the translation object, the translation purpose, the main audience, the influencing factors and translation features, etc.

### *A. The History*

The fansub translation is newly born compared with traditional paper-based translation. As it is recorded, fansubs originated in the explosion of anime during the 1980s in Japan. (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fansub>) In China, the history of the fansub groups can be traced back to about 10 years ago. In 2001, with the wide spread of the internet, the netizens all over the world began to publish the video programs made by themselves.

Yet the traditional paper-based translation can be traced back to the ancient times when the Chinese people translated the Buddhist Scriptures. It has gone through a long history till now, which makes it more developed than the fansub translation.

### *B. The Translator*

The translation subject of the fansub translation is no doubt members in the fansub groups, many of whom are not professional translators. The ex-group leader of YDY fansub group is a clinical psychologist, and one of the founders of the Ragbear fansub group is a policeman. ([http://www.guancha.cn/Celebrity/2012\\_09\\_25\\_99792.shtml](http://www.guancha.cn/Celebrity/2012_09_25_99792.shtml)) Students take a great part, among which most are Chinese students studying abroad. Few of them know or have done translation before, and some of them are even not majoring in foreign language. They are mainly young people who have strong interests in the European and American culture. In an interview of Xiao Fu, one of the founders of the most influential fansub groups FRM, he said: "in the subtitle translation circle, the true identities of the translators are always a secret. They might be a Chinese student studying abroad, or an office worker, or even a housewife in Downing Street. The only thing connects them is the internet, as well as their love of the foreign TV serial. But, they do have some common features. Generally, all of them have a lot of time to sit in front of the computer. Among these members, students, homeboys and homegirls take a great part. Their general age is between 20 and 25. And of course, they have strong foreign language abilities." (<http://news.qq.com/a/20090803/001004.htm>)

However, traditional paper-based translation is always done by professional translators, or at least professional language learners. Their knowledge and master of the source language is much better than the fansub translators. Besides, translators of the traditional literature enjoy great honor. As we can see from the translation history in China, there are countless famous translators. They have good reputations and are well respected by the whole society. However, fansub translators are always unknown to the public. They stay low, and only appear as an ID number. They do the translation secretly and keep quiet most of the time.



### C. *Translation Objects and Purpose*

The translation objects of the fansubs are audiovisual products, such as movies, TV serial, etc. The translation objects of traditional paper-based translation are mainly articles, papers, manuals and books, etc.

The translation purpose of the fansubs is to share, to learn and to improve. They always stick to the principle of sharing for free, and maintain to be the organization of non-commercial. They translate because they like the source video products and want to share with the others. They watch the American TV serial to learn English language and culture. And then they translate to practice English and to provide convenience for the other audience. Also, some people do the translation and publish it in the forum because they want to win the scores of the forum. The more scores they have, the more videos and TV programs they can download from the forum. The member of the CPPCC Chen Weiya said: "I think what supports the fansubs translation is the interest, as well as the satisfaction of being watched by the netizens. They do this for the interests and faith, but not for money. This is very admirable." ([http://news.qq.com/a/20100313/000218\\_1.htm](http://news.qq.com/a/20100313/000218_1.htm) )

As to the translation purpose of the traditional paper-based translation, we cannot conclude it in several sentences. All we can tell is that they are not just for enjoyment. For example, the translation purpose of the Buddhist sutras is to influence the thoughts of the people, and elevate their humanity. The translation of the western scientific and technical literature in the late Qing Dynasty was popular and was attached importance by many scholars because of the social situation at that time. (Chen F. K., 2009) They want to introduce the advanced science and technology to improve China's under-developed situation. Translation purpose of the world famous literature works is for the admiration and enjoyment of the people.

### D. *The Target Receiver*

The main audiences of the fansubs are people of the age from 19 to 40. According to a research made by the YDY Forum, among all the 1000 netizens who have participated in the research, 75% are in the age group between 19 and 40, and 71%-85% has a junior college education degree. (<http://ent.sina.com.cn/v/u/2009-04-08/13082461399.shtml>) Of course this data may not be so accurate, but it does represent a phenomenon. The target readers of traditional paper-based translation are the mass people, and it differs depending on the exact translation. The audience of the professional materials in a certain area may be the experts in that area, such as medical translation, software translation. And the audiences of the well-known literature works are the public.

### E. *The Influencing Factors*

The translation of the fansubs is influenced by several factors, such as the appetite of the audience, the personal preference of the translator, the present popular terms on the internet, etc. Taking from the view of the manipulation theory, the translation of the fansubs is manipulated by the ideology of the mass audience, the ideology of the translators and the social ideology, as well as the poetics of the translators. But the influence of the patronage can nearly be neglected, since the translation activity is spontaneous by the audiovisual fans. Apart from that, the influence of censorship on the fansub translation is not very strong due to its special features. Since the fansubs always keep a low profile, and the subtitled videos are not for commercial use, the censorship to it is not extremely strict. The fansub translation is a minority activity, so its censorship has not become a complete system yet.

As to the traditional paper-based translation, it is not only influenced by the ideology of the translator, the readers and the society, but also by the patronage. As we can see, most of the traditional paper-based translations are sponsored by a third party, which is what we called patronage, so they are inevitably influenced by it. For example, the translation of the Buddhist sutras in the Tang Dynasty is influenced by the government; and the translation of many books in the current society is influenced by the publisher. The translator's poetics also influences the translation process, but it is not as evident as in the fansub translation. The censorship to the traditional paper-based translation is developed and mature, and all the translation works are under strict examination.

## V. ADVANTAGES OF FANSUB TRANSLATION

Although fansub translation is non-mainstream compared with traditional paper translation, it still has advantages. It connects closely with the social development, enlarges the translation scope and promotes the development of translation. Besides, it also improves reading skills, boosts foreign language skills and facilitates easy and cheap international program exchange.

### A. *Promoting the Development of Translation and Translation Study*

It is developing fast and connects closely with the current society, which makes it more popular than the translated books. This can be traced back to the origin of the fansub group members, most of whom are netizens. They are familiar with the popular words on the internet, such as "狗血", "你妹啊", "嗨翻了", etc. Most of these words appear in the fansub translation and thus attract the resonance of many viewers. It can be claimed as a form of translation which comes from the people and shared by the people. Whether this kind of translation would last long in the translation system or not, it has inevitably promoted the development of translation.

Besides, it enlarges the scope of translation. Traditionally, when speaking of translation, it means on-the-paper translation. However, the emergence and development of fansub translation makes the translation world more and more colorful. Translation has broken through the boundary of paper and texts and accessed to the audiovisual area.

Last but not least, it will boost translation studies. Subtitle translation is different from traditional paper-based translation. It has its specific features, such as using a lot of simplification, annotation, web language, and sometimes the subtitlers have to do audio translation. All these features are good research points of translation studies.

### *B. Improving Reading Skills and Foreign Language Skills*

In a culture which favors audiovisual media, subtitles in foreign productions constitute an important and effective reading drill for both adults, including immigrants, and for children. Interlingual subtitles tend to be read even by viewers who understand the original language spoken. Similarly, intralingual subtitles usually trigger reading behavior in a perfectly hearing audience. This may of course sometimes be due to the 'natural acting' favored in many contemporary film and TV productions, which renders parts of the dialogue semi-inaudible to most people. But the prime reason for this 'doubled reception' of spoken lines on TV is that most literate people simply cannot avoid reading text on screen. In Denmark, subtitles are now the primary reason that children want to learn how to read, and normally-hearing people who never read the Danish non-optional subtitles are nowadays considered dyslectic.

According to Belgian studies, reading domestic-language subtitles while watching a foreign-language production improves foreign-language vocabulary skills, in particular in children. And in Italy, a promising, interactive and concordance-based method for learning minority languages through subtitled film sequences is presently being developed.

### *C. Facilitating Easy and Cheap International Exchange*

As is mentioned before, fansub groups are volunteer translation groups. The subtitlers in the fansub groups do the translation without charging any fees. This action improved the spread and acceptability of foreign audiovisual products in China. Since audiovisual products, especially television serials, contain a lot of cultural knowledge, such as life style, eating habits, communication features, etc., the viewers will learn those features while watching audiovisual products. Meanwhile, international exchange has also been increased at the same time.

## VI. DISADVANTAGES OF FANSUB TRANSLATION

Although fansub translation contains many popular words and expresses the current popular trends on the website and throughout the whole society. It cannot be assured that fansub translation is the best without any problems. Since every coin has two sides, so is fansub translation. Meanwhile, the using of popular words in fansub translation also has its shortcomings.

### *A. Instantaneous of Web Language*

It is known to all that nothing could stay popular forever. When it comes to web language, it is more obvious. Many words became popular on the internet instantaneously, and the subtitlers always use those popular words in the subtitle translation. We cannot tell whether those popular words will stay popular for a long time. Besides, it is always the case that those popular words will vanish quickly. Thus, it is probably that the subtitle translation will be out of date some day.

Right now, there are many disputes about the fansub translation. Some people are in favor of it and highly praise the translation, while some people dislike it. It is true that comparing with the traditional literary translation, fansub translation is not that classic and sometimes temporary. And the language used in the translation is not long-lived.

### *B. Negative Influence on the Audiences*

Although adding subtitles to the English programs can help the audience to learn English, it may also cause some negative influence on the audience if the translated subtitles are incorrect. As the author has noticed during watching English TV serials and movies, there are always some translation mistakes. The audiences would be misled if they learn English based on the wrong translations.

Take the phrase "give my best to him" for example. The correct Chinese translation is "带我向他问好", but some fansub group translated it into "把我最好的给他". The other phrase "she's such a pain in the ass" should be translated into "她真讨厌", but the fansub group translated it into "她的臀部有疼痛感". If the audience is not good at English and trusted the subtitle, they will be misled.

## VII. PROBLEMS CONFRONTING FANSUB GROUPS

Many problems existing in the fansub translation are unique, since they seldom appear in traditional paper-based translation.

### *A. Legal and Ethical Issues*

With its popularity and development, fansub groups have attracted more and more attention. They have received the support of the mass viewers, but also are facing with criticism and misunderstanding. From the perspective of maintaining the copyright, fansub groups may be criticized of piracy. Although they always add those words “this is only for study and communication, please do not use it for commercial purpose” in front of their subtitled programs, the subtitled programs are used by some illegal peddlers to make pirated discs.

On April 1st, 2009, the State Administration of Radio Film and Television prescribed clearly in the notice about strengthening the management on internet audiovisual program content that “any movies, television programs, cartoon programs and theoretical document audiovisual products should not broadcast on the internet unless certified”. Thus many websites which provide broadcasting and downloading of the subtitled foreign programs were shut down, such as tudou.com, youku.com and BT forum. As the translator of the subtitles, fansub groups were criticized of causing those piracies and blamed by many people.

However, if the fansub groups only translate the subtitles and do not add them to the programs, they would be able to avoid the criticism. It is a fact that many Chinese audiences do not know how to add subtitle to the program. But since every fansub group want to attract more fans, their help and thoughtful of providing subtitled programs lead to their infringement of law.

Fansub groups are global phenomenon and Chinese fansub groups are only a small part. Although the Chinese fansub groups might face some problems during their development, the fansub groups in America and Europe have avoided some of the problems by only providing translated subtitles. They would not add those subtitles to the programs, which could avoid being accused of illegal. May be Chinese fansub groups could also use this way to prevent from illegal or piracy (Liu X. J., 2011).

### *B. Quality Problems*

It should be admitted that the situation of the subtitle translation is quite a chaos right now. There are no uniform standards to regulate the fansub translation. Moreover, there exist certain people whose translate purpose is only to gain scores of the forum. So they are not serious with their translation and would make many mistakes. There are also some fansubs who only care about the amount of their translation without considering of the quality. They do not have a censor to guarantee the translation quality. So when watching the videos with subtitles, we can easily find a lot of mistakes. Generally speaking, the mistakes can be concluded in the following types:

#### 1. Format errors

Take the most common “srt” format as an example, which can be open by the notepad of the computer system. Its format is like this:

180

00:14:53,962 -; 00:14:56,362

我能跟你的朋友谈一会儿吗?

181

00:14:56,598 -; 00:14:58,828

你是他的律师吗?

There are three kinds of format errors:

a. While translating, the timing code is deleted. Only the number and sentences are left. For example:

180

我能跟你的朋友谈一会儿吗?

This kind of subtitle cannot be loaded into the videos, and there will appear error display like XXX faults.

b. The English subtitle is not removed clean. For example:

180

00:14:53,962 -; 00:14:56,362

那是他的拿手好戏.

c. The blank line is missed between two sentences. If so, the number, timing code and contents of the next sentence will all be displayed on the screen.

#### 2. Punctuation errors

Although the punctuation seems unnecessary, it actually influences the quality of the subtitle, and sometimes even the understanding of the plot. As to whether add punctuation or not, the group members of HST once had a discussion. And their discussion result goes like this: unified use Chinese punctuation, or do not use punctuation except “?”, “《》” which will influence the understanding of the meaning. However, not all fansub groups have punctuation standard. Thus this kind of error is difficult to avoid.

#### 3. Disunity translation of names

According to the customs of HTS fansub group, the names of people and places should also be translated. The abbreviations such as WTO, CIA, FBI, etc. are well known to the people, so they can be directly used in the translated subtitle. While translating the others names, the translators should follow the general customs. For example: the American president Kennedy should be translated into “肯尼迪”, because it has become a custom and the name is well known to the Chinese people. But if it is translated into “克妮蒂”, the audience will not be able to understand who it

really is. Sometimes, the names will be translated into the wrong sex. Such as the name Kyle can be translated into “凯尔” or “凯利”. However, if it belongs to a man but is translated into “凯莉”, the audience will get confused.

Besides, when one TV serial is translated by several people, this disunity will also appear. Sometimes the name of the same character will change in different episodes. Take *Sex and City* as an example, the name of the main character Mr. Big was translated into “大人物” in the first several episodes, but in the later ones it was translated into “比格先生”, “彼格先生”, and so does the names of several other figures. Thus, this will cause the audiences’ inadaptability.

#### 4. The sentences too long

This is the thing that many new subtitle translators will neglect. The size of the screen requires there should be no more than 20 Chinese characters in one line, and no more than 3 lines all together on the screen.

#### 5. The translated sentences difficult to understand

Each sentence of the subtitle will only appear several seconds on the screen, thus the translators should use the simplest sentence to express the most necessary information. Translate the sentences into “tongue twisters” should be strictly avoided. A sentence can have many kinds of translation based on the specific condition. So the translators can choose the easiest understandable sentences as long as it keeps the original meaning. For example,

“But he’s afraid if she finds out he’s gonna pay all that dough, she won’t let him.”

“但他担心是否她已经发现他能支付所有的钱，她不会的。”

There are three “he” and two “she” in the English sentence, which will make our Chinese people confused. But the Chinese translation is even worse because we totally cannot understand the meaning. So the translator should divide the meaning and then separate the sentence accordingly. It can be translated as:

“他准备支付所有的钱，但担心她发现后不允许这么做。”

#### 6. Understanding errors

Some English words have several meanings, and may be the meaning the translator knows is not the suitable one in the sentence. So if the translator only translates according to their existing knowledge, they will make mistakes. Such as:

“Why, it’s nearly nine o’clock.”

When there is a question mark behind the word “Why”, we usually translate into “为什么”. But in this sentence, there is a comma following behind, so it cannot be translated into “为什么”. At this time, the translator should consult dictionaries and translation software to figure out the suitable meaning. Therefore, we can translate the sentence into:

“啊，快要九点了。”

Another example goes like this:

“And right away you turned yellow.

Yellow?”

The next sentence is: “Yellow is a color you figure on in a murder.”

The direct translation of the sentence goes like this:

“紧接着你就变黄了。

黄了？”

But the audience will certainly not understand the meaning.

So, based on the meaning, the sentence could be translated like this:

“你立刻吓得脸都黄了。

黄了？”

#### 7. Blind translations

In the fansub HTS, if the proofreader do not watch the video but directly proof the English and Chinese subtitle, it is called “blind proofread”. And accordingly, direct translation without watching the video will be called “blind translation”. Since the biggest difference between subtitle translation and traditional article translation is that the subtitle is closely connected with the plots. For example, the word “you” always appear in the program. Such as:

“Why don’t you”

Whether it should be translated into “你为什么 not” or “你们为什么不”? It will depend on the actual situation of the plots. If it is translated without connecting with the plots, many mistakes will appear.

#### 8. Multiple translations

Multiple translation is not an error in itself. But if all the translators do not watch the program thoroughly, mistakes might appear. The translation of some terms, the language style and the expression methods might be different when translated

by different people. Thus, different kinds of mistakes will emerge.

#### 9. Too rigid or too flexible

According to the traditional paper-based translation theory by Yanfu, “faithfulness, expressiveness and elegance” are the standards to judge a good translation. The translators can get the meaning of the English sentence, but whether they can translate them into good Chinese is a question. The translation of some words, especially some verbs like “take, get” are more difficult since they have many meanings. For example: “I’ll get the car” should be translated into “我去开车，我去把车开过来”，but not “我去拿车”. “To saddle a horse” means “给马装上马鞍” but not “去鞍上马” which

is totally English style Chinese. Too rigid is not good, and so is too flexible. In the serious conditions, if the word “girl” is translated into “MM”, or “美眉”, then it is not good.

#### 10. Too many wrong words and sentences

Since the translators in the fansubs are always in a hurry and translate in a short time, the appearing of wrong words and sentences is a normal occasion. Sometimes there even exist some silly mistakes, which should be firmly eradicated. (<http://www.douban.com/group/topic/1040982/>)

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# A Unique Approach of Memory Narrative Therapy in Diasporic Contexts: An Analysis of *The Bonesetter's Daughter* and *The Kitchen God's Wife* by Amy Tan

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**Abstract**—Unlike the usual trauma situations, where narrative therapy could be utilized as a healing remedy, in diasporic context, the major errand of recalling memory for immigrants is constitution of a sense of 'self', that confirms with their national identity; and the chief mode of conveying this identity is via talk- stories. Although, recalled reminiscences are distorted and discontinuous but they facilitate the psychological redemption of afflicted trauma survivors. In the diasporic context, a distinctive stratagem is employed since there is not a will to talk with strangers in narrative therapy circles, by migrant trauma victims; this typical technique would secure a sense of national identity among migrants. This study is an investigation of a unique strategy of narrative therapy in diasporic context, in major novels of Amy Tan, as a second generation of Chinese migrants.

**Index Terms**—narrative therapy, trauma, memory narratives, Amy Tan, diaspora

## I. INTRODUCTION

The haunting power of past memories, intensified in traumatic incidents, forces the individuals to create an eligible picture of past; this would ensure a secured sense of 'self'. The process of recalling memories of traumatic event challenges the validity of stored images. Basically, the mind, proficiently, distorts the past and the outcome is representation of erratic memory. Repudiating the legitimacy of the presented images of past means existence of fashioned memory, in which fact and fancy are amalgamated, to fabricate a holistic picture. However, for migrants, foundation of a sense of 'self' is allied with national identity; usually, it is created by oral histories about past, in the form of memory narratives. Memory narratives could be considered the psychological solutions, to heal the victims of traumatic past incidents. Narrative therapy could be an inseparable part of memory narratives, in which recalling is the main narrative strategy to cure the past. But there is not a will to participate in therapy sessions by most of migrant communities; they usually prefer to share their trauma stories with their families or their close friends. They believe that sharing suffering with others would be a source of humiliation for them and their nation. Especially, migrant women, afflicted by suppressive forces inside their family as well as outside, are unwilling to share their narratives in therapy sessions. Their actions are always mixed with silence. Their retrospective accounts are marked by a sudden comprehension of the cruel passage of time that bestows them with courage, to share their memories with their children who are indifferent to these narrative, most of the times. As many cases of close reading of literary texts, this study is designed to interpret the disparate manifestations of memory's representation in characters' narratives and the way it influences their life and the life of people around them. Characters' desires and fears possibly will be recognized by scrutinizing their memory narratives. The literary texts provide clues to find the roots of character's actions and their present subjectivity. This study is an attempt to scrutinize a unique strategy of narrative therapy applied in diasporic contexts in major novels of Amy Tan. *The Bonesetter's Daughter* (2001) and *The Kitchen God's Wife* (1991) are two novels which are under the examination, in this research.

## II. THEORIZING NARRATIVE THERAPY

The oral reproduction of memory narratives has long proved to heal past, empirically. The comfort and the ease felt after sharing traumatic memories with others is a substantial reality. This established a scientific research to explore the mechanism and the impact of recalling within groups. The term 'narrative therapy' was coined by Michael White, David Epston, and many other psychologists. Narrative therapy concentrates, mainly, on the function of narratives in the process of healing mental injuries, by generating a vivid picture of life events. It involves an act of deconstructing the current, established meanings of actions, through questioning the long held assumptions. This would provide multiple possibilities for appreciating one's life. Narrative therapy assumes that identities are chiefly constituted by stories of life, whether personal or social. Like postmodern movement, it highlights the narratives of marginalized

discourses, in contrast to hegemonic social practices. This process is achieved through objectifying and externalizing the problems; it involves a re-evaluation of hegemonic values. In sessions of narrative therapy people are allowed to express their versions of experiences and this leads to constitution of a fruitful interpretive act that assigns a certified meaning to past events. Production of different versions of narratives is a cultural process and it is governed by cultural context of the individuals who express them; and like every other cultural matters, these narratives are not static, but they are open to modification. The main goal of narrative therapy is determined by the amount of knowledge and intelligibility that it provides the individuals with; it may change their perspectives in life, forever. By meeting other possible alternatives in life, people discover novel skills and capacity within, that all comes from past experiences.

Tabatabaei Lotfi (2014) suggests that,

Nevertheless, there must be a 'will' behind sharing memories. In most cases, especially in the cases of sexual and racial abuses and domestic violence, victims are unwilling to talk about their suffering; this might be because of the fear of later troubles by oppressors or social stigmatization. For migrant communities, this is doubled by cultural impediments; there could be also language barriers that add to the complexity of communicating. Unfortunately, most of these trauma stories are unnoticed or ignored by psychologists and society, but there are some movements to hear and cure the pain of past. (p.143)

Unfortunately, in diasporic contexts, in which there are multi- factorial suppressive elements, migrants prefer to keep silent about their traumatic experiences. Gradually, this silence is shattered by migrants who start to talk about their traumas, within narrative therapy circles. There has been a movement by migrant writers to inform people about the stories of their diasporic communities.

In a collaborative paper published by "The International Journal of Narrative Therapy and Community Work", a collection of different therapists' theories, on the latest accomplishments of this field by David Denborough (2004) is put forward. Additionally, the necessity of a reciprocal method for a better mutual comprehension of trauma narratives is suggested. Shona Russell believes that, recently, the position of the therapist as the holder of skill and knowledge has dramatically changed to a person who asks questions to explore different perspectives of people's life, through their narratives. However, the acquired knowledge may well be shared by other practitioners and patients (p. 30). Russell points to the inspiring act of sharing experiences with others in therapy sessions, "It also evokes a sense of joint exploration. Together we are setting out to explore territory that hasn't been explored before. Together we are trying to seek out unique outcomes and ways of re-authoring these into preferred storylines" (p. 32). The search for invisible consequences of past in one's life illuminates that there are many unexplored meanings to it; the act of meaning making is an impartial endeavor to discover truth, because narratives are interpreted multi-dimensionally. The produced data is, then, employed to provide justice for others. Sadly, some of these stories are shocking and immobilizing and leave a permanent impression of rage and anger in therapist that would affect the progression of narrative therapy.

### III. MIGRATORY NARRATIVES

Migration literature is a field of innovatory techniques of narration. Evidently, the major aim of sharing memories is uniting the immigrant families, as well as helping parents to transmit their national identity to their children. The significant point is that, in the course of recalling memory, a collective identity is constructed, as well as the individual identity. Like many other discursive social disciplines that interact perpetually in constructions and deconstruction of each other, the modes and patterns of recalling in a certified historical context, would produce diverse, yet communal products; these are manifested in the form of national myths and legends of a particular nation.

The narratives that individuals create as their individual memories might not be their own experiences of the incidents, entirely, since the formation of identity is in closely linked to the "autobiographical memory" and grants a "sense of personal continuity and consistency over historical time that forms the backgrounds for individual's interaction with others and serves as a reference point for self-reflective activities" (Waites, 1993, p. 14). It implies that in order to make sense out of incidents, the individuals locate themselves in accordance with memory; recalling traumatic events is in the form of the recollection of memories in an active process to satisfy a mutual desire. In diasporic context, a sense of autonomy prevails that is originated in the geographical dislocation; this would assist the process of disregarding, as well as the procedure of recollecting. Both of these activities are exposed to fictionalization. Therefore, an imaginary version of past is represented by migrant communities, which tries to cover the bitter parts of recalled memories.

In the strife to constitution an integrated 'self', a linear chronological order must be generated; in the cases of different types of Dementias, the loss of memory would result in social withdrawal. In migrant societies, this memory loss is a moral sin, a national crime or loss of a nation's memorial heritage.

Unfortunately, in diasporic contexts, children's estrangement with their inherited culture heaps on the sense of isolation. Additionally, the malfunction of communicating with the host culture incarcerates the practice of storytelling to domestic spheres. Thus, the issue of narrative therapy that could be an inseparable part of memory narratives appears to be an inconvenient subject in the context of migration, because most of migrants are reluctant to go through sessions of consulting; they are distrustful toward consulting institutes which are representative of the dominant, hostile host culture. Apparently, the concept of narrative therapy is excluded in migratory narratives, because, it is a voluntary participation, in consulting sessions by individuals.

The practice of recalling past by migrant writers is not a new notion, according to Carol Boyce Davis (1998). Recalling memory is transgression of borders of time, history and space. The policy of memory becomes the main concept in construction of past, in a new and logical present that has the function of articulation of meaning and creating coherence. The function of memory, in breaking the conventional norms of narration and violating the laws of time and history, creates a rich blend of impeccable version of stories which usually belong to migration narratives (p. 1006). In diasporic context, immigrants are free from their previous confinements; this leads to creativity and novelty, in their narratives; thus it would have a healing effect on them. However, the fallacious nature of memory generates distorted images of past by migrant communities.

#### A. Story Telling Policy by Amy Tan

There are resemblances between Amy Tan's personal life and the lives that she pictures, in her narratives; for instance, allusions to her grandmother's suicide are traceable in *The Kitchen God's Wife* and *The Bonesetter's Daughter*. Her mother's difficult life in a foreign country is also depicted in various texts. Sharing memory, in the form of storytelling, is not only the raw material for Tan's novels, but also fashions a fertile field, for formulation of identity. Through memories of mothers, the American born children gain an imagined Chinese identity; frequently, it is in conflict with their American ones. Mothers of Tan's novels, as well as her own mother, are all among the first generation of immigrants from China, who speak very little English and feel culturally alienated in their new context. Nonetheless, sharing memories within the domestic domains of diasporic families is a redemptive act which guarantees the mental and psychological integrity of characters.

The daughters, mentioned in the novels, are all born and educated in America; Ben Xu (1994) suggests that, "within the microcultural structure of family, the only means available for mothers to ensure ethnic continuity is to recollect the past and to tell tales of what is remembered" (p. 2). He believes that in dealing with memory narrative, it must be considered that each narrative may contain a double layer, one related to "life-story" and the other related to "existential perception" that it entails. "If the life-story is marked by a seeming actuality, existential perception is what transforms the casual daily events into a functioning mentality or an existential concern that is not self-evident" (p. 4). This means that in narrating memories of past, not only the actual events are remembered, but also the external reality of the present is attached to them that makes them convincing, in the present condition. "Memory narrative does not represent a perfect equivalent of the events it purports to describe. It goes beyond the actuality of events to the determination of their coherency as an existential situation, and this general picture of life in turn assigns exemplary values to the events which are awakened in memory by a functioning mentality" (p. 4). This quotation expresses the value of the discourse of memory in social significations. Incidents are interpreted with a retrospective function of memory narratives; the decisions are also made, regarding the present perception of past.

By storytelling, Chinese parents transmit their familial history to the next generation. Therefore, the younger generations obtain some sense of sympathy toward their ancestors and dreams that were to be fulfilled in The United States. American-born children, ostensibly, are liberated from their parents' past. Still, they are obsessed dramatically about their ancestral land. They are haunted by past, and the mystery associated with it; a mysterious past that existed only in the memories of their parents. Intelligently, Tan has used this strategy to narrate her stories. All of Tan's novels have parallel narratives, one related to the past which is retold by mothers, and in one case a step sister who has come back from China; and the other is associated with the present stories of daughters about the cultural conflicts and alienation, they feel regarding the ancestral heritage of their home which has been transmitted to them by means of past memories. The point is that storytelling plays an essential position in creation of a new, more Chinese identity, in contrast to the previous American one, McDaniels (2004) states that,

Basically, both versions of the stories, mother's and daughter's are necessary for revealing the complete story, including the painful secrets, whether the pain is alleviated or just changes its context. Both mothers and daughters need to tell their versions and listen to the others' versions in order to have all the information necessary to arrange their own stories in complete form. Women (in these texts and in general) need each other in order to know themselves completely. (p. 128)

Hence, storytelling is the only possible means of communication for alienated mothers and daughters. In this process, memory converts into an instrument of representing past images of China. Surprisingly, in the exchange of secrets, located at the end of the novels, characters obtain an impeccable insight about themselves and their Chinese identity. Sharing memories, in the form of oral histories, has been always considered a feminine act of breaking the silence and marginalization. The structure of the narratives demonstrates the individual tragedies of mothers' life in China, as well as, the obscurities of cultural transformation. The act of storytelling accentuates the mothers' strength in China where they were suggested to be invisible and voiceless human beings. They tell their stories to preserve their ancestral history, in addition to emphasizing their cultural differences. However, they find themselves muted in America, because their English is not good enough and they feel culturally alienated.

Cynthia Wong (1997) studies the process of narration, in novels of Amy Tan in her article, "Asymmetries: Loss and Forgiveness in the Novels of Amy Tan". She suggests that recalling past memories and their narrative exhibition is a kind of defense mechanism to guarantee the integration of 'self' in the context of America,

Subsequently, their survival in the new context depends upon a reliable mechanism for expressing what really happened. However, elusiveness of such a mechanism is evident as the mother's narratives progress, and therein lays



the incongruence of understanding between mothers and daughters. In expressing the twists and turns of experiences and their own altering responses to experiences past and present, Tan's characters frequently shift their own subjective, or narrating, positions. (p. 64)

The permanent changes of characters' stories would lay emphasis on the dynamicity of memory that provides a safe personal access to past. This designs a fictional realm out of the seemingly factual stories of mothers. Amazingly, the reconstruction of the mother's narratives is a cultural response to the wide detachment that they feel among themselves and their daughters. Fallacious nature of memory ensures family's union and provides mothers with a solution to their everyday problems, in diasporic context. Wong, then, concludes that, "storytelling in Tan's fiction is involved with the persistent shifting and reshaping of myths that have healed and comforted these women devastated by the magnitude of their losses. Tan imagines and constructs their efforts at forgiveness by renouncing their ability to unify the disparate experiences of women and their progeny originating from China" (p. 75). Recalling memories promises a better future for alienated mothers; their narratives are feministic endeavors to save their national, communal identities.

#### B. Act of Narration in Tan's Novels

*The Bonesetter's Daughter* narrates mother-daughter conflicts in an Asian- American family, where the mother's past is the key to healing mental injuries of the present. The story initiates, quickly, with the introduction of major character of the novel. The major character of the novel is Ruth Yang, a Chinese- American who is a ghostwriter; she undergoes a short enigmatic annual muteness. Besides, her life is under great pressures with factors such as clients, her husband Art and two step-daughters and most of all, incapability to create a mutual empathy with her mother, LuLing, who forces her to communicate with the ghost of her dead grandmother. Then, the story promptly, moves to the main narrative which is description of Ruth Young's life in America. In the middle of the story, LuLing's manuscript is found and this disrupts the ordinary current of life for Ruth; it is about past, when LuLing was still in China. Through reading LuLing's manuscript, about her memories in China, Ruth comes to get a new perception toward her life and tries to solve the struggles between her mother and herself. She starts to amend her life by initiating a unique creative writing, with all immaculate insight that she has attained about herself. In other words, by looking back and by the power of recalling past memories, Ruth has obtained a new vision of future; as she writes the story of her mother and her grandmother, she reveals her vision, in the closing words of the novel,

They write about what happened, why it happened, how they can make other things happen. They write stories of things that are but should not have been. They write about what could have been, what still might be. They write of a past that can be changed. After all, Bao Bomu says: 'what the past is but what we choose to remember? They can choose not to hide it, to take what's broken, to feel the pain and know that it will heal. They know where happiness lies, not in a cave or a country, but in love and the freedom to give and take what has been there all along. Ruth remembers this as she writes a story. It is for her grandmother, for herself, for the little girl who became her mother. (p. 197)

The identity conflicts are not restricted to LuLing and her mother, as Chinese, but they are also applicable to Ruth who has been born in America and thinks of herself as an American. Ruth is troubled, embarrassed and humiliated by her mother's Chinese behavior and criticizes her for her inability to assimilate with the American culture, "her mother couldn't even say Ruth's name right. It used to mortify Ruth when she shouted for her up and down the block. 'Lootie! Lootie!' Why had her mother chosen a name with sounds she couldn't pronounce?" (p. 24). Her embarrassment is intensified as she is considered the same as her mother, by others; they identify her with LuLing, except in the case that she can speak English. She has to be "LuLing's mouthpiece" and become "English-speaking 'Mrs. LuLing Young' on the telephone" (p. 24). This would clearly indicate the ambiguous state of migrant children. No matter how hard they strive, they are attached to their national culture, with an invisible thread; this magnifies their confusion.

Ron Eyerman (2004) suggests that memory is the product of "symbolic interactions, narrative and discourse"; and this means that it might be documented in a written form, as well as oral form (p. 162). By hiring someone to translate the mother's manuscript and discovering the real name of the grandmother, the novel moves toward a shared communication, which is based on the construction of a joint identity, "Precious Auntie belonged to a family. LuLing belonged to that same family, and Ruth belonged to them both. The family name had been there all along, like a bone stuck in the crevices of a gorge" (p. 196). Little by Little, Ruth respects her ancestral legacy that is supposed to be transmitted to her by the means of mothers and their stories of past; and it is the beginning of a sense of belonging to China as homeland,

As Ruth now stares at the photo, she thinks about her mother as a little girl, about her grandmother as a young woman. These are the women who shaped her life, who are in her bones. They caused her to question whether the order and disorder of her life were due to fate or luck, self-determination or the actions of others. They taught her to worry. But she has also learned that these warnings were passed down, not simply to scare her, but to force her to avoid their footsteps, to hope for something better. They wanted her to get rid of the curses. (p. 196)

Here, past becomes the source of redemption and mutual perception for members of a migrant family, which was threatened to shatter. Ruth discovers the answer to her philosophical questions about life. Interestingly, this insight belongs to a feminine sphere and its instructors are all women who share their memories with their daughters, to protect them from hazards of life. Unlike Tan's other novels, which are based on oral narratives of mothers, this story develops by the act of documenting past. However, the written word serves to perform as the savior of ancestral memories and preserves the history of a family and in larger scale, a nation.

*The Kitchen God's Wife* also profits the instrument of storytelling. Winnie and Helen are old friends and have kept each other's secrets about their past lives in China; they decide that it is the right time to disclose secrets about past, secrets so horrible that even, Helen, as a close friend is unaware of them. Again, there is a parallel mother/daughter narrative, in which it is the narrative of the mother that reshapes and reveals the real identity of the daughter. The major Character of the story, Pearl, understands that her mother, courageously, fought her difficult and tragic marriage to an abusive husband in China and came to America for a better life, while pregnant by him, as he maliciously raped him. The story ends with a return to China to cure the illness of the daughter, as a symbolic jubilation of return to national origin. *The Kitchen God's Wife*, also ends with a return to China in order to bring Chinese's medicine to cure Pearl; China again becomes equivalent to a remedy, for not only mental disease and unease of the characters, but also a remedy for their physical illnesses as Helen declares, "Chinese medicine can cure everything" and this includes a cure for identity imbalance of Pearl too (p. 406). According to Yuan, the novel is based on traumatic memories of homeland, "the China narrative is based on Winnie's painful experiences in China. In fact, the pain and suffering that are central to Winnie's recollection invite repression rather than recall. Her China narrative is subject to constant postponement and erasure to conceal the unspeakable experience and repressed memory" (p. 144). Nevertheless, the silence must be broken and memories must be recalled, because Pearl's mother thinks that the source of her illness is originated in her past. Helen mentions the unease felt by Pearl's mother in believing that she is the one who has given the disease to her daughter, "she thinks that she gave you your sickness" and also believes that her disease is "from an imbalance in nature"; and because she has her roots in China, the imbalance could only be cured there (p. 408). The source of disease is 'past' and the remedy is also in union with it; the voyage to China is compared to tasting magical water that might heal, not only physically but it can create a peace of mind by its strange effect on the memory of the past too, "I can taste it too. I can feel it. Only a little amount and it is enough to remember- all the things you thought you had forgotten but were never forgotten, all the hopes that can still be found" (p. 410). The omnipresence of past, in the form of memory, is the real reason for its diverse performance in the life of characters. It may cure and poison.

Walter Ong (1982) states that, "When a speaker is addressing an audience, the members of the audience normally become a unity, with themselves and with the speaker" (p. 74). Therefore, since the power of storytelling and sharing past memories lies in its capability to unite the minds of the speaker with those of the listeners, storytelling can diminish the communication and cultural obstacles which separated Chinese born parents and their American born children; it can fortify the bonds between parents and children. Additionally, it may have a curative effect on migrants who are unwilling to share their traumatic experience with strangers. It is clearly indicated that in diasporic contexts, the role of sharing memories within domestic domains is an outstanding one; this is also different with the usual narrative therapy sessions, for treating mental problems.

Accordingly, in Tan's novels, the remedial impact of sharing memories within diasporic communities would not only redeem the mental injuries of migrant society, but it also articulates a communal identity among them. This identity facilitates the act of communication among different generations of migrants, in a unique pattern. The memory narrative therapy is specified to migrant communities who refuse to share their traumatic experiences in therapeutic sessions.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Narrative therapy is a psychological cure in traumatic incidents. However, in diasporic contexts, a distinct tactic is used in sharing traumatic reminiscences. Usually, the migratory subjects are unwilling to share their memories with strangers in diasporic contexts and prefer to share it with their children in domestic spheres of their home. This would guarantee the transference of their national heritage to next generation and constitute a communal national identity among their diasporic communities. Memory narratives provide a fertile ground for a mutual dialogue among different generations; as if it is only through storytelling that the private monologue of memory is converted into a public meaningful dialogue and the lost sense of identity is regained among migrant communities. This study is an investigation of a unique strategy of memory narrative therapy, in diasporic context, in Amy Tan's *The Kitchen God's Wife* and *The Bonesetter's Daughter*.

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# Research on College English Autonomous Learning Strategies Based on the Digital Instructional Platform<sup>\*</sup>

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**Abstract**—Under the digital network environment, one of the objectives of college English teaching is to cultivate students' autonomous learning ability and make students become lifelong learners. The purpose of this paper is to investigate the current situation of college English autonomous learning strategy use based on the digital instructional platform. Through questionnaire and interview, it is found that the digital learning environment is not so good, and the use of learning strategies is not satisfactory in some degree, especially metacognitive strategy, affective strategy and social strategy. The following suggestions are put forward: strengthen the training of autonomous learning strategies, improve teachers' educational technology literacy, network environment, perfect the teaching management, and improve teachers' educational technology literacy and students' information literacy.

**Index Terms**—autonomous learning strategies, college English, digital instructional platform

## I. INTRODUCTION

In July 2007, the national ministry of education promulgated *College English Curriculum Requirements*, which explicitly proposes to enhance students' autonomous learning ability, improve the comprehensive cultural quality; change from teacher-centered teaching mode to student-centered; cultivate the students' lifelong learning ability as the guidance of lifelong education. Students' autonomous learning ability has become the focus of college English teaching. A person needs to have the ability of autonomous learning, and lifelong learning will be the inevitable trend of social development. Whether a person has the autonomous learning ability has become an important sign to measure a person's quality.

Modern education has realized that the basic purpose of education is to make students become independent, autonomous and effective learners. Therefore, strengthening the cultivation of college students' learning strategies and helping them grasp effective learning strategies aim at cultivating students' autonomous learning ability, which can make them acquire new knowledge and explore new problems. Autonomous learning strategies can stimulate students' learning initiative and enthusiasm effectively and it can also improve their autonomous learning ability and learning efficiency (Li, 2007). There are three significances of autonomous learning strategies. Firstly, it can improve students' learning and learning efficiency in a large scope, especially it can promote and improve the students who are with learning difficulties because of intelligence or other objective factors, to a certain extent, it can help them reduce the learning disabilities and increase self-confidence in learning. Secondly, autonomous learning strategies can guide the teachers' teaching more effectively. Objective and meaningful learning strategy teaching reduces the teaching and training time. That is to say, it can release the burden of students' learning. Thirdly, it is benefit for new curriculum reform. In the information age, the individual is limited on the master of subject knowledge, whereas grasping the strategy of knowledge acquisition contributes to grasp more knowledge.

The digital teaching platform provides convenience for students' autonomous learning in the choice of resources, selection of space, the development of the learning style, learning evaluation, which undoubtedly provides more advantages for students to develop college English autonomous learning. But through investigation it is found that the current situation of college English autonomous learning is not very satisfactory. Quite a number of students lack awareness of the college English autonomous learning strategies and their application. Therefore, how to take advantage of digital teaching environment to achieve self-learning ability is a problem to be a concern.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Modern education has realized that the basic purpose of education is to make students become independent, autonomous and effective learners. Therefore, it is so important to cultivate students' consciousness of autonomous learning and English learning strategy.

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## A. *Core Concepts*

### 1. Autonomous Learning

“Autonomous learning” is put forward based on “passive learning”, “mechanical learning” and “learning from others” (Dickinson, 1992). Since the 1950s, autonomous learning has become an important research topic of educational psychology. By the 1980s, Holec firstly introduces autonomous learning theory to the field of foreign language teaching. Holec (1981) thinks that autonomous learning is “taking charge of their own learning ability”, which includes the establishment of learning goals, self-monitoring and self-evaluation. There have been a number of researchers proposing understanding of “autonomous learning” from different aspects. Little (1990) considers that autonomous learning is the learners’ psychological reaction to learn the content and process. In autonomous learning, attitude and ability are the key factors to determine the autonomous learning. Pintrich (2000) thinks that learning is an active, constructive learning process. Students determine learning goals by themselves and monitor cognition, motivation and behavior which are constrained by the target and contextual features. Barry J. Zimmerman (2011) thinks that Self-regulated learning (or self-regulation) refers to the process whereby learners personally activate and sustain cognitions, affects, and behaviors that are systematically oriented toward the attainment of learning goals.

Chinese scholar Pang Weiguo (2003) argues that the basic characteristics of the autonomous learning are initiative, independence, effectiveness and relativity. After studying definitions of foreign scholars, Shu Dingfang (2004) reduces the English autonomous learning system to three aspects: attitude, capacity, and environment. Pang Weiguo believes that the initiative is one of characteristics of autonomous learning whereas Shu Dingfang attaches importance to the attitude of autonomous learning. As can be seen, learners’ high sense of ownership in the process of autonomous learning is the most important feature of autonomous learning. Autonomous learning is not completely learning freely, but students are responsible for their own learning under the guidance of teachers, which is the meaning of autonomous learning in this study.

### 2. Language learning strategies

Learning strategies in this paper refer to the strategies that people take to help to master the language in the process of learning a foreign language. Many scholars abroad have given the different definitions. Rubin (1975) defines the language learning strategies as “the techniques or devices which a learner may use to acquire knowledge.” Stern (1983) defines it as “particular forms of observable learning behavior, more or less, consciously employed by the learner”, Oxford (1990) defined as “specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations”. In addition to the definitions above, many scholars have given the definitions of their own. English learning strategy is a combination of learning skill and learning technology. It is also the learners’ learning plan consisted of rules and language learning skills. The core of English autonomous learning strategies is self exploration, self discovery, which focus is how to help students learn the language and skills.

### 3. Digital instructional platform

Digital teaching refers to teaching activities in the digital environment, in which teachers follow the rules of modern education theories, and use the digital teaching resources to cultivate students with the digital mode to satisfy the needs of the new century. The digital instructional platform based on network teaching software offers comprehensive support to different level students’ personalized learning. It can achieve new learning style, realize the personalized teaching activity and promote the sharing and utilization of the teaching resources. It has the following advantages to English learners: provide more practice opportunities, create a real language learning environment, and improve students’ listening and speaking skills. Through computers and network, learners can fully reflect their initiative. In the digital environment, teachers’ main task is not only how to teach better, but how to use the digital environment to cultivate learners’ autonomous learning ability. Students are not dependent on the teacher’s teaching and textbook, but utilize the digital platform and resources to carry out autonomous learning.

## B. *Theoretical Foundation*

Autonomous learning is not a teaching method, but a way students use to build their own knowledge spontaneously and autonomously, which mainly has the following theoretical foundations: constructivism, humanism and metacognitive theory.

One of the most influential representatives of constructivism is the famous Swiss scholar Piaget. Constructivism holds that knowledge acquisition is not taught by teachers but learnt by learners, which emphasizes that teachers are the helpers and promoters instead of imputers of knowledge (Fan, 2010). In certain conditions, learners gain knowledge by using the necessary learning materials and constructing mode with the help of teachers and partners. It advocates that in the process of construction, teachers should not only require students to collect and analyze relevant information, and then seek answers actively, but also encourage students to be responsible for their own learning and help students form their own learning strategies. Only in this way can they have the ability to adjust their own learning strategies constantly.

The main representatives of the learning theory of humanism are Maslow and Rodgers, who believes that the ultimate goal of teaching is to make people become free and independent people, become assertive with strong adaptability and distinct personality (Liu, 1999). Humanism learning theory’s “people-oriented, student-centered”

teaching philosophy emphasizes students' independent position in the study, and the importance of learners participating in the learning process actively, which is the core and foundation of autonomous learning. In the teaching process, teachers provide learners sufficient space, encourage them to participate in the study initiatively and form the good habit of autonomous learning.

Metacognition is the subject of cognition of self awareness and self monitoring, which consists of metacognitive knowledge, metacognitive experience and metacognitive monitoring. Metacognitive knowledge, the key to students from "learn" to "learning", is the prerequisite for success in learning. Metacognitive experiences change the knowledge structure of textbooks into cognitive structure of students, and make students become subjective from consciousness to behavior, which is advantageous to the student's main body status. Metacognitive monitoring is that cognitive subject controls cognitive activity initiatively, and chooses learning strategies flexibly.

### C. *Researches on English Learning Strategies at Home and Abroad*

Foreign language learning strategy research has experienced the following four stages. Firstly, initial stage (in the mid-1970s to mid-1980s). In 1975, Rubin published a paper entitled *What the Good Learner can Teach Us* on TESOL, in which Rubin classified learners' strategies into three categories: psychological characteristics of learners, learners' social strategies and cognitive strategies. In 1981, Rubin classified the learning strategies into direct learning strategies and indirect learning strategies. USA scholar Rebecca L.Oxford classified direct learning strategies into memory strategies, cognitive strategies and compensation strategies; the indirect strategies into metacognitive strategies, affective strategies and social strategies. Researches of this period focus on the description, definition and classification of good language learners' strategies. Secondly, Prosperity and development stages of language learning strategy (in the late 1980s to mid-1990s). In 1987, the Wenden and Rubin compiled a collection of essays together, named *Learners' Strategies of Learning a Second Language* including 12 papers, among which Wenden (1982, 1986) defined metacognitive strategies, who pointed out that metacognition strategies are a more advanced and independent strategy system with cognition activities. Metacognitive strategies' function is to plan, monitor and evaluate the cognition activity and behavior. Thirdly, mature stage of language learning strategies (in the 1990s). During this period, there are large numbers of researches on learning strategies and learning strategy training methods. In 1990, Rebecca L.Oxford published *Language Learning Strategies*, in which Rebecca L.Oxford put forward a more comprehensive system of two language learning strategies classification system SILL (Strategy Inventory for Language Learning), based on previous studies of skill and all micro strategies. This learning strategy is widely used and approved later in the academic filed. O'Malley and Chamot lead information processing theory and cognitive theory to second language learning strategies, who think language learning is a dynamic process of skill acquisition. In 1990, O'Malley & Chamot published *Learning Strategies in Second Language Acquisition*, which marked the second language learning strategy research has reached a new level. Fourthly, introspection and further development stage of language learning strategy (in the late 1990s to now). In the late 1990s, researchers began to focus on the study of learning strategy training. Oxford (1990) believed that language learning strategy training can make students use appropriate learning strategies more consciously. O'Malley and Chamot (1994) believed that a lot of learning strategy trainings can promote learning strategy program and internalization.

Chinese scholars started later on the study of second language learning strategies. In 1987, Huang Xiaohua with her supervisor finished a paper whose title is *Learning Strategies in Oral Communication*, which marks the beginning of English learning strategies in China. The domestic research of learning strategies is divided into three stages: the first stage (1990 ~ 1995) is to draw lessons from abroad and make an introduction; the second stage (1996 ~ 1999) is the innovation and development; the third stage (2000 - present) is a rapid development and expansion stage. Here a total of more than 40 papers were published in major publications. At the same time there are a lot of book published. *English learning strategy theory written by Wen Qiufang* has a far-reaching influence on the later research. In 2002, Cheng Xiaotang and Zheng Min compiled and published *English learning strategy* that adapts to the requirement of the new curriculum standard and specializes for the primary and secondary school teachers training, which is a simple and practical training teaching material.

Second language learning strategy research has made great achievements both at home and abroad, but there is still a lot of room to develop whether from the breadth or depth at home. Through questionnaire and interview, the paper mainly investigates the current situation of English autonomous learning strategy based on digital instructional platform in normal universities.

## III. RESEARCH DESIGN

### A. *Research Purpose and Objects*

In order to investigate the current situation of college English autonomous learning strategy use based on the digital instructional platform and explore its restrictive factors, this paper selected college English network teaching system of Xianyang normal university as a case study to investigate the use of English autonomous learning strategies.

The study objects were non-English major full-time undergraduates in Grade 2012 and 2013, college English teachers and management staff of the network platform. 160 questionnaires were given out to students and 156 were taken back.

## B. Research Methods

### 1. Questionnaire

This questionnaire is divided into two parts, the first part of which is revised from Oxford learning strategies questionnaire, including memory strategy, cognitive strategy, compensation strategy, metacognitive strategy, affective strategy and social. The Likert-type scale is used in the first part, that is to say, 1=Never or almost never true of me; 2=Usually not true of me; 3=Somewhat true of me; 4=Usually true of me; 5=Always or almost always true of me. The second part is the open questionnaire which needs to be answered.

### 2. Interview

The purpose of interview is to make some problems clear, which are not directly investigated in questionnaire, including the attitude of students, teachers and network administrators using the network platform; difficulties of students using internet platform; concepts of teachers' guidance as well as teachers' problems and difficulties in network teaching counseling etc. Nine students, five teachers and two network administrators participated in the interview, which had face to face interview and telephone interview.

## IV. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

### A. Analysis and Discussion of Questionnaire

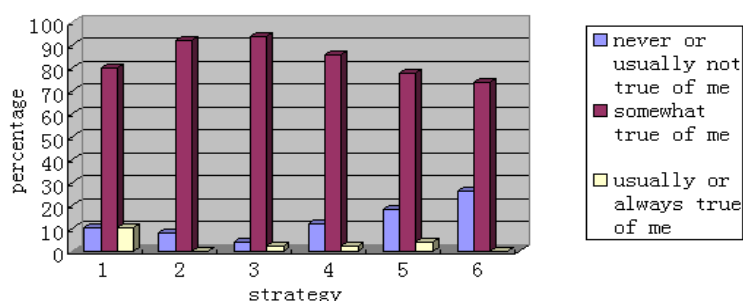


Figure 3-1 Use of strategies

Note: 1.Memory strategy 2.cognitive strategy 3.compensation strategy 4. metacognitive strategy 5.affective strategy 6.social strategy

Memory strategy is a series of ways that students use to remember things. From Figure 3-1 above, it is shown that 10% students never use memory strategy, 80% students use memory strategy sometimes, and 10% students always use it in learning English. Cognitive strategy indicates that students solve and treat learning materials in all kinds of ways. We know that about 92% students used cognitive strategy in different degrees and about 8% students did not use it, which suggests that they are not good at using cognitive strategies and they are not positive at learning English. When students have difficulty in learning English, they usually use compensation strategy which is a kind of behavior that students use to remedy disadvantages of language knowledge. It is found that about 92% students use compensation strategy in different ways and about 4% students don't apply it to learning English while another 4% students use it more often. Meta-cognitive strategy is one kind of behavior that students manage, monitor and evaluate learning process by themselves. It is found that 86% students use it more or less, 12% students never use it, while only 2 students always use it. Affective strategy is a kind of psychological strategy which students put into use to help themselves to control emotion, overcome anxiety and strengthen interests and confidence in learning English. The result of research indicates that about 78% students use affective strategy more or less in learning English, while 18% students never use it, only 4% students always use it. Students develop language communication skills by learning social norms of target language culture, which means social strategy. The data shows that 26% students do not use social strategy, 74% students use it sometimes. No one always uses it.

In the questionnaire, the following 6 items designed are related to students' autonomous learning: I often review English text (2.5%); I use English in all kinds of ways (5%); I try my best to find ways to learn English well (28.8%); I make plans to ensure enough time to learn English (18%); I have clear goal to improve my English (20%); I think about my progress in learning English (35%). These data shows that students don't have positive attitude to learn English. Compensation strategy is used more than others in the six strategies, while affective strategy is used less.

### B. Analysis and Discussion of Interview

Five teachers interviewed think that they need training in network teaching skills, and the biggest obstacles of students autonomous learning monitoring are poor network operation, and lack of incentives for students to learn English autonomously. Two network administrators think that autonomous learning equipment is often needed to be repaired; utilization of autonomous learning platform is not high.

Nine students whose performances are in different level in their class were chosen to do interview. For example, when asked if they had the habit of previewing English before class and what help they need to finish preview, the top student said: "I have the habit of preview and I think it is so important to do it to learn English well. When I am in

trouble, I will try my best to solve it with materials in hand. If it is impossible, I will mark it clearly and listen to teacher carefully or ask help for teachers"; the medium range student said: "I sometimes do the preview. When I am in trouble, I usually consult it with materials in hand"; the lower range student said: "My English is not good and previewing English makes me sad. I think it is a way of wasting time." All of the students want to communicate with foreigners when they meet them in daily life, but they can only say hello to them because of poor spoken English. When asked what the biggest difficulties and problems are in digital network learning, they gave the following response: they are not familiar with the function of the network teaching platform and can't operate well; the teaching equipment should be improved; counseling time should be increased; teaching and learning resources should be rich.

### C. Results and Suggestions

Based on the analysis of questionnaire and interview above, it is found that students are relatively good at using compensation strategy, and then cognitive strategy, while they need to strengthen memory strategy, metacognitive strategy, affective strategy, social strategy, especially metacognitive strategy. The network learning environment is not satisfying, including equipment, resources, teachers etc. The following suggestions are put forward.

#### 1. Strengthen the training of autonomous learning strategies

Firstly, we should cultivate students' memory strategy. With the development of society, traditional ways of learning English words can not satisfy the needs of information. Large vocabulary is essential to learn English well, so students can use different ways to memory words, such as classification of induction which means that students can remember words by using its characteristics such as prefix, suffix, antonym, synonym and so on. Secondly, students should strengthen the ability of mastering metacognitive strategy. They had better make a learning plan according to his/her existing knowledge foundation. During the learning process students should realize self monitoring by asking himself/herself questions and recording his/her learning. They should evaluate their learning with classmates or teachers at fixed period. Teachers should encourage students to ask others for help when they are in trouble; teachers can praise or blame students properly according to his/her performance well done or not. Mastering metacognitive is the key to realize autonomous learning. Finally, students' will should be strengthened by developing social affective strategy. In the interview, most students dare not communicate with foreigners because they are afraid of making mistakes. To release the situation, there are some suggestions. (1) In class, teachers should encourage students to ask and answer questions in English. Whether it is right or wrong, teachers should show appreciation. (2) Teachers encourage students to use body language to express their feelings. (3) Building an English corner. Every week, students can communicate their thoughts with classmates or teachers here. Students may say whatever they want as long as they say it in English. For a long time, they are used to thinking things and saying it freely in English. In all, it is helpful for learners to make use of English learning strategies.

#### 2. Improve the network environment

A full range of learning conditions should be provided for students. Insufficient learning equipment is the important factors that limit autonomous learning, such as lack of autonomous learning classroom, outdated equipment, few net branches, etc. In the short term, it is maybe difficult to change the present situation. It is hoped to extend the open hours of autonomous learning classrooms and provide more internet cables in the library, student dormitories to facilitate students to learn independently.

#### 3. Perfect the teaching management

School of foreign languages should be in combination with the practical situation and formulate suitable web-based English autonomous learning plan according to the course requirements. Establish and improve the network teaching management system to achieve English network teaching goals, put forward the functional requirements and assessment criteria, clarify the responsibilities of the teaching management staff at all levels and the mutual relationship. The network teaching of English teachers should be quantified. Draw up multi-level and multi-type learning evaluation index, online English learning should be brought into the credit system management.

#### 4. Improve teachers' educational technology literacy

Promote the development of teachers' network practical knowledge. The formation of network autonomous learning atmosphere is a key to improve teachers' education technology literacy. Update teachers' concepts, refresh teachers' roles, improve teachers' network teaching monitoring ability and network teaching behaviors.

#### 5. Improve students' information literacy

When teachers cultivate students' metacognitive strategy, they can recommend students to use information tools which can promote their metacognitive strategy, such as electronics, web logs, self test tools, etc. Students can be conducted to set up their learning autonomy from the following aspects: strengthen students' independent consciousness, clear goals of college English network learning and establish a system of autonomous learning cooperative group.

### V. CONCLUSION

*College English curriculum requirements* explicitly proposes to enhance students' autonomous learning ability, and the digital teaching platform provides convenience for students' autonomous learning. However, in the six learning strategies of this study, it is found that the use of learning strategy is not satisfactory in some degree except for compensation strategy, especially meta-cognitive strategy, affective strategy and social strategy. Network learning



environment is not so good because of some problems which partly come from students, teachers, net equipment, administrators, etc. So, the following suggestions are put forward: Strengthen the training of autonomous learning strategies, improve teachers' educational technology literacy, network environment, perfect the teaching management, and improve teachers' educational technology literacy and the students' information literacy. But sometimes it is difficult to put the system of cultivating college students English learning strategies into effect. It is hoped that more scholars pay attention to and do the research on autonomous learning strategies under digital instructional platform.

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# Study on the Intercultural Education in College English Teaching\*

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**Abstract**—Learning a foreign culture means getting in touch with a new culture. Intercultural education is gaining more and more attention in college English teaching. Cultural teaching in cross-cultural background involves more than the introduction of a target culture, but rather the emphasis of both the source culture and target culture. To fulfill the responsibility of spreading excellent Chinese culture to the world, both the foreign language learners and teachers should develop more versatile cross-cultural perspectives.

**Index Terms**—English teaching, Chinese culture, western culture, measures

## I. INTRODUCTION

With the advancement of globalization, people from all over the world are getting more and more involved with each other. Being the language most widely used in political, economical and cultural exchanges all around the world, English is becoming more dominant than ever before. Since English was first introduced into Chinese colleges and universities in late 1970's, it's been going through many major reforms. We used to focus on teaching new words and grammatical rules, and later moved on to communicative teaching, and then student-centered multimedia classroom teaching. But the fact is evident that for tons of Chinese English learners, English learning is like a nightmare. Normally Chinese students begin to study English as early as primary school, but after more than ten years of hard study, it seems that they are going nowhere except that some of them can get decent scores in CET-4/6. They are normally bad at listening and speaking, intimidated to communicate with English-speaking people. It's hard for them to use the language as a work language. Nowadays English experts, teachers and learners are reflecting on this time-consuming and low efficiency phenomenon. Under this background people begin to notice the lack of intercultural education in college English teaching has greatly undermined the effects of college English teaching.

## II. PROBLEMS IN COLLEGE ENGLISH TEACHING

There are some problems in college English teaching that we should be aware of.

### A. Cultural Factors Presented But Neglected in Textbooks

In July 2007, Ministry of Education put forward The Basic Requirements of College English Teaching to guide the college English teaching. According to the requirements, college English should be guided by foreign languages teaching theories, focus on English language knowledge, application skills, intercultural communications and study strategies and make use of multiple teaching models and methods. The aim of college English teaching is to cultivate the comprehensive application abilities of the students especially the listening and speaking abilities so that they can communicate with English in their study, work or social life, and at the same time enhance their self-study abilities, improve their cultural qualities to adapt to the requirements of social development and international exchange.

New Horizon English published by Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press is edited according to the requirements. It is a series of English textbooks being used by colleges and universities all over the country. It has four levels intended to be used for two years. In this book series, articles concerning America are very dominant. From these articles we can find that Chinese culture and American culture have many differences in values, beliefs, religions, customs, norms, thinking styles, etc. If these cultural factors are neglected, students will be confused while studying and lots of cultural information cannot be conveyed to students. The following are some examples of cultural factors that should be introduced to the students while teaching.

Chinese people and western people also have different likes and dislikes. In Unit 2, Book One, the article "Deep Concern" presents the readers a picture of generation gap in an ordinary American family. The teenage girl Sandy began her weekday with rock and roll music which upset her father a lot, wore makeup and torn jeans which made her mother worried and rushed to catch the school bus without having a decent breakfast. All these descriptions can surprise our students. For Chinese teenagers, weekday life is more like a routine, starting with the nutritious breakfast prepared carefully by parents, going to school clean and clear usually in uniforms because makeup is totally forbidden for middle

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and high school students, not to mention tattoos and piercings. If we don't supply the students with the background cultural information, they will totally feel at loss.

"Rich Meeting His Future Mother-in-law" in Unit 3, Book Two, is a very funny story about a Chinese girl (the author) bringing her American boyfriend Rich home to have dinner with her family. It's typical Chinese culture for future parents in law to prepare a wonderful meal to show that they are taking someone seriously. The author is kind of happy when the mother is busy in the kitchen. But things didn't go well because of the cultural conflicts. When being praised, Chinese people tend to be modest by denying the compliments. This often causes confusion because in American culture when being praised, American people tend to be happy and thankful. It's also Chinese culture to show modesty by self-denial. When the author's mother served her best dish, she complained about not being good enough because of the lack of salty flavor, which in Chinese culture is a sign for the guests and family members to praise the dish as the best one they have ever tried. But Rich believed the story and began to pour plenty of sauce right in front of the mother's shocking face, which in turn ruined the first meeting. This is a very typical example of the cultural differences and cultural conflicts.

"Graceful Hands" in Unit 5, Book Three, is about a story between the author (a doctor) and Mrs. Clark who is leaving the world. In order to save her family the painful moments of watching her dying, she sent all of them home and let the author stay around. In this process, her graceful hands and beautiful mind impressed the author very much. But it is really difficult for Chinese students who grow up in traditional Chinese culture to understand a story like that. In Chinese culture, when a significant family member is about to leave the world, the whole family will stay around to show their love and care. If one couldn't be there for some reason, it will be a great regret for everyone. Things are rather different in the United States. People there are more self-centered. The relationships between children and parents are more concerned with emotions instead of obligations. Parents take the responsibility of taking care of the children before they grow up, but children don't take the responsibility of taking care of their parents when they are old. When people get old, they will go to senior people's home to spend the rest of their lives. Both the parents and children don't think children should take the responsibility. Only after having this information can our students have a better understanding of the empathy between the two human beings?

"Choose to Be Alone On Purpose" in Unit 5, Book Four is another example of differences in values between Chinese culture and American culture. In American society lots of people choose to live alone, and this is even called national disease as well as characteristics of American heroes. Solitary hunters and explorers are easily found in literature. In Chinese culture, though poets and philosophers also seek for solitude, for most people choosing to be alone or having to live alone is pathetic. The reason behind that is in China people value collectivism while in America people value individualism. Chinese students are taught from very young age that public interests and personal interests are intermingling. Public interests should be on the top priority, and everyone should always be a part of the group, rely on the group and devote to the group in order to achieve personal interests. But American students are encouraged from very young age that they should always be themselves, pursue their personal freedom and right, and live the life as they wish. No one should interfere and limit others' lives. This also explains why Americans move a lot, while Chinese people seldom move. This article gives the students a good opportunity to understand the fact that different people on the earth are choosing different ways to live.

### *B. Chinese Culture Aphasia*

When we emphasize the introduction of western cultures in our college English teaching, we should always bear in our mind that our purpose of learning a foreign language is not only about the foreign language and culture. Instead, it's more about intercultural communications. (Hymes, 1971) Spreading our excellent Chinese culture and helping the world understand more about China is more significant.

In China, culture education research in English teaching began in 1980's. In this stage, experts mainly focused on the relationship between culture and language, and stressed the importance of culture introduction in English teaching. In the following 10 years, the focus of the research shifted to how to systematically introduce target language culture and the principles of culture introduction. Teaching syllabus, textbooks and teaching arrangements were modified in this stage. Since 1990's, with the advancement of language and culture research, culture teaching research witnessed a dramatic change. Researchers began to realize that mother tongue culture and target language culture shouldn't be separated. Students should be encouraged to understand western culture, and more importantly they should be aware of their responsibilities to appreciate and spread Chinese culture. Some experts and researcher made surveys about present situations of mother tongue culture learning, the conclusion is that Chinese students know very little about mother tongue culture.

Under this background, Professor Congcong from Nanjing University first proposed the concept of Chinese culture aphasia in 2000. Aphasia is a medical terminology, which originally used to refer to the partial or total loss of the ability of expressing ideas and the ability of verbal and written understanding because of the brain damage caused by injuries or diseases. In 1990s, literature critics began to criticize the invasion of western literature thinking and the loss of Chinese ancient literature thinking caused Chinese culture aphasia. Professor Congcong is the first person who has proposed the concept of Chinese culture aphasia in foreign languages teaching. He found that many young Chinese scholars who have a good command of English cannot express Chinese culture and cannot represent the style of the deep and independent Chinese culture when they communicate with westerners. When our foreign peers are eager to

know Confucianism or Taoism, we are at a loss, having nothing to share. (Cong, 2000) If our English teachers and scholars are having problems like this, it's not difficult to understand the difficulties our English learners are faced with. After many years of English learning, our students don't know how to answer simple questions like "What do you usually have for your breakfast?" The reason is that they don't know how to say "bean milk, steamed bread or fried dough". But on the other hand they know almost everything about western food, fried chicken, hamburgers, pizza, etc. Some of the students have very rich knowledge of western culture: they watch American movies and TV series, watch NBA games and sing RAPs. But when it comes to Chinese culture, they may find that they are really incapable of introducing their own culture. Very few students can explain in English the typical Chinese cultures like Chinese holidays, herbal medicines, acupuncture, Beijing Opera, Chinese cuisine .... The reason is that they know little about Chinese culture, they cannot even express the cultural connotations in Chinese not to mention English. Chinese culture aphasia is a very common phenomenon in Chinese language learners: they lack the knowledge of mother tongue culture and the ability to express Chinese culture in English. The phenomenon exposes the defects of college English education in China.

### *C. Lagging behind Both in Teaching and Learning*

The phenomenon of Chinese culture aphasia is caused by many reasons, such as educational and teaching concepts, teaching strategy and method, limitations of learners' ability, etc. This phenomenon reflects the lagging behind both in teaching and learning.

Most English teachers grow up in examination-oriented educational system and they themselves have limited knowledge of both western culture and Chinese culture. They gain their knowledge of western culture mainly from textbooks and very few of them ever go or study abroad, so it's reasonably difficult for them to present a true picture of western culture to their students. Meanwhile the lack of cultural awareness in English teachers unavoidably affects the cultivation of the students' cultural awareness. In most colleges and universities, English is still taught as a foreign language (TEFL), the main purpose of which is to cultivate students' communicative skill.

Most of the English teachers have rather tight schedules, therefore they don't have enough time and energy to read English newspapers, watch English movies or get access to modern media to collect first-hand and fresh information about western culture. In the long run, this will severely undermine the quality of English teaching. With the economic globalization and the broadening of the international communication, it's evident that the traditional English teaching cannot satisfy the need of rapidly developing world. As a lingua franca, English should be taught an international language (TEIL) to make sure that people from different countries and different cultures can communicate with English. But in China English teaching has been focusing on grammar and structure analysis, and English teachers mainly teach vocabulary and grammatical rules to improve the students' linguistic ability and to make sure that students can have correct grammars, good pronunciations and certain amount of vocabulary. CET- 4/6, as one of the most influential exams in China plays a very negative role because of its language orientation. This exam was intended for college students who have finished two years of college English study to make sure that they have fulfilled the course requirements. So this exam was designed as a course test. But what happened is that the whole society has increasingly been paying overdue attention to this exam. Enterprises and institutions ask for CET- 4/6 certificates when they enroll new employees, thus changing the real purpose of the test, and many colleges and universities use the CET- 4/6 scores to evaluate the teachers' as well as students' performances. Even after the reform of the test in recent years, the progress is still rather slow. This in turn fostered the exam-oriented English teaching in China. Very few teachers would try to bring culture into the classrooms because this is not included in the test.

As to the students, they are inevitably influenced by the language orientation test and the test orientation teaching. The classroom teaching itself loses its charm because the teaching has been the same in students' ten years of language learning, and the enthusiasm of the students is fading gradually. In order to have a decent job in the future, they have to take CET-4/6, which makes situation even worse. As young adult, they have the basic judgment that language learning should be linked with communication, and they have the strong desire to use the language as a tool for both academic and communicative purposes. But the fact is they have no alternative but to compromise to learn English for exams. Therefore, they intentionally or unintentionally neglect the learning of cultural factors in English. They know the romance of Valentine's Day, but they don't know the origin of it; they know Christmas and Thanksgiving Day, but they know little about the values and customs concerning the festival; they love Hollywood movies and American TV series, but they don't bother to probe into the beliefs and norms of western people. As to Chinese culture, they are showing less and less interests. They have no fun in celebrating Chinese traditional festivals, read fewer and fewer Chinese classics, and they seem to totally ignore the necessity to continue the learning of Chinese culture in learning English. In recent years, more and more westerners start to pay attention to Chinese culture. College students today in fact should take double responsibilities: on the one hand, they need to learn about western cultures to communicate cross culturally, and on the other hand, they need to spread Chinese cultures with the international language English.

## III. REFLECTIONS AND MEASURES

To solve the problems mentioned above, both the learners and teachers should reflect and take appropriate measures.

### *A. Cultivating High Quality Teachers*

We are living in a world where cultural blending and conflicting are unavoidable. Intercultural awareness and ability are basic qualities of modern people. (Byram, 1989) English teachers should undoubtedly take the responsibility to cultivate the English learners' ability of cultural communications because of their bilingual and bicultural backgrounds. To fulfill the task, English teachers should have the following qualities.

Firstly, right intercultural attitude is the basic requirement. English teachers should treat the foreign culture and home culture equally. English is not only used by native English speakers, and it is a virtually international language. We can not only communicate with native English speakers, but also any person from a different culture who can speak English. Both cultural centralism and hegemonism can be harmful. Cultural differences are reasonable existence, and the teachers should take an objective and lenient attitude. There are weaknesses and strengths in each culture. There is no so called superior culture; its only different people live their lives in different ways. (Kramsch, 1993) Being sensitive and adaptive to the differences and being ready to embrace the excellent factors to nourish native culture are crucial for qualified English teachers.

Secondly, they should broaden their intercultural horizon. Intercultural communication is based on the understanding of different cultures. This understanding of foreign cultures is determined by whether we can fully respect a different culture and develop multi-culture thinking. Most Chinese English teachers grow up in Chinese cultural background, lack of foreign cultural background, and this in some degree hinder the correct expressions of English culture. In the meantime, they worship western cultures more than home culture, and this stops them work hard to explore the differences and similarities between English culture and Chinese culture. In order to broaden the intercultural horizon, the teachers should work equally hard to know both cultures to meet the need of intercultural education.

Thirdly, English teachers should develop excellent intercultural teaching abilities. This ability reflects the teachers' professional level, and guarantees the possibility of cultural education. Professor Tubei used to say that the greatest challenge for English teachers is not to teach language plus explanation of cultural points or to start a culture course, but to blend language and culture in teaching. (Tubei, 1994) Therefore, timing is very important. Whenever there are conflicts between English and Chinese cultures, teachers should step in to compare and identify. Also, the teachers should take different perspectives to analyze cultural factors. In fact, at initial stage they should work more from Chinese culture perspective, since this is the cognitive frame of both Chinese students and teachers. The introduction of a foreign culture must be gradual, natural, enlightening and relative, and it should by no means be focused, imposing and isolated.

#### *B. Reforming English Teaching Models and Methods*

Influenced by traditional English teaching theories and methods, cultural education remains a weak part. In order to change the present situation, the reforming is necessary, and the introduction of Chinese culture into English classes should be an indispensable part of the teaching.

Culture teaching can take the forms of researches, lectures and practice. Research study asks the students choose a cultural topic that interests them from their academic sphere or real life, and the students then independently collect information, make surveys, communicate with people so as to gain progress in knowledge, skills and emotions. This method can motivate the learners' curiosity and cultivate their creative thinking.

The teachers can also organize the cultural phenomena and facts into some keynotes, and then lecture in classes so that the students can learn culture in a systematic way. Of course this is totally different from the traditional lecturing in that it stresses the students being the center, and the teachers only instruct the students to construct the knowledge by themselves.

Learning by doing should also be encouraged. Interactions among students can help them actively create multi-cultural environment and change their stereotypes of cultural orientations. The forms of interactions can be various: cultural performances, culture festivals, cultural forums, online cultural chatting rooms, etc.

Besides making use of whatever cultural teaching and learning models and methods, both the teachers and learners should always bear Chinese culture in mind. Elective courses of Chinese culture should be included in college English system, and these courses should be delivered in English. Students should learn to great extent to appreciate and spread Chinese history, philosophy, literature, and customs in English.

#### *C. Creating Cultural Environment*

We are learning and teaching English in a non-English environment. It is almost impossible to get systematic knowledge of English and American cultures. Classroom time is so limited. Yet we can make good use of mass media, like movies, TV series, newspapers and magazine to bridge the gaps and create cultural environment. Movies and TV series are especially useful in making up the lack of learning environment. The movies and TV series themselves have the characteristics of combining nature and society, culture and history, religion and ethics, ideal and reality, which covers almost every aspect of culture. Furthermore, they enjoy a variety of types, from legends to epics, from science fictions to war stories, which provide English teaching with rich material. According to language learning theories, language learning demands sufficient input, and this input must be of high quality. Language in movies and TV series are native and authentic, the settings of communications are real and natural, and this is the real high quality input. When the students watch the movies and TV series, they can experience both the language and the culture, and they will come into contact with a large number of most frequently used words and expressions and thus realize the true meaning

of learning a foreign language. Of course, the selection of the movies and TV series is a major task for teachers. They cannot just randomly show them to the students. There are many negative factors in western culture, and young students are not mature enough to make judgments on themselves. There are inappropriate scenes like violence and sex, so the teachers must take the responsibility to choose movies or episodes suitable for classroom settings.

Another effective way to create cultural environment is to invite more foreign teachers to English teaching classrooms. With the advancement of international communications, it becomes easier for colleges and universities to hire qualified foreign teachers to take part in college English teaching and the opening and rapidly developing China is also a great attraction to foreign teachers. Let's take Shandong Jiaotong University for example. Every year, we recruit 8 foreign teachers from English speaking countries to teach the students listening and speaking courses. The students can not only learn from them in classrooms and they keep in contact even out of classrooms. The first hand information and experiences of the foreign teacher really benefit the students as well as Chinese English teachers.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Culture is one of the key words of the new century, and the world civilization is developing in the process of different cultures blending and conflicting. Intercultural communications give us opportunities to broaden our horizons and enjoy the relevant achievements. How to improve the students' intercultural abilities has become and will remain a significant part of college English teaching. Both the teachers and students should take their responsibilities to meet the challenge of this new era.

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# Construction and Validation of EFL Learners' Attitudes toward English Pronunciation (LATEP): A Structural Equation Modeling Approach

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**Abstract**—The present study aimed at constructing and validating a scale to measure the significance of pronunciation in English language learners' perspectives within four major domains of Linguistic, Psychological, Sociocultural, and World Englishes that are highly associated with pronunciation ability. Building upon the previous literature, the Learner Attitudes Toward English Pronunciation (LATEP) scale was constructed in six-point Likert type format. In order to verify its construct validity, the hypothesized four-solution model underwent Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis through AMOS with a sample-size of 243 advanced EFL learners. The results of the study showed initial poor fit of the LATEP model to the sample data; however, the model was revised by removing seven items from the questionnaire as well as the addition of a correlational path between two error terms. LATEP scale may be applied into various fields of study to fill the inherent gaps in the realm of English language learning.

**Index Terms**—pronunciation, scale construction, validation, learner attitudes, SEM

## I. INTRODUCTION

Pronunciation teaching is by and large sacrificed in language classrooms since teachers tend to view it as useless in comparison to the basic language skills (Elliott, 1995). In this regard, Gilbert (2010) entitles it as “an orphan” in English language classrooms around the world. Teacher training programs were also found to totally neglect pronunciation teaching (Baker & Murphy, 2011; Derwing & Munro, 2005). In addition, pronunciation is marginalized in course books (Gilner, 2008) to the extent that it directly inculcates its triviality in teachers so as to let them omit those parts due to the time limit (Marx, 2005, as cited in Kanellou, 2011). To add weight to the list, pronunciation research has been delegated within the field of applied linguistics (Kelly, 1969). In this regard, Derwing and Munro (2005) noted that there exists generally little published research on the effectiveness of pronunciation instruction despite its apparent role in successful communication.

Despite the dedicated endeavors either from a theoretical or practical perspective, pronunciation continues to be the “Cinderella” (Kelly, 1969) of ELT which has been neglected. Nevertheless, pronunciation instruction is regarded as extremely beneficial from learners' perspective (Barrera Pardo, 2004). Thereby, it is discouraging to find pronunciation as an “orphan” in all domains of EFL/ESL from research and teacher preparation programs to teachers' practices and course curricula employed in class (Kanellou, 2011).

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. Linguistic Effects of Pronunciation

To a greater or lesser degree, pronunciation is connected with other language skills and sub-skills like a chain. Thus, trying to separate these components is demanding if not impossible. Pronunciation is considered as “an integral part of oral communication” (Morley, 1991, p. 496) since good pronunciation facilitates communication and enhances intelligibility (Varasarin, 2007). Linking pronunciation with grammar and vocabulary, Underhill (2011) maintained that while the two cerebral activities (i.e., grammar and vocabulary) give language its structure and meaning, pronunciation is its embodiment through speaking and writing.

As regards writing, Kelly (2000) rejected the commonly-held view concerning the irregularity of the English spelling system since simply one out of every thousand words has irregular spelling. In addition, a number of these words are amongst the most common ones such as *are*, *said*, *come*, *how*, *what*, and *could*.

Like writing, the ability to read is bound up with phonological skills (Goswami, 2000; Hulme, Snowling, Caravolas, & Carrol, 2005); rich phonological awareness skills mark good readers while poor phonological awareness skills mark poor readers (Goswami, 2000). In fact, pronunciation, spelling, and reading abilities are interconnected through the *orthographic analogies* (i.e., the ability to read new words based on known words for e.g., using “*light*” as a guide for reading “*fight*”) that one employs while reading (Goswami, 2000; Wood & Farrington-Flint, 2002). Consequently, better pronouncers are better readers, better spellers, and more successful in making orthographic analogies.

### B. Psychological Effects of Pronunciation

An English language learner with a good command of grammatical and lexical proficiency, feels frustrated as soon as he/she encounters communication breakdown due to his/her poor pronunciation (Kelly, 2000). One of the prominent and promising outcomes of a good pronunciation is the feeling of self-confidence since poor pronunciation devalues good language skills and deprives learners of their deserved social, academic and work advancement while good pronunciation tends to make the communication easier and more relaxed and thus more successful (Varasarin, 2007). Owing to the fact that learners apply avoidance strategy to words or phrases they fail to pronounce (Celce-Murcia, Brinton and Goodwin, 2002, as cited in Brawn, 2010), language learners’ communicative competence is extremely limited without sufficient pronunciation skills.

Aiming for a highly perfect and flawless pronunciation may cause great anxiety in perfectionist language learners; thereby, such learners may prefer to remain silent and not participate in group discussions unless they are certain about the meticulous accuracy of their speech (Pishghadam & Akhondpoor, 2011).

### C. Sociocultural Effects of Pronunciation

Accent is a crucial marker of social belonging since speakers speak in a way to conform to the ethics of the social groups they belong to or desire to belong to (Levis, 2005). According to Rubin (2012), listeners commonly attribute social identity to speakers and consistently make a number of judgments about them based on how they pronounce words and phrases. In his view, such judgments may be about speakers’ ethnicity, social class, enthusiasm, confidence, intelligence, academic success, and even about their physical height.

Accents are inherently attached to social classes along with their sources of pride and respect, as well as their evaluation system (Bourdieu, 1984, as cited in Pishghadam & Sadeghi, 2011). Therefore, speakers may strive for highly valued language forms such as *Standard English* (British accent) and *Received Pronunciation* (American accent) in order to enjoy ‘*linguistic capital*’ (Milroy & Gordon, 2003, as cited in Kerswill, 2007). The immediate appeal for such accents lies in finding better social opportunities. For instance, negative evaluation of speakers due to their accents, may occur in employment interview sessions (Kalin, Rayko, & Love, 1980, as cited in Garrett, 2007).

### D. Pronunciation from the Theory of World Englishes

The recent spread of the English language from national to international setting requires the same shift in the ELT pedagogical considerations. Owing to the international status of English language, the theory of *World Englishes* has downplayed the necessity of adopting a native-like accent (Hosseini Fatemi & Shahriari Ahmadi, 2010) in favor of mutual intelligibility between listeners and speakers (Kang, 2010).

Timmis (2007) argued that learners’ choice of a particular accent is mainly influenced by their attitude toward that variety. Thus, learners with more positive attitudes toward a specific variety are more motivated to conform to it and they may run the risk of losing their cultural identity. On the contrary, within the context of English as an international language (EIL), the strict adherence to native speaker norms and models is de-emphasized in favor of the promotion of a pronunciation that reflects the speaker’s identity (Coşkun & Arslan, 2011).

Building upon the aforementioned body of literature, Seyedabadi (2014) conducted a qualitative study that captured Iranian EFL learners’ attitudes toward the significance of pronunciation within linguistic, psychological, sociocultural, and world Englishes domains through a relatively large number of interviews. The results highlighted the knock-on effects of pronunciation on such factors. Pronunciation was found to influence the four language skills (i.e., listening, speaking, reading, and writing) to a larger or lesser degree. In addition, pronunciation was believed to play a role in language learners’ self-confidence, willingness to speak, and anxiety. To add weight to the list, she reported that poor pronunciation could be an indicator of one’s lack of sufficient knowledge both in its general and linguistic sense.

In the light of her findings, pronunciation seems to be a necessity for English language learners rather than an extra component of ELT. However, the dearth of studies on the side of English language learners calls for in-depth and comprehensive analyses of their viewpoints regarding such domains. Thus, aiming to fill this gap, the present study addressed the issue quantitatively. To this end, it included two phases. In the first phase, a scale was constructed to measure the significance of pronunciation in English language learners’ perspectives within four major domains of *Linguistic*, *Psychological*, *Sociocultural*, and *World Englishes* that are highly associated with pronunciation ability. Throughout the second phase, the construct validity of the scale was verified through Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). The results of the current study will answer the following research questions:

1. Does LATEP scale enjoy psychometric properties (reliability and validity)?
2. Does LATEP model fit to the data well?



### III. METHODOLOGY

#### A. Participants and Setting

The data collection started in August 2013 and lasted for a month. The sample consisted of 306 advanced EFL learners who were studying *FCE*, *CAE*, and *CPE* courses. Participants were selected on the basis of accessibility from eight private language institutes in Mashhad, a city in north-east of Iran. Owing to the fact that Iranian public system of English language teaching simply follows Grammar Translation Method and fails to address the communicative aspects of language learning, the current study was simply confined to private language institutes. The learners were both male ( $N=106$ ) and female ( $N=137$ ) with a range of 19 to 31 years old (Mean= 24.94,  $SD=3.66$ ). They had studied English for 6 to 13 years (Mean= 7.52,  $SD=1.942$ ). The majority of the learners either held their Bachelor degree (51.9%) or Master degree (25.5%). Less than half of the participants (40.3%) had foreign travel experience.

#### B. Instrumentation

Based on the previous literature, Learner Attitudes Toward English Pronunciation (LATEP) scale was constructed and then validated through Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA).

The questionnaire consisted of two parts. Part one addressed the participants' demographic features and also their educational background including gender, age, educational degree and major, years of studying English, foreign travel experience, and approximate estimation of their contact with native and non-native speakers of English via chat or through films, books, classes, etc. The second part which underwent statistical analyses comprised 39 items exploring the respondents' viewpoints toward the importance of pronunciation in English language learning within four major domains of *Linguistic*, *Psychological*, *Sociocultural*, and *World Englishes*.

#### C. Procedure

Applying the instructions and guidelines of questionnaire design and construction provided by Dornyei (2010), the researchers drafted the questionnaire with 40 items under four dimensions of *Linguistic*, *Psychological*, *Sociocultural*, and *World Englishes*. For each dimension at least six items were developed. Next, joint consultations were held with professors, colleagues, and friends in order to make sure of the content validity of the scale and revise the items. Afterwards, the newly designed questionnaire was subjected to the pilot study to examine the clarity of items, estimate the administration time of the questionnaire, and to further revise the items. At this stage 18 advanced EFL learners were asked to read, answer, and suggest improvement for each item. Based upon their comments, the researchers altered the wording and structure of some items to maintain clarity. Following these preliminary stages, 39 items were retained with some revision and clarification.

After preparing the ultimate version of the questionnaire, 306 advanced EFL learners were asked to fill out the LATEP questionnaire during the class hours by prior arrangement with the teacher and administrators. The administration process took place in the presence of one of the researchers and lasted for at least 8 minutes. The researcher clarified each item upon respondents' request.

### IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The collected data were entered into SPSS Version 21 software. The items were scored according to the six-point Likert scale ranging from 6 (*strongly agree*) to 1 (*strongly disagree*). Negatively-worded items (2, 3, 6, 9, 26, 28, 33, and 39) were reverse scored in order to achieve a total positively-oriented score.

After checking for the missing data, outliers, and normality status of the sample data through SPSS, construct reliability and validity of the scale were checked through Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with AMOS. Confirmatory factor analysis was adopted as a hypothesis testing technique to investigate the data obtained from the Likert-type response categories of the newly-designed LATEP scale. Byrne (2010) mentions three distinctive features in SEM that sets it apart from other multivariate procedures. First, "it takes a confirmatory rather than an exploratory approach to the data analysis" (p. 3). Accordingly, contrary to other multivariate procedures that are mainly descriptive by nature (like Exploratory Factor Analysis), SEM can test a hypothesis. Second, while traditional multivariate methods are unable to compute measurement error, SEM presents estimates of error variance parameters. Third, although other multivariate procedures are only based on observed measurements, SEM includes both unobserved and observed variables.

#### A. Data Screening

Before doing the analysis, missing data, outliers, and normal distribution of the data were checked. Missing data were controlled through expectation-maximization algorithm in which a missing score was replaced by a predictive distribution (Kline, 2011).

In order to identify univariate outliers, all of the scores for a variable were converted to standard scores and a value of  $\pm 3.0$  or beyond was detected as outlier. To mark multivariate outliers, Mahalanobis  $D^2$  was employed. A case was a multivariate outlier if the probability associated with its  $D^2$  was 0.001 or less (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Following this, 63 outliers were identified and removed.

Data requires a normal distribution in order to work properly. Univariate and multivariate normality of variables and factors were assessed by two components of skewness and kurtosis. Values of kurtosis and skewness exceeding  $\pm 2.0$

indicate violation of univariate normality while the kurtosis and skewness values above 5.0 account for violation of multivariate normality (Kunnan, 1998).

Table 1 shows the normal distribution indices of skewness and kurtosis for all the factors of the LATEP scale. As kurtosis and skewness indices are within the range of -2 and +2, they have univariate normal distribution. In addition, all the kurtosis and skewness values are less than 5.0 which show the multivariate normality of the sample.

TABLE 1.  
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR THE FACTORS

	N	Skewness		Kurtosis	
		Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Linguistic	243	-.231	.156	1.341	.311
Psychological	243	-.192	.156	-.416	.311
Sociocultural	243	.046	.156	.034	.311
World Englishes	243	-.218	.156	-.175	.311
Valid N (listwise)	243				

### B. Construct Reliability

Owing to the fact that the traditional Cronbach alpha is merely based on simple correlations and fails to account for the measurement error, it tends to understate reliability (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham, 2006). Therefore, this study employs model-based construct reliability calculated in the SEM analysis in order to sufficiently capture the measurement properties of the newly-designed scale. Construct reliability measures the extent to which a set of observed variables reflect the common latent factors. Its advantage lies under the fact that it accounts for the effects of both latent variables and measurement errors. According to Hair et al. (2006), the equation for calculating construct reliability is:

$$CR = \frac{\left(\sum_{i=1}^n \lambda_i\right)^2}{\left(\sum_{i=1}^n \lambda_i\right)^2 + \left(\sum_{i=1}^n \delta_i\right)}$$

where  $\lambda_i$  is the standardized factor loadings and  $\delta_i$  is the error variance associated with observed variables. A coefficient estimate of .60. to .70 is acceptable while an estimate of .70 or higher indicates good reliability. Table 2 shows the reliability estimates for the four underlying factors of the LATEP scale.

TABLE 2.  
CONSTRUCT RELIABILITY ESTIMATES OF THE LATEP SCALE FACTORS

Factors	Reliability Estimate
Linguistic	.85
Psychological	.82
Sociocultural	.79
World Englishes	.76

### C. Construct Validity

Construct validity of the LATEP scale was assessed by Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). It examined the hypothesized factor structure of the relationships among the variables by determining how well the model fitted the data.

#### 1. Model Specification

Based upon the previous literature, a four-solution model was proposed to capture the pronunciation attitudes of Iranian EFL learners. Fig. 1 displays the hypothesized model of Learner Attitudes Toward English Pronunciation (LATEP).

In order to obtain better results, 39 items of the LATEP scale were combined to make 20 parcels, where each composite is the average of two subsequent items, except for the very last item (RWEs7) which is left intact. The following clues provided by Bandalos and Finney (2001) and Ho (2006), explain why the use of item parcels as indicators was deemed appropriate. First, item parceling reduces the complexity of the model since it makes the measurement model simpler while keeping the structural part intact. Second, owing to the fact that rules of thumb for acceptable fit indices ignore the indicator/factor ratio, some fit indices of the model tend to decrease as the number of indicators per factor increase. Larger number of indicators per factor set the stage for cross-loadings among the indicators which finally results in the overall model misfit. Third, a model with a large number of indicators per factor has more free parameters to estimate hence it requires a larger sample size. Therefore, item parceling contributes to less sampling error and more reliable parameter estimates because of reducing the variable to sample size ratio. Last but not least, item parcels are robust against the violation of normality assumption that underlies the maximum likelihood method used in most SEM computer programs.

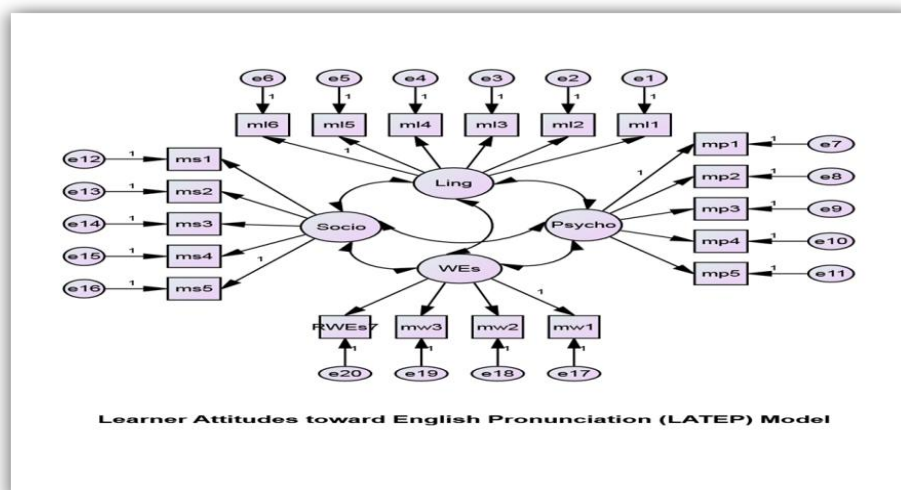


Figure 1. Hypothesized Model of Learner Attitudes Toward English Pronunciation (LATEP)

As the figure shows, the structural part of the LATEP model involves four latent factors: *Linguistic* (Ling), *Psychological* (Psycho), *Sociocultural* (Socio), and *World Englishes* (WEs). These latent factors are allowed to be correlated which accounts for the unidimensionality of the LATEP scale. The measurement part of the model explains how the four latent factors are measured by the twenty observed or indicator variables. According to the model, the following indicators measure each of the latent factors; variables ml1 to ml6 (Items 1 to 12) measure *Linguistic* factor, mp1 to mp5 (Items 13 to 22) measure *Psychological* factor, ms1 to ms5 (Items 23 to 32) measure *Sociocultural* factor, and finally, mw1 to RWEs (Items 33 to 39) measure *World Englishes* construct. The model also depicts some error terms (circles entitled as e1 to e20) for indicators which allows for imperfect measurement.

## 2. Model Identification

In order to obtain correct parameter estimates in CFA, the measurement model must be *identified*. Kline (2011) mentions four identification rules for a CFA model: 1) the model degrees of freedom must be at least zero ( $df \geq 0$ ); that is, the number of estimated parameters should exceed or equal the number of data points (i.e., sample moments like variances and co-variances). 2) Every latent variable (including the residual terms) must be assigned a scale; this is usually accomplished by fixing one of its loadings to one. 3) Every latent variable must have a scale of at least two indicators.

Based on the aforementioned rules, the LATEP model appears to meet the identification conditions; obtained degree of freedom is positive ( $df = 164$ ) indicating *over-identification*; AMOS automatically assigns a regression weight of 1 to each latent variable; finally, every latent factor has at least four indicators.

## 3. Model Estimation

Among the estimation methods in AMOS, maximum likelihood (ML) is by far the most popular and recommended one. As Brown (2006, p.73) clearly elaborates, “the underlying principle of ML estimation in CFA is to find the model parameter estimates that maximize the probability of observing the available data if the data were collected from the same population again”. In addition, ML estimates are powerful against the violation of normality assumption (Brown, 2006). In view of these reasons, the present study made use of ML estimation method with AMOS.

## 4. Model Evaluation

After ensuring that the LATEP model was specified and identified properly, goodness-of-fit indices were then examined to assess the acceptability of the model. Table 3 shows the fit indices of the LATEP model. In this study, due to the inherent sample-size sensitivity of Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) statistic, the normed  $\chi^2$  ( $\chi^2/df$ ) was considered with a value below 2 deemed as acceptable (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). As a result, the obtained  $\chi^2/df$  value of 1.699 shows suitable fit of LATEP model.

TABLE 3.  
MODEL FIT SUMMARY

	$\chi^2/df$	RMSEA	LO 90	HI 90	GFI	AGFI	IFI	CFI
LATEP model	1.699	.054	.043	.064	.898	.869	.797	.787

The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) value for the hypothesized model is .054, with the 90% confidence interval ranging from .043 to .064 which is acceptable by the threshold value of lower than .08 (Byrne, 2010). Interpretation of the confidence interval indicates that we can be 90% confident that the true RMSEA value in the population will fall within the bounds of .043 and .064, which represents a good degree of precision.

The rest of the fit measures of the LATEP model are less than the threshold value of .90 (Byrne, 2010) which accounts for the poor fit of the hypothesized model to the sample data; Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI) = .898, Adjusted

Goodness-of-Fit Index (*AGFI*) = .869, Incremental Fit Index (*IFI*) = .797, and Comparative Fit Index (*CFI*) = .787. Hence the obtained results call for the modification of the proposed model.

### 5. Model Modification

Owing to the fact that the results indicated insufficient fit of the hypothesized model to the sample data, post hoc respecification procedures were taken into account to mark the possible areas of misfit in the model. Following this, the modification indices were requested.

As demonstrated in Table 4, the obtained *MI*s for the *Covariances* yield a clear evidence of misspecification caused by the error covariance (e13 ↔ e12; *MI* = 22.692) related to parcels ms1 and ms2. The estimated *parameter change* value declares that if this parameter were included in the model, it would result in an estimated value of approximately .316. Therefore, the estimation of an error covariance between parcels ms1 and ms2 is deemed appropriate.

TABLE 4.  
MODIFICATION INDICES: COVARIANCES

			M.I.	Par Change
e17	<-->	Socio	4.665	-.088
e17	<-->	Ling	9.810	.038
e12	<-->	WEs	4.144	-.031
<b>e13</b>	<b>&lt;--&gt;</b>	<b>e12</b>	<b>22.692</b>	<b>.316</b>
e14	<-->	Socio	5.940	-.099
e14	<-->	Psycho	10.280	.048
e15	<-->	Socio	4.156	-.062
e15	<-->	e13	13.855	-.153
e11	<-->	e14	4.375	-.081
e10	<-->	Ling	7.138	-.025
e9	<-->	e17	12.243	.099
e9	<-->	e14	8.160	.080
e8	<-->	e11	4.354	-.051
e7	<-->	e14	8.572	.105
e3	<-->	e12	5.143	-.106
e5	<-->	e18	5.236	-.075
e5	<-->	e17	5.006	.086
e5	<-->	e10	7.861	-.083
e6	<-->	e4	4.829	.093
e6	<-->	e5	7.143	-.085

A review of the Modification Indices (*MI*s) for the *Regression Weights* (i.e., factor loadings) demonstrated in Table 5, reveals five parameters suggesting cross-loadings (mw1 ← Psycho; mw1 ← Ling; ms3 ← psycho; ms3 ← Ling; ms4 ← WEs; ms4 ← Psycho, ms4 ← Ling) among which the one with the largest *MI* is of concern (ms3 ← psycho, *MI* = 12.035, *Par Change* = .843). The unspecified parameter indicates the cross-loading of parcel ms3 on the psychological factor. Taking this misspecification into account, the researchers decided to omit parcel ms3.

TABLE 5.  
MODIFICATION INDICES: REGRESSION WEIGHTS

			M.I.	Par Change
mw2	<---	ml5	5.394	-.139
mw1	<---	Psycho	5.908	.593
mw1	<---	Ling	11.990	1.262
mw1	<---	mp3	13.455	.323
mw1	<---	ml1	6.666	.162
mw1	<---	ml4	4.525	.119
mw1	<---	ml5	10.230	.225
ms1	<---	ms2	18.976	.287
ms1	<---	ml3	5.609	-.223
ms2	<---	ms1	15.182	.212
ms2	<---	ms4	9.031	-.262
ms2	<---	mp2	4.142	-.214
<b>ms3</b>	<---	<b>Psycho</b>	<b>12.035</b>	<b>.843</b>
ms3	<---	Ling	10.570	1.181
ms3	<---	mp3	14.700	.336
ms3	<---	mp1	14.069	.288
ms3	<---	ml3	5.901	.182
ms4	<---	WEs	4.477	.629
ms4	<---	Psycho	6.981	.500
ms4	<---	Ling	7.830	.792
ms4	<---	mw3	5.525	.134
ms4	<---	ms2	11.591	-.139
ms4	<---	mp3	5.393	.159
ms4	<---	mp2	4.601	.150
ms4	<---	ml1	7.171	.130
mp5	<---	ms1	4.499	.085
mp5	<---	ms3	4.497	-.117
mp4	<---	ml5	8.539	-.158
mp3	<---	mw1	11.106	.131
mp3	<---	ms3	8.205	.114
mp1	<---	ms3	8.685	.150
ml4	<---	ml6	4.383	.179
ml5	<---	mw2	4.719	-.138
ml5	<---	mw1	5.135	.121
ml5	<---	mp4	5.348	-.149
ml5	<---	ml6	6.502	-.165
ml6	<---	ml4	4.384	.097
ml6	<---	ml5	4.797	-.127

The last strategy to pinpoint the areas of misfit was to omit the parcels with low loadings on their related factors. Based on the factor loadings of the LATEP model appeared in Appendix B, three parcels (ml5, mw2, and RWEs7) were removed from the model.

As recommended by Pedhazur (1997, as cited in Ho, 2006), the aforementioned modifications were made sequentially, one at a time, until the fit of the model was confirmed. The results of the post hoc analyses (Table 6) are as follows:  $\chi^2/df = 1.408$ ,  $RMSEA = .041$  (90%  $CI = .023-.056$ ),  $GFI = .934$ ,  $AGFI = .908$ ,  $IFI = .914$ ,  $CFI = .910$ . Consequently, all of the obtained values for the final model shown in Fig. 2 indicated a good fit of the LATEP model to the sample data. Therefore, the construct validity of the model was confirmed through CFA.

TABLE 6.  
REVISED FIT INDICES

	$\chi^2/df$	RMSEA	LO 90	HI 90	GFI	AGFI	IFI	CFI
LATEP model	1.408	.041	.023	.056	.934	.908	.914	.910

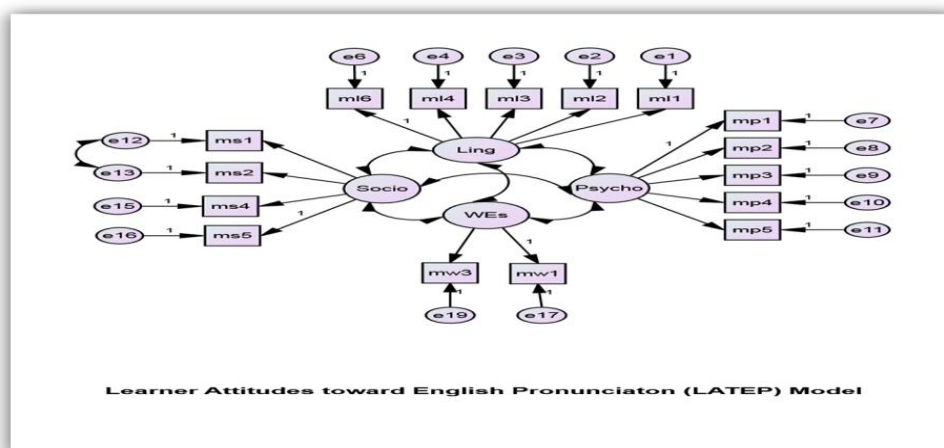


Figure 2. Revised Model of Learner Attitudes Toward English Pronunciation (LATEP)

## V. DISCUSSION

In order to investigate the EFL learners' attitudes toward the significance of pronunciation in English language learning, 39-item scale (LATEP) was designed. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was applied to substantiate the construct reliability and validity of the scale in the context of Iranian EFL learners.

The results of the initial LATEP model did not show a sufficient fit to the sample data. Thus, post hoc modification procedures were taken into account to mark the possible areas of misfit in the model. The unspecified error covariance between error terms e13 and e12 might suggest redundancy due to content overlap. The items under these two parcels consisted of similar and related concepts including one's knowledge, social status, social class, and economic status associated with his/her pronunciation (Appendix A, Items 23 to 26). Although easily grasped by educated individuals, these items were found to be confusing for the participants of this study. Great knowledge might endow an individual with a conferring prestige or a prominent social position (i.e., higher social status). In the same way, an awarded higher social status could result in an inevitable shift of one's social class in order to conform to the new context. Likewise, economic status is considered as one of the components of social class. To achieve satisfactory fit, it was essential to include a correlated error term between these two parcels (ms1 and ms2). Verifying the content of the four stated items, it was perceived that the statistical findings were incompatible with Bourdieu's (1991) attributed concept of *linguistic capital* to speakers who use highly valued language forms such as British and American accents.

The large cross-loading of parcel ms3 on Psychological factor was meaningful. This parcel included items 27 and 28 that were truly found to share psychological as well as sociocultural themes since attitudes are shaped by one's mental and sociocultural constructs. In addition, item 28 was found to be the opposite of item 29 which was clearer. Taking these misspecifications into account, the researcher decided to omit parcel ms3 with its two including items.

The last modification step was to remove the parcels with. Based on the factor loadings of the LATEP model, three parcels (ml5, mw2, and RWEs7) had low loadings on their corresponding factors that were removed from the model. Parcel ml5 comprised items 9 and 10. Item 9 is inconsistent with what previous studies (Engen & H  en, 2002; Walter, 2009) declared regarding the link between pronunciation and reading comprehension. Advanced EFL learners were unable to create a link between their pronunciation ability and their reading comprehension skill. As regards item 10, upon reading this item, respondents might perceive pronunciation as downgrading the role of other skills and sub-skills activated in the speech process such as the knowledge of vocabulary and grammar of the language. Such finding was in contrast with Underhill's (2013) claim on the role of pronunciation in providing the language with volume and body. Parcel RWEs7 was distinguished to be ambiguous and irrelevant to the intended construct. Perhaps its ambiguity would be resolved if it were worded as this: "*the pronunciation of English as an international language belongs to all nations that use it (as the first, second, or foreign language)*".

## VI. CONCLUSION

The value of this LATEP scale lies in its illuminating nature of reflecting the significance of pronunciation in EFL learners' perspectives within four major domains of Linguistic, Psychological, Sociocultural, and World Englishes that are highly associated with pronunciation ability. Thereby, the newly designed and validated scale may be applied into various fields of study in order to fill the inherent gaps in the realm of English language learning. Moreover, several studies could be conducted using this scale to find its objective association with various pedagogical, psychological, sociocultural, and international variables.

Using the LATEP scale, teachers can assess their students' viewpoints concerning the significance of pronunciation in order to consciously determine what to include in classroom curricula. Likewise, material developers would be in-

formed of the English language learners' real needs. Thus, they may be inspired to take into consideration the language learners' wants in order to produce more reader-friendly materials.

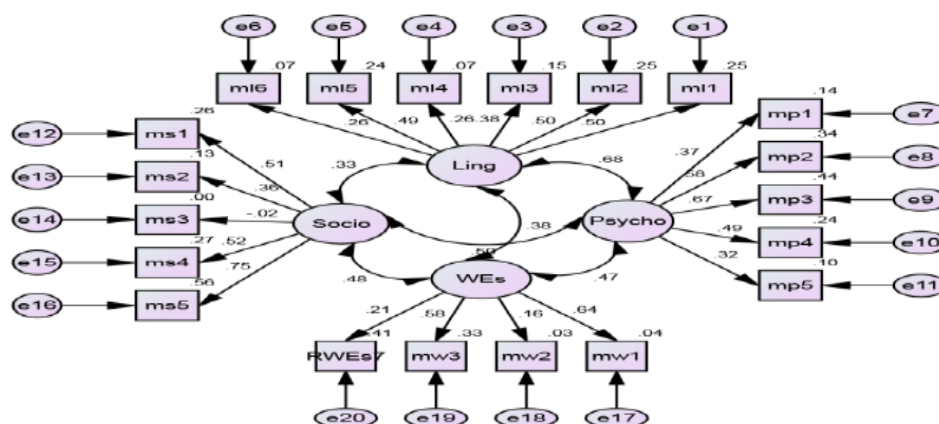
Any scientific study is inevitably faced with some limitations and problems that prevent its triangulation. This research could have yielded different results, if it were not confronted with the following limitations. First, since the study was conducted in Mashhad, the results cannot be safely generalized to other contexts. Second, due to their advanced level of English proficiency, some of the participants were teachers as well as learners of English. Although they were requested to answer the questions from a learner's perspective, it seems less likely for them to draw a clear-cut distinction between their learning and teaching experiences. Thus future studies may account for these shortcomings.

#### APPENDIX A. THE LATEP SCALE: 39 ITEMS

No	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Partly Agree	Slightly Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	Pronunciation is the inseparable part of English language learning.	6	5	4	3	2	1
2	Pronunciation is of less value compared with the main language skills (reading, writing, speaking, and listening).	1	2	3	4	5	6
3	Pronunciation has a trivial (small) effect on learning the basic language skills (reading, writing, speaking, and listening).	1	2	3	4	5	6
4	Pronunciation influences the speaking skill directly.	6	5	4	3	2	1
5	Pronunciation has a mutual effect on listening skill.	6	5	4	3	2	1
6	In English language, the way words are pronounced, is irrelevant to their spellings.	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	Fluent pronunciation increases reading speed.	6	5	4	3	2	1
8	Correct pronunciation improves the quality of reading.	6	5	4	3	2	1
9	While reading a text, correct pronunciation is irrelevant to reading comprehension.	1	2	3	4	5	6
10	Accurate pronunciation is the key to correct speech.	6	5	4	3	2	1
11	Accurate pronunciation increases listening comprehension.	6	5	4	3	2	1
12	Correct pronunciation indirectly enhances the vocabulary size.	6	5	4	3	2	1
13	Accurate pronunciation reduces English language learner's anxiety.	6	5	4	3	2	1
14	Accurate pronunciation raises English language learner's degree of self-confidence.	6	5	4	3	2	1
15	An English language learner's poor pronunciation influences his/her willingness to communicate.	6	5	4	3	2	1
16	Having a standard pronunciation is a motivating factor in English language learning.	6	5	4	3	2	1
17	Having a standard pronunciation gives a sense of self-accomplishment.	6	5	4	3	2	1
18	Correct pronunciation makes communication easier.	6	5	4	3	2	1
19	An English language learner's accurate pronunciation leads to feelings of closeness with native speakers.	6	5	4	3	2	1
20	An English language learner with a poor pronunciation is afraid of being laughed at, so he/she may not participate in group discussions.	6	5	4	3	2	1
21	The aim of learning English pronunciation is to achieve a native-like accent.	6	5	4	3	2	1
22	The aim of learning English pronunciation is just to have a correct and intelligible (understandable) pronunciation.	6	5	4	3	2	1
23	One's knowledge can be judged by his/her good or poor pronunciation.	6	5	4	3	2	1
24	One's good or poor pronunciation indicates his/her high or low social status (one's social or professional position in relation to others).	6	5	4	3	2	1
25	One's good or poor pronunciation indicates his/her social class.	6	5	4	3	2	1

26	Having good or poor pronunciation is irrelevant to one's economic status.	1	2	3	4	5	6
27	The listener develops a positive attitude toward a speaker with a perfect pronunciation.	6	5	4	3	2	1
28	People pay more attention to a speaker with a poor English pronunciation.	1	2	3	4	5	6
29	Perfect pronunciation attracts the listener.	6	5	4	3	2	1
30	If one's pronunciation is good, others respect him/her.	6	5	4	3	2	1
31	Speaker's wrong pronunciation distracts the listener.	6	5	4	3	2	1
32	One's good or poor pronunciation indicates his/her personality and politeness.	6	5	4	3	2	1
33	In my opinion, all English accents are acceptable. For e.g., correct English with Indian accent.	1	2	3	4	5	6
34	In my opinion, a beautiful pronunciation is near to American or British standards.	6	5	4	3	2	1
35	Among different accents of English, I like American accent the most.	6	5	4	3	2	1
36	Among different accents of English, I like British accent the most.	6	5	4	3	2	1
37	"English as an international language" means everybody has to know English and use it.	6	5	4	3	2	1
38	"English as an international language" means people worldwide communicate through English.	6	5	4	3	2	1
39	English as an international language belongs to all nations that use it (as the first, second, or foreign language).	1	2	3	4	5	6

#### APPENDIX B. STANDARDIZED ESTIMATES FOR THE LATEP MODEL



**Learner Attitudes toward English Pronunciation (LATEP) Model**

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# A Case Study on the Effect of Chinese Negative Transfer on English Writing

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**Abstract**—Language transfer has always been a hot topic in the study of second language acquisition. Most language learners are easily affected by their mother tongue while learning a foreign language. This paper will mainly focus on Chinese negative transfer and its influence on English writing. It lists some common errors which Chinese middle school students made on English writing. Moreover, the author also gives suggestions on how to avoid such negative transfer on English writing.

**Index Terms**—language transfer, second language acquisition, English writing

## I. INTRODUCTION

First language transfer in second language learning is always a major issue. Over the past years, a huge number of English teachers in China often complain about the reoccurrences of some mistakes and errors in students' writing. Among the basic skills in language learning, namely listening, speaking, reading and writing, writing is often regarded as the last one to be required because it is the most difficult one. As for second language acquisition, language transfer is commonly listed as the most influential factor. As English learners, we all get the feeling that we can't control the influence coming from our mother tongue when we learn it. This kind of feeling is especially obvious when writing compositions and doing translation works. For example, we may translate "green-hand" into "fresh-hand"; we may forget to add an "s" to a sentence like "He want to have a piece of cake now".

Psycholinguists thought that it is unrealistic and useless to avoid transfer in the process of learners' interlanguage development. Transfer, a type of cognitive activity, is just as helpful as learning strategies for language learners. According to the language transfer theory, during the learning process of a second language, the learner's mother tongue would show a great influence on the acquisition of his or her second language.

This paper will mainly concentrate on Chinese negative transfer and its influence on English writing. In this paper, we will first review how linguists in this field see this phenomenon. Then we will report an investigation that we have carried out in a middle school in China. It consists of paper writing, data collecting, error analyzing. After reporting our findings, we will compare those data we have already obtained and find solutions to avoid negative language transfer in our English writing.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Transfer, as an important notion in second language acquisition (SLA), is a basic concept in psychology. In psychology, it refers to "the phenomenon of previous knowledge being extended to the area of new knowledge, i.e. the influence which the learning or remembering of one thing has on the learning and remembering of another thing." (Sajavaara, 1986, p.123) It is Sajavaara (1989) who first introduced this notion into the area of linguistics. He first used it to refer to cross-linguistic influence. However, it was not until the 1950s and 1960s that this term became popular among linguists. Transfer has been used by educational psychologists and educators to describe the use of past knowledge or experience in new situations.

### A. Historical Review of Language Transfer

The theory of language transfer has been developing for a long period of time. Since the middle of the twentieth century, the cross-linguistic influence has been the most important argument discussed for several decades in the study of second language acquisition. It is one of the basic conditions for learning because the subsequent learning depends greatly on what has been learned in the past (Sawrey and Telford, 1977). Generally speaking, the study of language transfer has experienced three periods: behaviorist, mentalist and cognitive period.

Language transfer was first proposed in contrastive analysis theory in the 1950s. The term "transfer" is closely

related to L2 acquisition. In the late 1960s, under the influence of Chomsky's universal grammar, its importance waned while learners' errors were seen not as evidence of language transfer but as evidence of creative construction process (Chomsky, 1965). From the 1970s, a more balanced perspective has emerged in which the role of transfer is acknowledged and transfer is seen to interact with a list of other factors which are not fully understood yet.

In the research of language transfer, contrastive analysis, morpheme order study and markedness theory are the representatives. Language transfer has been increasingly regarded as a cognitive process. Odlin focused greatly on cross-linguistic influence to support his research on language transfer. In the 1980s, Chinese scholars applied Western transfer theories to Foreign Language Learning (FLL) to test this theory's validity in Chinese acquisition. The transfer theory has been further improved since it is combined with language universals, cognitive theory and social factors.

### *B. Definition of Language Transfer*

In the study of applied linguistics, different researchers would like to define a term from their own perspective. The term transfer is one of these.

The most commonly cited definition of transfer is proposed by Odlin. "Transfer is the influence resulting from similarities and differences between the target language and any other language that has been previously (and perhaps imperfectly) acquired." (Odlin, 2001, p.75) He offered this "working definition" of "substratum transfer" as a foundation for his own research. He also assumed that transfer is not simply a result of habit formation or interference, or a falling back on the native language.

In fact, with the time passing by, the notion of "language transfer" is also experiencing great changes. The notion of "language transfer" was closely related to the behaviorist theories at first. Fries (1945) and Lado (1957) introduced the term into the field of second language (L2) learning. They assumed that learners tended to transfer the characteristics of their native language and cultures into the foreign languages and cultures that they were learning. Therefore, the learning of a second language was seen as an increase of a "behavioral repertoire." (Corder, 1973, p.27)

Sharwood Smith and Eric Kellerman (1986) suggested that the term should be restricted to "those that lead to the incorporation of elements from one language into another." (p.82)

Faerch and Kasper (1987) defined transfer "as the process by which L2 learners' active L1 knowledge in developing or using their interlanguage (linguistic system between L1 and L2), and they also pointed out that the process may either support (positive transfer) or defect (negative transfer) from learning." (p.25-34)

O'Malley and Chamot (1990) regarded transfer as "the use of previous linguistic or prior skills to assist comprehension or production." (p.89-97)

Language transfer, also called cross-linguistic influence, is one of the key factors contributing to learners' interlanguage. It refers to the influence of the mother tongue (L1) on the learner's performance in the development of a given target language. This definition, although somewhat vague (as Odlin admits), is still widely accepted. As a result, the definition of "transfer" has been considerably broadened in the field of contrastive linguistic studies.

### *C. Classification of Language Transfer*

Basically, language transfer could be scientifically classified as positive, negative and zero transfer. Positive transfer refers to the fact that learners use their former knowledge to avoid making mistakes in the language learning process. That is to say, the transfer helps or facilitates language learning in another situation, and may occur when both the native language and the target language have the same form. In contrast, negative transfer refers to the fact that learners use their former knowledge and make mistakes and errors when learning the target language (Gass & Selinker, 2001). Specifically, it refers to the use of native language patterns or rules which leads to an error or inappropriate form in the target language. Zero transfer refers to those situations where no transfer occurs.

For the reason that positive transfer is hard to distinguish and the study of zero transfer is of little significance, this thesis tends to study the negative transfer appearing in middle school students' writings. Many linguists and researchers have done an abundance of studies on negative transfer. Rod Ellis (1985, p.123), for example, offered the manifestation of negative transfer as "errors", and errors are the results of negative transfer.

Odlin noted that language transfer is the outcome produced by cross-linguistic similarities and differences. He provided a classification of outcomes which include positive transfer, negative transfer, and differing lengths of acquisition. Among the three outcomes, he paid much more attention to the outcome of negative transfer. Thus, he points out that although negative transfer tends to be equal to production errors, there are other ways in which an individual's second language performance may differ from the behavior of native speakers. In Odlin's book he divided negative transfer errors into underproduction, production, overproduction and misinterpretation (Odlin, 2001).

Underproduction errors means learners may produce very few or no mistakes of a target language. For example, Chinese and Japanese students are inclined to use accumulative simple sentences in an attempt to avoid relative clause. As for production errors, Odlin declared that three types of errors are likely to arise from similarities and differences in the native and target languages: (1) substitutions, (2) calques, and (3) alternations of structures. The last type is misinterpretation. It refers to native language structures which can influence the interpretation of target language messages, and sometimes that influence may leads to learners inferring something very different from what speakers of the language would infer.

Knowing that errors are the main manifestation of negative transfer will make the research more authentic and

reasonable.

### III. INVESTIGATION

In the present study, we have carried out an experiment about the errors made by Chinese students in their English compositions. And there is also a supplementary experiment which was used to investigate one specific negative transfer phenomenon in the first experiment. All the subjects in this study come from a senior middle school named Shanghai Middle School in Yichang. It is an ordinary middle school where I taught in 2012. In order to make sure not to be influenced by different teaching methods, all of them are in the same class - Class 2, Grade 3. And their ages ranged from fifteen to sixteen. There were 30 boys and 24 girls in the group. They have learned English for 5 or 6 year. I choose this group of students because they have a good acquisition of English after years study so the mistakes made by them are typical and deserve research.

#### A. Research Design

This section includes research purpose, research instrument and research questions. As for the methodology, both quantitative and qualitative methods are adopted in this study. Quantitative research is to find out the frequency and variables of Chinese transfer identified in the data. In this study, quantitative research is employed to find out the errors, which are made by the students in their English writing from cognitive ability aspect, while qualitative research is employed to describe and analyze the samples of with Chinese transfer, and give the possible reasons from the specific cognitive habits aspect.

##### 1. Research Purpose

When I had a part-time job as an English teacher, I found a common phenomenon in Chinese students' English compositions which had interested me a lot. There have been existing variable errors in Chinese English learners' writing, and the reasons for that are not only the differences between the two independent language families but also the differences between those two different cultures.

By describing and analyzing the errors caused by negative transfer of Chinese in English writing, this paper plans to get people's attention to the problems caused by language transfer in Chinese students' writing and thus to provide pedagogical implications for English teachers.

##### 2. Data Collecting

54 Chinese students in this class were asked to write a paper on the title of "Making a difference" in about 100-150 words within 30 minutes. The main idea is: many people think that only those who hold important positions can make a difference in the society. Do you agree with it? What is your point of view?

The whole writing process was observed by myself in my regular class, and the students were not informed of the title in advance and they made no preparation, which made the data more reliable. The samples can reflect natural, spontaneous language use which is generally preferred.

In the study, we only counted the grammatical mistakes caused by the interferences of their mother tongue. In the following table, we list different kinds of mistakes and the times of their frequency of occurrences.

TABLE 1

Classification	Types of mistakes	Times	Proportion
Grammatical mistakes	Singular and plural of nouns	30	26.8%
	Predicate verbs	22	19.6%
	Cohesion of sentences	47	30.2%
	Omit or misuse of articles	6	5.4%
	time tense	39	28.5%

#### B. Error Analysis

##### 1. Singular and Plural of Nouns

According to the above table, there are 30 such kinds of mistakes in 54 papers; almost every student has made one. And both the learners and the English teachers should pay much attention to this kind of mistake. In fact, the English learners are required to acquire this rule at the very beginning of their learning process. But why do they still make this kind of mistakes even after years of English study? Let's have a look at those mistakes first:

*Every day we can receive so much information.*

*But in some rural area in China, the situation is quite different.*

Both Chinese and English have the concept of singular and plural of nouns. The difference lies in that we only add plural suffixes to personal nouns in Chinese. It is unnecessary to add plural suffixes to those nouns which refer to objects. For example, in Chinese, "book" has no plural form, it can be used to refer to one book or two books. But in English, "book" has a plural form. There exists a semantic blank, which makes it difficult for Chinese students to acquire plenty of English affixes.

It is especially obvious when we realize that nouns in English can be divided into countable nouns and uncountable nouns, but in Chinese we don't need to consider this question. "Information" is a good example: it is an uncountable noun in English, but in Chinese, we can say "a piece of information" or "two pieces of information". Then the Chinese

students would regard this word as a countable one. Here, we can see, if the students judge from their mother tongue, they would make mistakes in telling a countable noun from an uncountable one. All of those mistakes are due to the negative transfer of the students' source language.

## 2. Predicate Verbs

Similarly, the students also made a lot of mistakes in using predicate verbs. In English, verbs, auxiliaries and modal verbs can be used together to express the tense and tone of verbs. But this kind of phenomenon does not exist in Chinese. So the students often neglect the variation of predicate when writing sentences. For example:

*In my opinion, it will leads to a polarized society.*

English and Chinese have the same sentence order: subject-verb-object, but the formation of the predicate in those two languages is quite different. The sentence above is in the future tense: according to the English grammar rules, we should use the original form of "lead" after "will" in spite of the third person singular "it" appears here, so "leads" in the sentence should be changed into "lead". In Chinese, it shall be much easier: no matter how the tense and subject change, the predicate "lead" won't have any change of form.

## 3. Cohesion of Sentences

Students made a large amount of mistakes in the cohesion of sentences, the percentage is 30.2%. About the cohesion of sentences, the students often use conjunctions like "because, so, not only...but also...". Those conjunctions also occur in Chinese. In English we only need one conjunction to connect a sentence, while in Chinese we can use two conjunctions or even more in one sentence. For example, a student wrote a sentence like this:

*Because Internet includes much knowledge, so we should make good use of it.*

However, the student only needs to use either "because" or "so" according to English grammar. This kind of mistake is also caused by the negative transfer of Chinese.

## 4. Omission or Misuse of Articles

The reason why Chinese students make mistakes in using articles is also understandable: there is no article in Chinese. Those students whose mother tongue has articles acquire this grammatical rule better than those whose mother tongue has no articles. As there is no counterpart in Chinese for the students, they may find it difficult to acquire the use of articles. For example:

*Every global citizen know existence of computer, but not everyone has seen or used it, especially in rural areas.*

In this sentence, the students totally don't know how to use articles in a correct way. So the correct version of this sentence should be like this:

*Every global citizen know the existence of computer, but not everyone has seen or used it, especially in the rural areas.*

## 5. Time Tense

Tense is a grammatical category, typically marked on the verb, which refers to the time of the event or state denoted by the verb in relation to some other temporal reference point. The huge difference between Chinese and English tense leads to the occurrence of many errors in students' compositions. Since some Chinese students are quite aware of the English tense and undoubtedly they turn their mother tongue for help, i.e. Chinese tense. Therefore, errors are made because of Chinese interference. In English, tense is used for many reasons: some are supposed to indicate time; some are meant to stress, or attract readers' attention; while the others refer to implications. For example:

*She is being nice.*

In this example, the students used present progressive tense to stress the fact that she is beautiful. According to the English tradition, we don't use the present progressive to express a person's being beautiful at the time being, which may sound quite absurd for the listener. So we should change this sentence into this version:

*She is nice.*

## C. After-writing Feedback

A feedback followed the writing task immediately. The purpose of the feedback is to gather some information on the participants' writing background and whether the results obtained from the sample writing are consistent with what the students have felt. Then the participants were asked whether they used their knowledge of Chinese in the process of writing. And if they did, give the example and tell us the percentage of their writing contained translation.

The results coming from the feedback are basically consistent with those I obtained from the participants' composition, out of the 54 participants, 47% of the participants used their Chinese knowledge throughout the whole process of their writing, 20% of them used translation in more than half in the process of their writing. This study shows that translation plays an important role in the process of the participants' writing and to some extent it has become a common strategy that Chinese senior middle school students use in their English writing.

## D. Supplementary Experiment

For the tested students made a lot of mistakes on cohesion, here we added a sentence combination test for the tested students. The purpose of the test is to investigate the production ability of the participants. It is borrowed from the tests made by Eckman (1977), Doughty (1991) and Hamilton (1994). Because their tests are considered as classical ones, thus they are frequently cited. The original test is made up of twenty pairs of sentences which are easy to understand. They are designed in this way: every four sentences represent one relative clause type. Among these sentences, two are

embedded into the subject position and the other are attached to the position of object. This paper will just borrow some examples from the classical ones for the time is limit.

### Test (1)

The tested students are required to meet the following requirements: combine the two single sentences in each pair into a relative clause by using the relative pronouns “that, which, who, who, whom” or “whose”. Omitting any information or changing the form or meaning of sentences is judged as incorrect. The sentence A is the main clause. The tested students need to attach sentence B to sentence A. That is to say, the combined sentence should start with sentence A.

(1) Sentence A: That little boy has a good friend.

Sentence B: His friend's name is Xiao Ming.

Following the above directions, (1) should be “That little boy has a good friend whose name is Xiao Ming”. There are several different versions of this sentence combination task.

Version one: *That little boy's good friend's name is Xiao Ming.*

Version two: *That little boy has a good friend and his name is Xiao Ming.*

Those two versions changed the original meaning and did not use the relative pronouns. The first version doesn't quite suit the English grammar. The native speakers seldom use possessive case twice in one sentence. Some students said they don't know how to add the relative pronouns so they went against the requirement of the test.

### Test (2)

(2) Sentence A: The tourists didn't follow the instruction.

Sentence B: The tourists were injured.

According to the requirements, the relative sentences will be “The tourists who/that were injured didn't follow the instruction”. While the most common version given by the tested students is “The tourists who didn't follow the instruction were injured”. Although it is a correct sentence in grammar, it violates the direction that Sentence B is always the sub-clause. Therefore, such sentence is treated as incorrect.

### Test (3)

(3) Sentence A: Mr. Li is the chairman of the organization.

Sentence B: Mr. Wang is older than Mr. Li.

Loss of points may occur when participants have the form or meaning of the sentence changed, which is forbidden in the test. The right combination of these two should be “Mr. Li whom/that Mr. Wang is older than is the chairman of the organization”. Because it is a relative clause, the subjects may change the meaning or form semantically as “Mr. Li who is younger than Mr. Wang is the chairman of the organization”. Because of the changed form, this sentence is also scored zero. Besides, omitting or changing relative pronouns wrongly is considered incorrect.

## IV. SUGGESTIONS

In the present study, we have only talked about the grammatical part, but we need to understand that second language writing is more than a cross-language behavior, which also includes the exchange of thinking modes and culture modes. That the Chinese students use English to express themselves is also a transfer from the original Chinese thinking modes and culture modes to the newly English thinking modes and culture modes. During the confused exchanging process, many factors may influence the students' mother tongue, which will lead to negative transfer in their writing and make some mistakes in the composition. Here, the paper provides the following suggestions for the second-language teachers and learners.

### A. Enlarge Vocabulary and Strengthen Grammatical Exercise

In order to acquire English well, learners first need to make preparations for vocabulary, which is the step-stone of all language learning. But the learners also need to pay attention to the differences between Chinese and English words: although many words in these two languages have similar meanings, there is difference between connotative and denotative meanings. What's more, many words in these two languages have different collocations. For example, the Chinese may say “see a newspaper”, which is due to the negative transfer of their first language. And the correct expression is “read a newspaper” in English. The more a student reads, the better his or her writing becomes. Reading widely is one of the best ways to acquire native English. So, after-class reading with various kinds of materials should be done.

Perhaps this is best way to get rid of the control of the negative transfer of Chinese for English learners. Grammar rules are the base of sentences formation. There are great differences between English grammar system and Chinese grammar system. The arrangement of grammatical components in English is much flexible than that of Chinese. Practice makes perfect. In this way, learners can have a better understanding of the grammatical structures they have already acquired and overcome Chinglish in their writing.

### B. Get a Better Understanding of Cultural Differences

The purpose of learning a language is for communication. But Chinese students are learning English in a non-natural environment, which means they have been greatly influenced by Chinese culture. As analyzed in previous chapter, it is

found that the students are greatly affected by their mother tongue and thinking modes when writing. During writing, they would like to use literal translation. They always think about their ideas in Chinese and then translate them into English. Therefore, reducing the interference of the mother tongue is a key point in learning English now that the degree of interference concerns closely with the quality of English writing.

English teachers should help Chinese students adapt to English thinking way. In China, learning English is influenced inevitably by the Chinese environment. Although there are some changes about learning English environment recently, it is unlikely to transform basically and greatly in the mother tongue environment. So in order to improve their writing skills, the teachers also need to teach them the English culture, including the society structure, history, culture, geography and even customs. Only in this way, can the students get a comprehensive understanding of connotative meaning of English and avoid negative language transfer. In the English teaching, the teacher should add an cultural introduction part to their teaching task.

### C. Make Comparison between L1 and L2

Due to a large number of inter-lingual errors, teachers should cultivate students' insights and sensitivity to the differences between two languages by the means of contrasting, inducting and analyzing. The reason is that mother tongue transfer is a most difficult problem in the progress of acquiring second language. Therefore, the differences between L1 and L2 need to emphasize. During the class, teachers should help students to explore differences so that they can make the English sentence actively and conscientiously. Teachers choose to compare and contrast between Chinese and English by teaching materials. If teachers often do that, the students will do it in the same way. So teachers can work out some examples aiming at kinds of differences in morphology, syntax and discourse. With this type of regular practice and training, students may have deeper understanding of their mother tongue and English, and would avoid committing errors consciously while writing English composition.

In a word, to better understand and distinguish the similarities and differences between these two languages can shorten Chinese learners' way to a better acquisition of English.

## V. CONCLUSION

Though the data in this research are extensively collected, there is a need to replicate this study with many different populations and at different levels of English ability. As the limitation of one research, it can not cover so many subjects that the data collected may not be universal. In addition, because of the limitation of time and experiment and the author's ability, the analysis and classification of Chinglish may be subjective and incomplete. The stock will be enlarged throughout constant efforts to collect various data.

By both quantitative and qualitative analysis, we found that Chinese students' mother tongue does have a negative influence on their English learning. From my point of view, different thinking modes in English and Chinese are the major causes of Chinglish expressions and other grammatical errors. Since one's thinking mode is deeply rooted in his or her mind, it is very difficult for us to change it. So as second language learners, if the we students want to improve our English writing, we must train ourselves more and acquire more English culture. We should realize the importance of writing in our study and life, even in our future work.

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# Cooperative Learning: An Effective Approach to College English Learning

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**Abstract**—Cooperative Learning (or Collaborative Learning), has become one of mainstream learning strategies in the world. As China continues to push forward and lucubrate into the reform of college English, many educational theorists and teachers who work on college English try to use the cooperative learning, a creative and effective learning strategy, into the current college English learning system, and have made some achievements. This paper also tries to sum up some relevant studies on cooperative learning in college English learning, and use some actual instances of college students' English learning to attempt to raise some effective approaches to improve the cooperative learning strategies in the college English learning, and hope to provide some references for the colleges to launch cooperative learning.

**Index Terms**—cooperative learning, college English, influencing factors

## I. FOREWORD

Since the Ministry of Education formulated and promulgated the “Requirements for College English Curriculum Teaching” (trial) in 2007, the models of the college English teaching and learning strategies are continuously optimized, and the reform of college English teaching and learning strategies are also constantly deepen and perfect. In accordance with the guidance of the “Requirements” (Ministry of Education, 2007), “one of the purposes of teaching reform is to promote the formation of students’ individualized learning methods and the development of students’ autonomous learning ability.” The new teaching model should be able to make students select suitable materials and methods to learn, attain the guidance of learning strategies, and gradually improve their autonomous learning ability. At the same time, “the teaching reform should ensure that the teaching theory and practice can be changed from the pattern that is teacher-centered and simply to impart knowledge and skills into the pattern that is student-centered and both to teach the knowledge and skills and pay more attention to the cultivation of the practical application of language ability and autonomous learning ability.” (Ministry of Education, 2007) This is also a change that aims at the lifelong education whose purpose is to cultivate the students’ lifelong learning ability. In the face of such requirements, the college English teaching and learning has received the unprecedented challenge. And at the same time, Cooperative learning which is in accordance with the requirements has attracted more and more attention. Therefore, it is extremely important to discuss how to effectively apply the cooperative learning strategies to the teaching in college English teaching reform.

## II. THE RELATED STUDIES ON COOPERATIVE LEARNING

### A. *The Foreign and Domestic Study Status of Cooperative Learning*

From a historical perspective, Cooperative Learning (Collaborative Learning in the studies in the western countries, or the “Collective Teaching” called by Dyachenko in the former Soviet Union) is a relatively old philosophy of education. In the western countries, the source of cooperative learning can be traced back to early human era. As early as in the first century AD, the Roman Quintilian school has pointed out that the students can benefit from the mutual teaching (Shi Aimin & Pan Li & Zhou Xiaoqin; 2010). In 1806, the conception of the cooperative learning group was introduced from Britain into the United States, and respected and widely applied by the American educators, like Park, Dewey, etc. The modern theory of cooperative learning was introduced from Britain into America in the 18th century, and was successfully risen and extensively practiced in the 1970s in the United States. The main representative figures of modern cooperative learning include American educator Parke, Professor Dewey and the like. In addition, in the United States, Professor R.E. Slavin at Johns Hopkins University, the brothers Professor D.W Johnson and Professor R.T Johnson at the University of Minnesota, Professor T. R. Guskey at the University of Kentucky, Professor Cagan majored in educational psychology at the University of California--Riverside, and the couple Professor Y. Sharan and S. Sharan at the Tel Aviv University in Israel are all the important representatives in the cooperative learning research and experiment. One of the founders of the cooperative learning theory, Johnson, a professor at the University of Minnesota in the United States, put forward with his members that people could adopt team approach in the teaching in order to make the students have the collaborative efforts and give full play to the advantages of their self-study and peer-study.

Since the 1990s cooperative learning, a new educational conception, along with the reform of Chinese elementary educational curriculum, is gradually favored by the educators, theory workers and especially the front-line teachers. Many theoretical and practical studies have shown that the cooperative learning is obviously effective to improve the

psychological atmosphere in the classroom, improve the students' academic performance, promote the students' process of socialization, etc. The Education Department of Hangzhou University in Zhejiang province began to experiment the cooperative learning group in the teaching in 1990s. Then in the middle of 1990s Shandong Provincial Institute of Education Research had a series of researches and experiments on the cooperative teaching. In recent years the subjective educational experiments on team cooperation were discussed constantly, and this series of scientific researches on education and teaching practice could promote the development of cooperative learning in China. Professor Wang Tan (2002) who is mainly engaged in cooperative learning combines with Israel R. Sharan's standpoints and points out "cooperative learning is a general term for a series of methods to organize and promote the classroom teaching. In the process of learning among the students, cooperative learning is the basic feature of all these methods. In class, the cooperation between peers is realized by organizing the students in the group activities. The students can learn through the interaction and the communication between peers, also learn through personal study." Then, the theories and practice of the cooperative learning aiming at the college English teaching, like bamboo shoots after the rain, deepen and perfect in various disciplines and fields of the education in china. However, the current domestic specialized researches and practice on cooperative learning for college English teaching model and learning strategies are not widely available. Therefore, this paper will try to discuss on how to effectively apply cooperative learning strategies to the college English teaching, use the group cooperative learning mode, make full use of the students' and their fellows' advantages in English learning, cultivate students' spirit of cooperation and accomplish their English learning tasks in common. And in the meantime, this paper will also attempt to discuss on how to stimulate students' interest in learning English and improve their enthusiasm for English class activities, so that the students can improve their ability to learn English in the mutual learning and assistance.

#### *B. The Connotation, Elements and Forms of Cooperative Learning*

The connotation of cooperative learning is complex and multi-faceted. The famous Chinese scholar Wang Tan (2001) argued that: "The real cooperative learning is a kind of teaching activity and strategy system which is guided by the teaching goal, organized on the basis of the heterogeneous groups, driven by the power resources from the interactive cooperation of the dynamic factors in the teaching and rewarded for the team achievements." Cooperative learning focuses on the interaction between the teachers and the students and among the students themselves in the process of teaching, and emphasizes on the interactive cooperation among the students in the teaching and learning activities. The interactive cooperation among the students is the common characteristic of cooperative learning. Cooperative learning mainly consists of five basic elements (Song Yu, 2012), including (1)The positive interdependence. The team members depend on and help each other to successfully complete the task; (2)The face-to-face interaction. Team members directly communicate within the team and actively participate in activities to contribute themselves in the maximum; (3)The individual accountability. Team members must develop their individual responsibility in the cooperative learning; (4)The development of social skills within the small group. The social skills in cooperative learning mainly refers to the necessary organizational ability, communicative ability, collaborative ability, respectful attitudes with each other, etc. in the group cooperative learning; (5)The group processing. Team members reflect on the experiences in the group cooperative learning and make best efforts to improve the strategies of the cooperative learning.

With the combination of various teaching characteristics proposed by the advocates and researchers who majored in cooperative learning in recent decades, there are a variety of methods of the cooperative learning produced and applied in educational practice. The most typical and common methods of cooperative learning are listed as follows:

1. Learning Together (LT)
2. The Teams-Games Tournament (TGT)
3. The Group Investigation (GI)
4. Academic Controversy (AC)
5. Jigsaw Learning
6. Student Team-Achievement Divisions (STAD)
7. Team Accelerated Instruction (TAI)
8. The Partner Cooperation (PC)

The styles of the above methods of cooperative learning are not identical, so they are suitable for different types of college English courses. However, as for these types of cooperative methods, the learners must master the different skills in cooperative learning. For example, the learners should grasp how to encourage the others or help others, how to resolve the conflict, how to negotiate, how to reject, etc. (Nan Bo, 2003)

### III. THE DESIGNED TASKS

The author attempts to use cooperative learning strategies as the main target of the college English classroom teaching in two classes, where the students are in Grade one in the university, and has received the certain effects. Here are two cases of college English classroom teaching combined with the cooperative learning strategies.

#### *A. The Jigsaw Learning*

The main feature of Jigsaw Learning is that the students' learning mostly depends on the cooperation, exchange and

sharing between the team members from the home group (or Jigsaw group) and the team members from the expert group. Each student will be responsible for the completion of a certain part of the learning task. Teachers are no longer masters of English learning. Instead, they will become collaborators and guide their students to learn. The students will become the real leaders of class learning.

The following case is that the author implemented the cooperative learning strategy, Jigsaw Learning, with the text of "Fighting with the Forces of the Nature" in the textbook *College English* (new edition) (Shanghai: Shanghai foreign language education press). The time of the designed task is within 90 minutes (2 course hours). In the process of the students' cooperative learning with the designed time, there will be several stages as follows.

In the first stage, the students will be divided into the home groups (or Jigsaw groups) for the first time. In the process of the Jigsaw group division in the first time, the teacher should give full consideration to the difference of the students' individual ability. It is best to realize that in the same Jigsaw group there are the students who are excellent in English and also the students who are poor in English. In this way, it is better to arouse the excellent students' enthusiasm and reduce the backward students' anxiety in the process of cooperative learning. When grouping, the teacher should ensure four or five students to form a heterogeneous group. Besides the reasonable division of the group, the teacher should also make the students grasp and practice some skills of the cooperative learning such as lending an ear to, expression, organization, rejection, encouragement and the like. These skills can make sure that the Jigsaw learning activities can be carried out more smoothly and effectively.

In the second stage, the text "Fighting with the Forces of Nature" is divided into several parts and each heterogeneous group receives the learning materials which have already been divided. For instance, the text "Fighting with the Forces of Nature" is mainly concerned about two battles, *Napoleon's Campaign to the Russian* and *Hitler's Invasion to the Soviet Union*, and four countries, *France, Russia, Germany and the Soviet Union*. Therefore, each country will be a learning task. And at the same time, the teacher should help the students to divide the received task again inside the group according to the differences of the individual English ability.

In the third stage, the students will be divided again. The students who have received the same learning materials in different heterogeneous groups will be gathered together to form a new group, an expert group. The students in the same expert group will focus on the same learning materials to learn cooperatively. At this stage of cooperative learning, the students in the expert group must depend on their own strength to learn and grasp the new words and expressions related to their assigned learning materials as much as possible. Each member in the group should actively speak out and participate in discussion, until all the members reach a consensus on the assigned learning tasks and record the achievements of the discussion respectively. At this time, the members have become experts in the assigned reading tasks. At the same time, the students in the same expert group can practice how to interpret the content of the assigned reading material and the new words and expressions in the reading material to the members in their original heterogeneous group. For example, the students who are responsible to learn and master the reading materials about the country, *Russia*, will begin to discuss and solve the relevant reading tasks, including Russian geography, weather and other natural features in Russia, the military strategies occurred in the text and so on. They also have to help each other to learn and grasp the new words, such as *retreat*, *czar*, *truce* and etc. In this stage, the teacher will no longer play a leading role. When the students have the divergent opinions in the group discussion, the teacher will appropriately help and give advice to them. When the students cannot understand and grasp the new words by themselves, the teacher should give the proper guidance and assistance. When the students report their achievements of their assigned tasks, the teacher should give the appropriate instruction and summary.

In the fourth stage, when all the expert groups have completed their discussion, the students return to the original heterogeneous groups. In a heterogeneous group, each student will take turns to report their achievements of the discussion in the expert group and assist other members to learn and master the assigned reading information. In the process of reporting, the students will also be responsible for the interpretation of the new vocabulary and learning skills to other members. When all the students have completed their reports in their original heterogeneous group, the whole task is completed. For instance, when the students return their heterogeneous group to share and study the information by turns, such as the military strategies adopted by France, Russia, Germany and the Soviet Union, the natural conditions and so forth. The group members should complete the relevant reading task about the country that they have been assigned. In this stage, the teacher should walk around each group, observe how the group tasks progress and give some guidance and suggestions. At the same times, the teacher should record and evaluate the process and achievements of each group's cooperative learning.

The author finds out that when the teacher has explained the objectives and procedures of the English cooperative learning clearly, although there are still some difficulties in learning, the students are pleased to participate in this English learning strategy in class which breaks the traditional PPP (presentation, practice, production) (Zhang Pei, 2009), and find fun in the process of Jigsaw learning.

### B. Learning Together

Learning together (LT) in particular refers to the method in which four or five students of different English proficiency comprise a group and study together to complete a task. At the end of learning together, each group should submit an assignment to the teacher and will be rewarded according to the achievements of the group performance. This method emphasizes on that the whole group can improve the ability to interact and cooperate with others through the

group common activities, such as discussion, brainstorming, reflection, and so on. However, the brothers Professor D.W Johnson and Professor R.T Johnson did not provide a specific operation method, but beyond the research approaches to the specific teaching methods, they systematically put forward the five elements of the effective cooperative learning. Learning together is an early and universal method of cooperative learning.

The author once tried to use learning together method to design a 30-minute writing task in the college English course. The whole procedure of learning together method can be composed of three stages, including pre-writing, in-writing and language focus. And the specified time is within 30 minutes. With the help of the writing skills that the students have mastered in class, the students should cooperate and complete a composition in the group, and hand in it in written form. And then the author will give a comment on the achievements of each group. Before the procedure, the whole students will be divided into several writing groups, mainly each of which should consist of four or five students.

In the pre-writing stage, the teacher will introduce the topic of the task to the whole students at the beginning. The topic of the composition is "Success". Then the teacher will lead the students to collect the materials, such as the examples of the famous successful celebrities, some well-known old sayings related to success and so on. In the meanwhile the teacher also guide the students to conceive and draw up the outline, identify the main ideas and etc. through their discussion and negotiation, with the joint efforts of the group.

In the in-writing stage, based on individual ability and the interest, the members will have the division of labor on all the assignments agreed within the group, such as screening and organizing the materials, forming the outline and content of the draft, selecting the correct words, phrases and sentence patterns, amending the errors, and the like. Every member inside the group will receive one or two specific assignments. In this stage, the teacher should make the students express themselves in a relaxing atmosphere. In order to make the students to have more confidence, the teacher could show some sample compositions, but encourage the students to use their imagination and creativity to compose in stead of imitating those samples.

In the third stage, the team members will discuss, negotiate and modify the draft together. They should thresh whether the theme is outstanding, whether the paragraphs are reasonable and coherent, whether it is appropriate to use such words or phrases and so on. And the teacher could encourage students to read the draft in the small scope and make them give advice and evaluation. In the end, each group should hand in their final composition in the specified time and the teacher should give some suggestions and evaluation to the group achievements.

The author finds out that, when the teacher has explained the learning objectives and procedures to the students clearly, the students are willing to try and cooperate, and finally find joy in the process the learning together method. In addition, in the whole process the teacher needs to observe around all the groups, guide and supervise the task progress and result of each group. When there is misrepresentation and lack of words occurred, the teacher should guide and help the students correctly and cautiously. When each group has completed the task and submits their compositions, the teacher must record and evaluate the outcomes of the cooperate learning in each group.

#### IV. THE INFLUENCING FACTORS OF COLLEGE ENGLISH COOPERATIVE LEARNING

In the author's opinion, the effects of the cooperative learning strategies are quite obvious in the process of the college English learning. In the process of English learning, the cooperative learning strategy not only can be beneficial to help to reduce the students' anxiety, but also can increase the students' self-confidence, bring their enthusiasm, initiative, imagination and creativity. At the same time, it also can provide a good platform for the college students, which is conducive to the students about forming good learning and communicative skills and cultivating the students' consciousness to cooperate and help with each other. Combined with the practical teaching experience and some points of view from the researchers who major in the cooperative learning theories, the author thinks that the chief factors that can affect the cooperative learning strategies to play a main role in the college English learning are as follows:

1. The teachers need to have a positive attitude towards the cooperative learning strategy. They should have in-depth understanding and grasp on the connotation, characteristics and skills of cooperative learning, and also they need to have an abundant store of knowledge. Teachers' role in the cooperative learning process mainly is to guide and supervise. But at the same time because of the need to guide and supervise in the whole process of cooperative learning, as a result, it is essential for the teachers to explicitly study and master the connotation and necessary skills of cooperative learning. In the process of cooperative learning, teachers should define the purpose and task of cooperative learning, and give clear instructions to the students. They should explain clearly to the students about the activities of cooperative learning, concerning the intention, requirements, methods, steps, etc., in order to avoid students to be at a loss. At the same time, the teachers should be able to control the time of cooperative learning. And according to the difficulty of the tasks and the actual situation where the students discuss, they should decide when to stop. In addition, the teachers should guide their students to learn cooperative skills in the process of cooperative learning. In the process of mutual learning, the teachers should delve into the students' activities to listen and observe the group behavior, pay attention to the problems of the completion of the tasks or the process of cooperation, and timely provide the effective guidance and assistance for the students. In the meanwhile, they also should lead the groups to focus on the existing problems and try to let the students find their own rules and solve problems. Then, the teachers need to give the students the opportunity to fully display the achievements and give timely feedback and summary. They could try to make more groups to fully show their achievements respectively, and make the students understand that what they are speaking out

is on behalf of the group opinions rather than personal thoughts. They also remember to encourage and inspire their students to put forward different views on the issue, debate with each other, and stimulate the students to have in-depth thinking. At the same time, the teachers should have self-reflection in the learning and the practice, constantly adjust their learning strategies and restructure or rearrange the students' English learning content, in order to make sure that the English classroom learning strategies are conducive to the mutual development between teachers and students.

2. Faced with the cooperative learning strategies, the students need to have the psychological preparation and communication skills. The Students' role in the process of cooperative learning is not only to be the participants, but also to be specific organizer and designer of the activities. Therefore, the students' learning attitude and devotion to the activities will affect the students' learning in the overall cooperation. In addition, the most basic condition for the cooperative learning is that the task is completed by the members within the group. Therefore, it is essential for the students to master the necessary cooperative skills in cooperative learning. In the process of cooperative learning, the students should learn to ponder seriously, actively speak, actually participate in English classroom learning, actively explore the formation process of new knowledge, and use their own expressions to show the process of exploration. Communicating within the group, the students can find out different views of from their own to solve the problems, and can help those students who have difficulty in learning English, with a group spirit of cooperation. In addition, the students must learn to listen to others' opinions modestly. The behavior of each member in the group will be advised, reminded and corrected from others. Therefore, they need to hear and record others' views carefully, and compare others' views with their own views, and even dare to deny themselves. At the same time, the students should also learn to actively practice, the actual hands-operated practice. Knowledge results from practice, and learning knowledge is also inseparable from the practical operation. Finally, the students should learn to practice cooperatively and combine the practice with thinking. The activities in cooperative learning should reflect the consciousness of cooperation, that is to say, it can not only reflect the wisdom of the collective, but also cultivate the students' consciousness of cooperation and form the habit of working with people. In the psychological atmosphere where the students can call a spade a spade, actively cooperate and have a harmonious understanding with others in the group, the students' creative potential can be brought into full play, so as to promote students' cooperative ability.

3. According to the different types of cooperative learning, there should be diverse kinds of the reasonable and effective evaluation mechanism. Whether a cooperative learning strategy is feasible and effective to achieve the expected objectives can be referred from the effective data of the scientific evaluation mechanism. It is better to achieve the goal of promotion through evaluation, with cooperative learning evaluated effectively. The evaluation of cooperative learning should include self-evaluation, peer-evaluation, group-evaluation and teacher-evaluation. The process of the evaluation should adhere to an integrated standard. For instance, it is based on the group performance. The individual performance should be combined with the group performance, and the skill performance is united with the cooperation performance in the group. Through the grasp of the state of the students' real classroom learning and activities, the teachers can collect all kinds of information, timely find problems and improve, in order to promote the benign development of cooperative learning. On the evaluation content, the teachers should pay attention to the students' emotion, attitude, ability, the language expression and the potential for self-development in the process of cooperative learning to conduct a comprehensive evaluation mechanism. In the "Requirements for College English Curriculum Teaching" (trial) it is clearly pointed out that "The system of evaluation includes two forms, formative evaluation and summative evaluation, and the colleges and universities should actively introduce diversified evaluation system according to the characteristics of college education." (Ministry of Education, 2007) The evaluation mechanism of cooperative learning in the college English teaching should be an evaluation system combined the formative evaluation with summative evaluation, and should be aimed at college students' English learning process and the results, based on the evaluation of students' ability to practically apply in English.

## V. CONCLUSION

From the perspective of the development of modern foreign language teaching in China, college English teaching and learning is constantly reforming and diversifying. The author shows that the cooperative learning strategies have a positive effect on the college English learning through the real samples of the college English classroom learning. But at the same time, the author also believes that the effective cooperative learning strategies can be implemented in combination with other forms of teaching. The Strategies differ from person to person, due to the circumstances. As a kind of effective learning strategies and learning style, cooperative learning can not only promote the college students' acquisition of language knowledge, language skills and the development of communicative competence, but also help to promote the students' positive enterprising, learn to cooperate, cultivate the students' consciousness of the innovation and the spirit of cooperation. In the meanwhile, it also can exercise the students' practical ability and improve their comprehensive quality, so as to promote the college students' employment competitiveness and sustainable development to lay a necessary foundation for the future. In the end, the author hopes that this paper can be useful to expend the teaching methods for the majority of college English teachers and provide the effective ways to enrich the content of college English classroom teaching.

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# A Corpus Based Study of the Relationship among the Iranian EFL Students' Gender, Language Proficiency, and Cross-cultural Knowledge of Apologizing and Requesting

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**Abstract**—One of the issues in communicative language teaching (CLT) domain is pragmatic knowledge. One of the issues that has gained significance in pragmatic studies is the relationship among pragmatic knowledge, gender, and language proficiency. A few studies have investigated the effect of gender on pragmatics knowledge and the relationship between language proficiency and pragmatic knowledge; on the other hand, few of these studies have been corpus based. In this study, the relationship among the Iranian EFL students' gender, language proficiency, and comprehension of speech acts (apologizing and requesting) were examined. Then the findings were compared with the international corpus collections of the speech acts. To that end, 30 male and 30 female EFL students from Islamic Azad university of Hamadan were selected through quota sampling. Two kinds of tests, IELTS test and Discourse Completion Task (DCT) test, were administered to measure the students' language proficiency and speech acts knowledge. The results of data analysis showed that in pragmatics test, the female students outperformed the male students and in language proficiency test male students outperformed female ones. Therefore, the results of this study implied that gender affects the students' pragmatic knowledge and there is no relationship between pragmatic knowledge and language proficiency knowledge.

**Index Terms**—communicative competence, pragmatic knowledge, speech acts, corpus

## I. INTRODUCTION

Communicative competence has been with us for nearly three decades (Kasper & Rose, 2001). The term "communicative competence" was coined by Hymes (1972). Hymes (1972) believes that the language users must not only be able to apply and use grammatical rules, but also to know how to use them appropriately.

One of the manifestations of communicative competence is pragmatic competence and the ability to utilize appropriately different speech acts in communications. Studies of cross-cultural pragmatics report that the way speech acts are realized varies across languages. This variation can sometimes cause misunderstandings, or what Thomas (1983) called pragmatic failure.

According to Thomas (1983) lack of pragmatic awareness is most evident among EFL learners while communicating with people from other cultures. Teachers in EFL classrooms are partly responsible for the lack of pragmatic knowledge among learners. EFL teachers mostly concentrate on the grammar and vocabulary (linguistic competence) and they do not pay sufficient attention to the pragmatic or sociolinguistic dimension of language.

Eslami-Rasekh (2008) believes the communication of EFL learners with native speakers (NSs) may bring about pragmatic failure due to the lack of pragmatic knowledge of the sociocultural norms of the target community. As such, pragmatic competence should be acquired in order to lessen pragmatic failure or communication breakdowns between native speakers (NSs) and non-native speakers (NNSs).

Most of the researchers (e.g. Bardovi-Harlig, 2003; Kasper, 2001; Kondo, 2008; Tateyama & Kasper, 2008) believe that pragmatic knowledge is teachable, but their methods for teaching pragmatics is different. For example, Bardovi-Harlig (2003) argues that the classroom is a place where pragmatic instruction can occur. On the other hand, Koike and Pearson (2005) found out that the rate of acquisition of pragmatic competence was faster when English-speaking learners of Spanish received explicit instruction and feedback.



One of the issues in pragmatics teaching is the effect of students' gender and language proficiency on their pragmatic knowledge. Unfortunately, of the researches in the pragmatic domain, a few of them have considered the relationship among the EFL students' gender, language proficiency, and cross-cultural knowledge of speech acts. Studies in this domain are scarce and few of them have been corpus based. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to inspect relationships among the students' understanding of the speech acts, their gender, and their language proficiency and compare the results based on the corpus studies of speech acts to know which group's speech act knowledge is closer to native speakers of English; the male group or the female one; the group with high language proficiency knowledge or the group with low one.

## II. BACKGROUND STUDIES

The term "pragmatics" can be said to derive from Peirce's "pragmatism", a philosophical movement of late 19th century. Pragmatism can be said to be akin to 20th century Anglo-Saxon linguistic philosophy, from which present day pragmatics eventually evolved. According to Kitis and Milapides (1997) the term "pragmatics" is owed to Morris (1938) who distinguished the three levels of linguistic theory: Syntactic, semantics and pragmatics. Syntax studies the relations signs bear to other signs, semantics studies the relation between signs and objects, and pragmatics studies the relation between signs and their interpreters. After about thirty years elapsed, pragmatics finally made its way into modern linguistics in the late 1960s, when linguists began to explore so-called performance phenomena. To this end, they adopted ideas developed and advanced by L. Wittgenstein, G. Ryle, J.L. Austin and other eminent (ordinary or natural) language philosophers (Bublits and Norrick, 2011).

Pragmatics has been defined in various ways, one of the earliest definitions is proposed by Morris (1938) who defined pragmatics as the study of the relations of signs to interpreters. The most popular definition has been offered by Crystal who believes that pragmatics is "the study of language from the point of view of users, especially of the choices they make, the restriction they encounter in using language in social interaction and the effects their use of language has on other participants in the act of communication" (Crystal, 1997; cited in Kasper & Rose, 2001, p. 2). A more recent definition of pragmatics has been proposed by Barron (2003), who believes pragmatics is "knowledge of the linguistic resources that are used in a given language for realizing particular meanings in context, knowledge of the aspects of speech acts and finally knowledge of the contextual use of the particular languages' linguistic resources" (p.10).

Pragmatics as an area of query within foreign language acquisition is usually named as Inter language Pragmatics. Inter language pragmatics is convinced as the "nonnative speakers' comprehension and production of speech acts, and how their L2 (second language)-related speech act knowledge is acquired" (Kasper and Dahl 1991, p. 1).

There are some empirical evidence that show native speakers and nonnative speakers have different systems of pragmatic in production and perception of language; for this reason when they want to acquire a second language they will encounter with so many problems because their inter language pragmatics (ILP) is not so good. One piece of such evidence is speech acts, such as compliments, complaining, refusals, apologizing, requesting. "speech acts are often but not always the patterned, routinized language that native and pragmatically nonnative speakers and writers in a given speech community use to perform functions such as thanking, complimenting, requesting, refusing, apologizing and complaining" (Olshtain & Cohen 1991, p.19).

One of the issues in the domain of pragmatic knowledge is the effect of gender on pragmatics acquisition. Kerekes (1996) found that female learners are more interested in using L2 norms in expression of emotions than male learners did. In another study, however, Rintell (1984) found no gender differences in learner's perception of expression of emotions. As to directness and indirectness, Wolfson & Manes (1980) found out that women are less direct; this is because women tend to be more agreeable; on the other hand, men tend to be more direct than women are. In another study, Holmes (1995) found out that women's speech is more polite than men's and women are more likely than men to express positive politeness and to use mitigating strategies.

Another issue in the pragmatics studies is the effect of language proficiency (LP) on pragmatic competence (PC). Takahashi (1996) found that Proficiency did not have any effect on pragmatic competence (PC). EFL learners with both low and high proficiency lied on some of the SL pragmatic aspects. Kit (2000) found that learners across several levels of proficiency are capable of perceiving differences in situational factors. Proficiency did not have the expected effect on pragmatic competence (PC). He adds the main reason may be attributed to the fact that EFL learners just learned English through what they were exposed to in the classroom; the problem was lack of access to authentic materials. In another study, Barron (2003) pointed out that increased grammatical proficiency may or may not cause a corresponding increase in pragmatic capabilities. It may allow the learner to construct or overuse a structure which is pragmatically less effective.

One of the newly developed issues in the linguistic researches is corpora. O'Keeffe et al (2007) believe a corpus is a collection of texts, written or spoken, which is stored on a computer. Corpora have been available for linguistic research from the 1960s. Since the early days of corpus linguistics, there has been an interest in using corpora as a means of exploring functional and contextual aspects of language use. Pragmatics is concerned with meaning in context. Because speakers can mean more than they say, pragmatics is "the art of the analysis of the unsaid" (Mey, 1991; cited in Rühlmann, 2011, p. 629).

Due to the massive dependence of pragmatic phenomena on context, corpora, as a relatively decontextualized environment, have long been seen by some researchers as unfit for use in pragmatic research. Nonetheless, some corpus-based analyses of pragmatic phenomena have been in recent years.

In a study of speech acts in corpora, Taavitsainen and Jucker (2007) looked at the relevant speech-act verbs in a large mixed corpus. They started with specific patterns of linguistic expressions and test their precision and recall in large corpora (e.g. patterns often used as compliments or explicit performatives, containing speech-act verbs of promising). These, and similar studies, produce instructive and remarkable results, given the complexity of the speech acts involved (e.g. compliments), the size of the corpora tested (e.g. the BNC) and the standards of qualitative and quantitative assessment. Lorenzo-Dus (2001) examined a corpus of over 1000 tokens of compliment responses in British English and Peninsular Spanish in terms of cross-cultural and gender differences. The analysis of the outcome revealed cross-cultural and gender differences.

### III. METHODS

#### A. Participants

The sample participating in this study consisted of 60 individuals (30 males and 30 females) who were all native speakers of Persian and their age ranged from 18 to 32. They were studying English as a foreign language in Islamic Azad University of Hamadan. They were all senior undergraduate and graduate students majoring in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL).

#### B. Instruments

In order to collect the data, two data collection instruments were utilized. The first one was IELTS test. It was chosen from the series of IELTS tests in Cambridge IELTS 6 book and it was utilized to measure the participants' level of language proficiency. The second instrument was Discourse Complement Task (DCT). According to Varghese & Billmyer (1996) "DCT is a questionnaire containing a set of very briefly described situations designed to elicit a particular speech act" (p. 40). The participants were asked to complete a DCT, designed by Jalilafar (2009), which took 20 minutes to answer. The validity and reliability of this questionnaire had been substantiated through a pilot study done on 10 students by Jalilafar (2009). The DCT questionnaire was administered to the participants who were asked to put themselves in each situation and respond to 20 items. In the first 10 situations, the subjects were required to use an apology strategy in order to apologize, while in the last 10 situations, the subjects were asked to use a request strategy in order to request.

#### C. Procedure

At first, the IELTS test was administered to the subjects. The participants were informed about the manner of doing the test. The participants were forbidden to use any dictionary during the test. The next step was administering the DCT questionnaire. Most of the participants were unfamiliar with this kind of questionnaire. Therefore, they were informed about the manner of doing the DCT questionnaire. The participants were asked to imagine themselves in each of the situations, not think too much, and try to answer the questions as soon as possible. Since the gender factor was important in this study, the participants were asked to determine their gender by marking their sex on the answer sheets.

Although the language in which the situations and questions in DCT were stated was English, the participants were allowed to write their answers down in Persian. The reason was that all the participants were able to read and understand the questions in English, but they were not able to transfer their own intentions and the apology and request strategies that they intended to use to answer the questions in English. Therefore, they were allowed to use their own native language, so that they did not have any limitations in answering the questions.

Later on, for the data analysis, the students' answers were translated to English and the English equivalence of the participants' answers which were in Persian were obtained. For ensuring the correctness of the translations, they were checked by some skillful translators. Then the participants' apologizing and requesting strategies were compared with Blum-Kulka & Olshtain's CCSARP (a cross-cultural study of speech act realization patterns). CCSARP is a coding manual, designed by Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984), in which they identified some patterns utilized in apologizing and requesting in English contexts.

After collecting the participants' answers, the answers were compared with CCSARP to know which patterns of the CCSARP, the participants used more in order to apologize and request. The next step was inspecting the examples of CCSARP, based on one of the most comprehensive corpora, the British National Corpus (BNC). In fact, by inspecting the CCSARP patterns and examples on BNC, the researcher was able to know how many times a specific pattern has been used and which patterns have been used more than the others in order to request and apologize in English texts in various genres.

### IV. RESULTS

The hypotheses in the present study were:

1. There is a significant difference between Iranian male and female EFL learners regarding their cross cultural speech act knowledge.

2. There is a significant relationship between Iranian EFL students' language proficiency and cross cultural speech act knowledge.

Table 1 shows the mean, standard deviation, and standard error of mean of the scores of LP variable based on gender. As it is illustrated in Table 1, the mean of the male group is more than the mean of female group.

TABLE 1  
THE MEAN, STANDARD DEVIATION, AND STANDARD ERROR MEAN OF THE SCORES OF LP VARIABLE BASED ON GENDER

**Group Statistics**

Gender			N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
LP dimension1	Male		30	23.30	3.554	.649
	Female		30	19.00	4.275	.781

In order to inspect the meaningfulness of this difference, considering normality of the distribution of this variable, independent t-test was utilized (Table 2). Table 2 shows that males' LP scores are higher than females' LP scores in a meaningful way ( $t = 4.24$ ,  $df = 58$ ,  $P = .000$ ,  $P < 0.05$ ).

TABLE 2  
THE T-TEST FOR COMPARING INDEPENDENT GROUPS IN LP VARIABLES

**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
LP	Equal variances assumed	.470	.496	4.236	58	.000	4.300	1.015	2.268	6.332
	Equal variances not assumed			4.236	56.128	.000	4.300	1.015	2.267	6.333

The second step was inspecting the two other variables, i.e. Apology and Requesting variables. Table 3 shows descriptive amount of apology variable. As it is revealed in Table 3, the mean score of using apology strategy in female's group is higher than male's one.

TABLE 3  
DESCRIPTIVE AMOUNTS OF APOLOGY VARIABLE

**Ranks**

Gender		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Apology dimension1	Male	30	21.13	634.00
	Female	30	39.87	1196.00
	Total	60		

Table 4 shows descriptive amount of Request variable. The mean score of using this strategy in female group is higher than that in male one significantly.

TABLE 4  
DESCRIPTIVE AMOUNTS OF REQUESTING VARIABLE

**Ranks**

Gender		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Requesting dimension1	Male	30	16.38	491.50
	Female	30	44.62	1338.50
	Total	60		

In Table 5, the correlation among the scores in LP variable, Apology variable, and Requesting variable has been shown. The Table 5 shows that LP has a meaningful relationship both with Request strategy ( $r = -.326$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), and with Apology strategy ( $r = -.235$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). The correlation between the scores of LP variable and the scores of Apology and Requesting variable is a negative correlation. This shows the more the students' scores in LP variable, the less their scores in Apology and Requesting variables, and vice versa.

TABLE 5  
THE RELATIONSHIP AMONG THE LP VARIABLE, APOLOGY VARIABLE, AND REQUESTING VARIABLE

		LP	Apology	Requesting
LP	Pearson Correlation	1	-.235	-.326*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.070	.011
	N	60	60	60
Apology	Pearson Correlation	-.235	1	.406**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.070		.001
	N	60	60	60
Requesting	Pearson Correlation	-.326*	.406**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.011	.001	
	N	60	60	60

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

\*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The results of this study support the first hypothesis because the results showed that there was a significant difference between Iranian EFL learners regarding their gender. On the other hand, the results reject the second hypothesis, because the study showed that there is a no significant relationship between Iranian EFL students' language proficiency and cross cultural speech act knowledge.

## V. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

One of the issues in the domain of pragmatics is the effect of gender on pragmatics acquisition. This study inspected the effect of gender on acquisition of Apology and Requesting speech acts. The results of this study showed that female participants performed significantly better than the male ones both in Apology strategy and in Requesting strategy. The findings of this study are close to Kerekes' (1996) findings. Kerekes (1996) found that female learners are more interested in using L2 norms in expression of emotions than male learners did; however, the result of this study is different from the result of the study done by Rintell (1984). Rintell (1984) found no gender differences in learner's perception of expression of emotions.

The findings of the present study are also close to Holmes' studies in (1995). Holmes (1995) investigated the differences between males and females in terms of using the frequency of complaints and apology strategy. The results suggested that there were significant differences between the performance of two gender groups regarding the distribution of apologies between men and women, and women apologized more than men did.

Lorenzo-Dus (2001) examined a corpus of over 1000 tokens of compliment responses in British English and Peninsular Spanish in terms of cross-cultural and gender differences. Like the results of this study, the study done by Lorenzo-Dus (2001) revealed gender differences in using different speech acts.

Another important issue in pragmatics domain is the effect of language proficiency (LP) on pragmatic competence (PC). Studies in this domain are rare. The present study also inspected this issue and showed that the male participants, who outperformed the female ones in language proficiency (LP) test, did not perform as well as female participants in pragmatic test. In other words, the participants with higher language proficiency (LP) knowledge were weak in pragmatic competence (PC). Therefore, the present study shows that language proficiency (LP) does not affect on pragmatic competence (PC).

The findings of this study are in par with the findings proposed by Takahashi (1996) and Kit(2000). Takahashi(1996) found that Proficiency did not have any significant effect on pragmatic competence (PC). EFL learners with both low and high proficiency lied on some of the SL pragmatic aspects. Kit (2000) found that learners across several proficiency levels are capable of perceiving differences in situational factors. Proficiency did not have the expected effect on pragmatic competence (PC). He added that the main reason may be attributed to the fact that EFL learners just learned English through what they were exposed to in the classroom; the problem was lack of access to authentic materials. The finding of the present study is different from Barron's (2003) findings. Barron (2003) pointed out that increased grammatical proficiency may or may not cause a corresponding increase in pragmatic capabilities.

The present study showed that gender affects pragmatic competence (PC). The female participants outperformed male participants both in apology and requesting speech acts. Therefore, there is a significant difference between males and females regarding their cross cultural speech act and female participants' use of apology and requesting strategies is closer to native speakers than male participants'.

The findings of this study also showed that there is a negative correlation between students' scores in LP variable and their scores in Apology and Requesting variable. Male participants, who were weaker than female ones in pragmatic test, outperformed the female participants in language proficiency (LP) test. In other words, the participants who did not perform well in pragmatic test, performed well in language proficiency (LP) test. Therefore, the students' LP knowledge does not affect their knowledge of pragmatic competence (PC).

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# Comparison of Individual Classifiers and Collective Classifiers between Chinese and English

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**Abstract**—This paper tries to analyze the differences and similarities between Chinese individual classifiers and collective ones, between Chinese classifiers and English partitive constructions. Chinese has countless individual classifiers, most of which originated from the referent shape and forms. Both individual and collective ones have their respective principles of formation and functions, while English partitive construction “a + N1 + of + N2” equivalent to Chinese collective classifiers is far more resourceful. Both of Chinese classifiers and English partitive construction are capable of visualizing the described object and endowing it with feelings or emotions.

**Index Terms**—Chinese individual classifiers, Chinese collective classifiers, English partitive construction, differences and similarities

## I. INTRODUCTION

Among the eleven word classes in Chinese, classifier is an independent category, which is not included in the ten word classes in English, for English has no such category. However, the commonality of human nature leads to the similar cognition of “quantity”. Both English and Chinese have the system of classifiers, for example, *yi zhang zhi* (one classifier paper) in Chinese is equivalent to “a sheet of paper” in English. But the categories of quantity in English still belong to nouns (Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech & Starvik, 1985). In Chinese language, there are more classifiers indicating individuals with strong specificity, but less classifiers indicating groups with strong universality; while in English the converse is true (Huang, 2002 & Wang, 2001). Since Chinese has this part of speech, it is natural that Chinese classifiers are more systematic than English ones.

## II. CONCEPTION AND CLASSIFICATION OF CHINESE CLASSIFIERS AND ENGLISH PARTITIVE CONSTRUCTIONS

In Chinese language, a word used to represent the measuring unit is called a classifier. Chinese classifiers generally can be divided into two major categories of classifiers: noun classifiers and verbal classifiers. According to semantics, noun classifiers can be divided into individual and collective classifiers, indefinite classifiers, quantitative measure words and measure words. Verbal classifiers can also be classified according to different standards. This article is only focused on individual and collective classifiers which take up the largest proportion of classifiers. In Chinese, individual classifiers should be applied in the case of measuring individual person or object. For example, *yi ge ren* (one classifier person “a person”), *yi jian shi* (one classifier event “one event”), *yi tou niu* (one classifier cow “one cow”), and *yi shou chuan* (one classifier boat “one boat”). Here *ge*, *jian*, *tou*, *shou* are individual classifiers. Collective classifiers refer to the amount exceeding more than one, which can also be called collective noun classifiers. For example, *yi qun ren* (one classifier people “a group of people”), *yi dui mei* (one classifier coal “a pile of coal”), *yi zu shuju* (one classifier data “a set of data”). Here *qun*, *dui*, *zu* are collective classifiers. Collective classifiers can be further divided into quantitative one and non-quantitative ones. The frequently used quantitative collective classifiers are *qun* (crowd), *bang* (gang), *huo* (band), *pi* (batch), *fu* (pair), *dui* (couple), *shuang* (pair), *da* (dozen) and the like. By contrast, there are only two non-quantitative collective classifiers: *xie* (some) and *dianer* (a little/a few).

In English, there are no classifiers as separate parts of speech. In English, an individual person or object is signified by “a” or “an” article when the object is countable. When object is uncountable, a fixed format, “a + N1 + of + N2” is commonly used, such as “a piece of paper”, “a bar of chocolate”. This is also a unique way to show quantity and measure units or manner. Quirk and Greenbaum (1973) defined this structure as “partitive construction”. In the case of measuring more than one objects, plural form is adopted. However, the above rules may change with the change of classifiers functions. For instance, “a + N1 + of + N2” can be used to represent more than a number, such as a group of people.

In the following sections, the differences between collective classifiers and individual classifiers in Chinese, and the differences and similarities of classifiers between English and Chinese will be illustrated in details.

## III. THE BASIC DIFFERENCES BETWEEN COLLECTIVE CLASSIFIERS AND INDIVIDUAL CLASSIFIERS IN CHINESE

In meaning, collective classifiers indicate an amount of more than one, while individual classifiers only a single one.

In role, collective classifiers emphasize number, while individual classifiers category. Li(2000) holds the view that some of group classifiers (namely collective classifiers), such as “flock, crowd, gang, and group”, mean “a number of”, for example, “a number of sheep” can be collectively called “a flock of sheep” and “a number of people” “a gang/group of people”. In fact, almost all collective classifiers express a certain number, provided that the noun it modifies is discrete. Besides some collective classifiers which indicate fixed numbers like “double, pair” which equal two, “dozen” which equals twelve, “ream” which equals 500, and “a gross” equals 12 dozens, there are other ones, which in a given context, also indicate definite numbers or relatively definite number, say “batch”, one batch may be 20 persons, or “flock”, one flock may contain 30 or so. Individual classifiers have the prominent classifying function in the examples of *yi zhang zhuozi* (one classifier table “one table”). The classifier *zhang* stresses the dimensions of a table, indicating it is a relatively large plane object. Whereas, in *yi pai zuozi* (“a row of tables”), *pai* is a collective classifier which focuses on the amount, indicating there are many tables. The number of “one row”, arranged in line, in a certain context, is a fixed number.

In combination, there are four major differences between collective and individual classifiers:

Firstly, in the combination of “numeral + X + NP”, if X is a collective classifier, when X is removed, the format turns into “number + NP”, which is not only grammatically inappropriate, but also semantically different from the original meaning; if X is an individual classifier, when X is removed, the format turns into “numeral + NP”, which is only grammatically inappropriate, but semantically unaffected. For instance, if the classifier *tou* is removed from *yi tou zhu* (one classifier pig “one pig”), *yi zhu* (one pig) is still understandable and unaffected in meaning, though syntactically wrong. In contrast, in the case of *yi qun zhu* (one classifier pig “a herd of pigs”), *qun* is a collective classifier. If it is removed, *yi qun zhu* turns into *yi zhu*, thus the meaning is utterly different in addition to the wrong syntax. Therefore, if there is a classifier omitted in a given context, the omitted one must be an individual classifier.

Secondly, in the “numeral + X” combination, if X is a collective classifier, the combination can often be inserted such adjectives as “big, small, long, thin and thick”; if X is an individual classifier (excluding those classifiers which describe the shape like “particle, slice, strip, block”), the combination, in most cases, cannot be inserted any other elements. For example, in *yi zhi wuya* (one classifier crow “one crow”), or *liang shan chuanghu* (two classifier windows “two windows”), any other word such as *da* (big) or *xiao* (small) cannot be added before the individual classifier *zhi* or *shan*. Whereas, some adjective can be inserted between numeral and collective classifier: *da* (large) can be added after numeral in the example of *yi pi huowu* (one classifier goods “a batch of goods”), or *xiao* (small) before the collective classifier *guo* in *san guo jiaozi* (three classifier dumplings “three pots of dumplings”). In brief, in most cases, collective classifiers can be inserted adjectives while individual classifiers cannot.

Thirdly, in the combination of “numeral + X + NP”, if NP is a collective noun, X must be a collective classifier; if NP is an individual noun, X must be an individual classifier. For instance, *yi pi qiangzhi* (one classifier guns “a batch of guns”), *qiangzhi* (guns) is a collective noun, so *pi* (batch) is a collective classifier. In the example of *yi zhi budui* (one classifier army “one army”), army is a collective word, so *zhi* is a collective classifier which indicates a group of people who work together. By contrast, some objects are commonly regarded as single one, in that case, collective classifiers cannot be used to describe them. For example, *yi ge diqiu* (one classifier earth “one earth”) cannot be said into *yi qun diqiu* (one classifier earth “a group of earths”), for *qun* is a collective classifier. But in some cases, it is hard to judge whether NP in a combination is an individual or a collective noun such as “student, mobile phone, book”, then X becomes a critical element which determines NP’s attribute. If X is an individual classifier, then NP is a separate individual; if X is a collective classifier, then NP is a collection of things or the whole.

Lastly, if classifier X is combined with Chinese character *dan* (single), i.e. *dan+X*, then the classifier must be an individual one. While in the formula of *cheng* (in considerable numbers or amounts)+ X, the classifier is a collective one. For instance, *dan ge* (single one), *dan zhang* (one piece), *dan zhi* (single one), *ge*, *zhang*, *zhi* are all individual classifiers; *cheng shuang* (in pairs), *cheng zu* (in group), *cheng lei* (in category), here *shuang*, *zu*, and *lei* are collective classifiers. Commonly, *dan + X* sets “single X” in the background of the whole so as to highlight single itself. By contrast, *cheng + X* takes the whole as its value orientation. For instance, *cheng tao* (a complete set) sells at 100 yuan, *dan ge* (a single one) at 12 yuan A, here *cheng* is the value orientation of the whole, whereas, *dan ge* is to show itself with the whole as its background.

Whether English has classifiers or not has been disputed by scholars. The common consensus is that English has functional partitive constructions similar to Chinese classifiers, though it has no classifiers. There exist some differences and similarities between the two. English partitive constructions and Chinese classifiers are, in essence, have very similar functions in spite of their differences in expression. They are both aimed at satisfying the need of human cognition. And the choice of the classifier is decided by the change of cognitive subjects or cognitive perspectives.

#### IV. THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN CHINESE CLASSIFIERS AND ENGLISH PARTITIVE CONSTRUCTIONS

##### A. Individual Classifiers

From the perspective of signifying individual things, Chinese language, compared with English language has much richer classifiers which has formed a separate category. The fact that English uses a/an article to signify countable individuals also determines the richness of Chinese individual classifiers, which also reflects people’s understanding of



the same thing from different cognitive angles. “One object for multiple classifiers” is the result of the switch of perspectives of cognitive subjects’ (Wang, 2007). If the perspectives are different, the objects’ salient properties are different and the classifiers chosen change accordingly. As Wang (2001) states in his book using different classifiers on one thing may show different emotions of the language user.

For instance, the description of the moon in Chinese, *yi ya/wan xinyue* (one classifier crescent moon “the crescent moon”), *yi gou/hen canyue* (one classifier waning moon “the waning moon”), *yi yuan haoyue* (one classifier bright moon “the bright moon”), *yi lun yuanyue* (one classifier full moon “the full moon”). Different classifiers leave people with varied imagination. As the above examples illustrate, *ya* (tooth) is the most intuitive classifier to describe the crescent moon, which resembles the shape of a tooth, long and lathy, with slight curves at both ends. The classifier *wan* (curve), meaning “not straight, or bent”, is commonly used in Chinese to describe the new moon with the feminine beauty. The original meaning of *gou* (hook) is a tool which hooks up things, with bent shape and sharp ends, highlighting the fineness of the waning moon. The classifier *hen* (trace) is an indication that something has been present, a mark left by objects such as *lei hen* (tearstain), *shang hen* (scar), often implying something is gone with kind of helpless feelings. *hen* used to describe the moon is also aimed at highlighting the feeling of loss and helplessness. *Yuan* (circle) is a classifier to describe the shape of the moon-- round, that is, every part of the line is the same distance from the center of the area, which presents a perceptual intuition. The classifier *lun* (wheel) literally referring to a car wheel, or a carriage wheel also shows a circular shape which is an appropriate description of the full moon. These examples indicate that a Chinese individual classifier can describe the shape of the object in addition to its quantitative function. Besides, it also has the function of expressing one’s emotions and feelings, which is illustrated by the following two examples. One is the description of a fish, such individual classifiers as *tiao* (strip), *wei* (tail), *tou* (head) can be used. *tiao* refers to a long and narrow thing. It is most frequently used to describe a fish, for it can present the image of the fish who swims freely with its smooth body. *wei* originally means the projected end of birds, beasts, insects, fish and so on. The use of *wei* to describe a fish is to stress the tail of the fish resembles that of an animal, long and thin. *tou* is the upper part of the human body or the front part of the body in animals. The use of *tou* can lead people’s attention to the head of the fish, often used in describing a big fish like whales, sharks and other large fish.

The other example is the description of a wall. Such individual classifiers as *dao*, *mian*, and *du* are frequently used to modify a wall in Chinese. *dao* means “road” which is long and straight, and is often used to modify long-shaped objects like river and thread. Here *dao* is used to depict the long and towering wall. *mian* originally refers to “face” with the extended meaning of “flat surface”, used in describing a short and broad wall. *du* has the meaning of fending or blocking, displaying the wall is tall and broad and hard to cross. In ancient time, noble or rich families had tall walls surrounding the courtyard which implied that poor families were denied to access. If a girl was married to such families and found that the arranged marriage unhappy, then the marriage became *yi du gao qiang* (one classifier tall wall “one tall wall”), which could not be crossed and reflected the helplessness of the girl who had to accept her miserable fate. There are more examples of such descriptive individual classifiers in Chinese. Therefore, it can be concluded that Chinese classifiers not only function as measuring tools, but also serve as auxiliary adjectives to express people’s feeling and emotion by modifying individual objects. It is not uncommon to find a particular noun co-occurring with different classifiers to highlight different aspects of its meaning (Becker, 1975, p.113).

## B. Collective Classifiers

From the perspective of quantifying collective things, English has more quantitative collective classifiers than Chinese. In Chinese, the commonly used quantitative collective classifiers are *qun* (crowd), *bang* (gang), *huo* (band), *pi* (batch), *fu* (pair), *dui* (couple), *shuang* (pair), *da* (dozen) and the like, as mentioned above. Though these collective classifiers like *qun* (group), *bang* (gang), *huo* (band), *pi* (batch) can all mean “a group of”, they are different in numbers and emotional connotations. *qun*, *bang* and *huo* can be used to describe a group of people, in which, *qun* is relatively neutral, *bang* and *huo* are labeled with derogatory meaning. *bang* contains more people than *huo*. It is evident that Chinese language has abundant collective classifiers, but it is still incomparable to such structures in English.

Take *qun* for example, in Chinese, in the formula of *yi*(one) + *qun*(crowd/group)) + persons, the counterparts of the collective classifier *qun* are varied in English: “a circle of friends, a company of students, a crowd of children, a group of people, a galaxy of scholars, a throng of pedestrians, a flock of sheep, a pack of wolves, a swarm of bees, and a crash of rhinoceroses”. Here “circle, company, crowd, group, galaxy, throng, flock, pack, swarm and crash” are all translated into *qun* in Chinese. Naturally, the use of different collective classifiers leads to different connotations and feelings. For instance, in “a crowd of children”, “crowd” enables people to form a picture of a large number of noisy children; in “a galaxy of scholars”, galaxy (any of the large groups of stars which make up the universe) presents a vivid scenario of many scholars gathering together like stars because of their academic achievements; in “a crash of rhinoceroses”, “crash” (the noise made by a violent fall, blow the or breaking) modifies the rhino, depicting the fierceness of a great number of huge fast-moving animals, making tremendous noise and kicking up dust while treading heavily on the ground.

In addition, a fresh way of expression which has the similar structure as the above ones occurs in English language such as “a blunder of boys”, “a giggle of girls”, “an eloquence of lawyers”, and “a skulk of thieves”. The original meaning of “blunder” is a stupid unnecessary mistake. With “blunder” as a modifier, the boys’ carelessness and their liability to make stupid mistakes are fully displayed. “giggle” means “to laugh quietly in a silly childish, uncontrolled

way". Such description of the girls forms a vivid picture that the girls cannot help laughing in a childish but adorable way. "eloquence" means the ability to express ideas and opinions readily and well, so that the hearers are influenced. When it is used to modify a lawyer, the lawyers' bearing during an eloquent argument and their dashing along their speeches are dynamically shown. "Skulk" means to hide or move about secretly, trying not to be noticed, usually through fear or for some bad purpose, which exposes the thief's stealthiness incisively. The application of this structure increasingly appears in English language, that is, N1 is substituted by a meaningful noun or verb to modify N2, aimed at reflecting the state of N2. In this construction, N1 cannot be simply translated into Chinese "qun". Instead, some appropriate adjective must be added before N2 to present the vivid image of the source text.

### C. The Causes of the Differences between Chinese Classifiers and English Partitive Constructions

Chinese language has more individual classifiers and less collective ones than English language. The difference does not exist without reason. English has countable and uncountable nouns. The singular number of individual countable nouns can be signified by a/an article, while in Chinese, the singular one number should be paired with a classifier to signify an individual object. For instance, the counterpart of "a flag" in English is *yi mian qizhi* (one classifier flag "one flag") in Chinese. *mian*, a classifier must be present between "one" and "flag" to express a flag, which makes Chinese focus more on the use of classifiers, paying attention to every nuance of individual classifiers. And in English, since there exists such structure as "a + N1 + of + N2", which can generate many variants because of its flexibility, e.g. a loaf of bread, a piece of bread or a slice of bread; a group of people, a crowd of people and so on.

## V. SIMILARITIES BETWEEN CHINESE CLASSIFIERS AND ENGLISH PARTITIVE CONSTRUCTIONS

Although Chinese classifiers and English partitive constructions are quite different in form, they have many in common in the aspect of their functions. They can be used not only as a measure unit but also as a connotative word. The use of classifiers itself is to enrich language and one of the most important functions is to give life to language.

### A. Visualization of Concrete Objects

Both Chinese classifiers and English partitive constructions can visualize the modified objects. Take five expressions for example, in Chinese: (1) *yi ye bian zhou* (one classifier small boat "one small boat"), *ye* is an individual classifier; (2) *yi dai yuan shan* (one classifier distant hills "distant hills"), *dai* is a collective classifier; in English: (3) a blade of grass (partitive construction to describe the individual thing); (4) a mountain of newspapers (partitive construction to signify countable collective thing); (5) a blanket of snow (partitive construction to describe uncountable collective thing).

The first example using a leaf as the classifier of the boat to compare a boat on the lake or river to a willow leaf showing vividly the shape of a boat on a broad surface of the lake. The second one uses *dai* (belt/strip), whose original meaning is a belt made of fur, fabric or yarn. The classifier can embody the long stretch of distant hills; "blade" in the third one, originally used to describe blade of knives, swords and chisels, gives a "flat, long and narrow" feeling of a grass. In the fourth one, "mountain" which refers to the "mass of very high land going up to the peak" is often used to describe high, towering objects. Here it describes newspapers heaped together like a mountain; "blanket" in the fifth one which means "thick, woolen covering on beds" is always associated with the thick, soft, comfortable feeling, which endows snow with such feature.

### B. Visualization of Abstract or Conceptualized Objects

Chinese classifiers and English partitive constructions are capable of visualizing abstract or conceptualized objects as well as specific objects, making abstract objects more visible and perceivable, and creating a profound, novel and artistic conception. For example, *yi xian xiwang* (one classifier hope "a ray of hope"), *xian* is a classifier meaning "a thread, a long and thin piece of a material such as cotton, nylon, or silk, especially one that is used in sewing". Using *xian* to modify "hope" highlights the hope is slim, which is more imaginative than the direct expression of "a slim hope"; *yi jian buxing* (one classifier misfortune "a shoulder of /considerable misfortune"), here *jian* functions as a classifier. The expression appears in such a sentence as: the widow shouldered *yi jian buxing* and set off to a life journey full of uncertainty. Using *shoulder* to modify misfortune makes the invisible misfortune visible or intangible tangible and turns an abstract thing into a concrete one, which enables the reader to feel the heavy burden borne by the widow.

In English, "a little breath of spring", the original meaning of "breath" is "a single act of taking in and sending air out". Here, "breath" seems to send out a fresh and sweet fragrance of the spring, which can be smelt and tasted and thus makes intangible air visible and perceivable; "a world of differences", "world" can mean everything that exists anywhere. It can refer to the earth or the planet, suggesting vastness and boundlessness. Consequently, the expression "a world of differences" implies great disparities.

### C. The Basic Equivalence of Chinese Non-quantitative Classifiers and English Ones

Just as above mentioned, there are many quantitative classifiers in both languages. They have similarities and differences. However, regarding non-quantitative classifiers, they are nearly equivalent. In Chinese, the commonly used non-quantitative classifiers are *xie* (some) and *dian'er* (a little). *xie* is more than *dian'er*. In English, those non-quantitative expressions are often used, including "lot, quantity, deal, number, plenty", they have nuances in usage though. The following expressions are arranged in proper order of their quantity: a few (not many), a lot of (not in large

quantity), plenty of (enough), a large number of/a large quantity of (considerable amount, the former for countable nouns, the latter for an uncountable noun). But from the cognitive perspective, the quantity standard varies with different people, that is, each person has his own view of whether the amount is small or large. The same amount may be small for one person but large for another person. For example, a very poor man who gets a higher pay than usual, will think that he has “a large quantity of money”, while that money is only a small sum of money for a wealthy man. In view of each one’s cognitive differences in non-quantitative structure, English and Chinese non-quantitative classifiers are basically equivalent in that “a few” is often translated into *dian’er*, “a lot of, plenty of, a large number of, a large quantity of” can either be translated *xie* or *henduo* (many/much) in Chinese.

#### D. The Causes of the Similarities between Chinese Classifiers and English Partitive Constructions

Considering the similarities between Chinese classifiers and English partitive construction, it is necessary to mention the function of classifiers as a unit of measurement, measuring objective things. Moreover, it is evident from the above analysis, classifiers also have descriptive function to picture the shape or appearance of objective things. Just as Foley(2001, P. 233) states classifier semantics may appeal to perpetually salient features of the typical referents of the nouns they classify. Their primary function is to provide sufficient descriptive information for the communicative purposes of human speakers in ongoing social discourse. The use of the classifier is, to a great degree, affected by the way the cognitive subject perceives the object. For instance, whether to use the Chinese classifier *dao* or *mian* or *du* in describing a wall is determined by the perceiver or the cognitive subject. In description of the children, whether to use “a group of children”, or “a crowd of children”, is also decided by the cognitive subject. As to using the same classifier on different nouns, there also exist many examples. For instance, *tiao* is the right classifier for “a rainbow”, “a leg”, “a snake”, “a cucumber” and “a scarf”, for *tiao* reflects the common longitudinal property of these objects, which is perceptually salient, despite that the intrinsic properties of the five objects vary (Ni, Gao & Ouyang, 2009). Therefore, the internal demand is the same of Chinese classifiers and English partitive constructions. The use of different classifiers on the same object or the same classifier on different objects is based on the cognitive perspective of the perceiver. It varies with the change of the cognitive perspectives.

## VI. CONCLUSION

This paper analyzed the differences and similarities between Chinese individual classifiers and collective ones, between Chinese classifiers and English partitive constructions. The following conclusions can be drawn positively based on the above study. Firstly, Chinese has countless individual classifiers whose origins are very imaginative and life-like. The origin of most Chinese classifiers often comes from the referent shape and forms. Individual classifiers and collective ones have their respective principles of formation and functions. Secondly, Chinese has richer individual classifiers than English while English has far more collective classifiers than Chinese. Thirdly, the use of Chinese classifiers or English partitive constructions can visualize abstract and conceptualized things, enabling the described object to be more vivid and life-like. Lastly, though Chinese classifiers and English partitive constructions differ in form, they have the fundamental commonality in that the selection of Chinese classifiers or English partitive constructions is decided by the cognitive perspective of the cognitive subject.

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# Fuzzy Language Translation in the Psychological Description and Its Reflections

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**Abstract**—The employment of fuzzy language is one significant feature in psychological description of fiction. This paper is aimed at analysis of fuzzy language translation in the psychological description in British fiction. The three-character principle of translation formulated by Liu Zhongde is the criterion to evaluate the translation referred to in this paper. Proper addition of fuzzy words and appropriate domestication of fuzzy expressions are two translation techniques analyzed in this research. Reflections on fuzzy language translation in the psychological description are rewarding for further relevant research.

**Index Terms**—fuzzy language, psychological description, proper addition of fuzzy words, appropriate domestication of fuzzy expressions, reflections

## I. INTRODUCTION

Fuzzy language abounds in human languages. Wang Peizhuang maintains that language fuzziness is the intrinsic property of non-artificial languages<sup>1</sup>. (Wu, 1999, p.1) Literary works are characterized by the application of fuzzy language, which leaves readers enough space for imagination and enhances the expressive force of literary works. And British fiction is no exception. In the following section, the present author aims to focus on some prominent translators' translation of British fiction and analyze the fuzzy language translation of psychological description in these works. To facilitate the evaluation, the present author capitalizes on the three-character principle of translation formulated by Liu Zhongde, namely, "faithfulness, expressiveness and elegance", which is widely hailed as a most practical translation criterion.

## II. PSYCHOLOGICAL DESCRIPTION IN BRITISH FICTION

As far as characters in fiction are concerned, Liu Zaifu maintains that fuzziness is one of the most essential features of characters and man's feelings and emotions are the fuzziest because they are the most uncertain and most intangible. (Wu, 1999, p.44)

The following passage is just from the third chapter of Jack London's autobiographical novel *Martin Eden*:

Ambition soared on mad wings, and he saw himself climbing the heights with her, sharing thoughts with her, pleasuring in beautiful and noble things with her. It was a soul-possession he dreamed, refined beyond any grossness, a free comradeship of spirit that he could not put into definite thought. He did not think it. For that matter, he did not think at all. Sensation usurped reason, and he was quivering and palpitant with emotions he had never known, drifting deliciously on a sea of sensibility where feeling itself was exalted and spiritualized, and carried beyond the summits of life.

He staggered along like a drunken man, murmuring fervently aloud: "By God! By God!

A policeman on a street corner eyed him suspiciously, then noted his sailor roll.

"Where did you get it?" the policeman demanded.

Martin Eden came back to earth. His was a fluid organism, swiftly adjustable, capable of flowing into and filling all sorts of nooks and crannies. (London, 2001, p.21)

In this part, Jack London depicts how ambitious and fantastic the poor sailor Martin Eden became when he saw Miss Ruth, the gentle and amorous girl by utilizing a series of figure of speech. The expressions are pretty fuzzy, but the readers are provided with a vivid description and are able to feel the beauty of fuzzy language.

The present author will refer to *Mrs. Dalloway*, one of the masterpieces of Virginia Woolf, detailing one day in protagonist Clarissa Dalloway's life in post-World War I England. The novel follows Clarissa Dalloway throughout a single day in post-Great War England in a stream of consciousness style narrative. The part to be dwelled upon is excerpted from the opening of the novel. "The celebrated example of 'stream of consciousness' is the opening pages of *Mrs. Dalloway*". (Drabble, 1985, P.944)

In the opening of the novel, the author displays for the readers the constant flow of consciousness by employing interior monologue, one particular kind of stream of consciousness writing. Interior monologue, or quoted stream of consciousness, presents characters' thought streams exclusively in the form of silent inner speech, as a stream of

<sup>1</sup> According to Webster's Online Dictionary, language that is deliberately created for a specific purpose is artificial language. <http://www.webster-dictionary.org/definition/%20artificial%20language>

verbalized thoughts. Interior monologue also often attempts to mimic the unstructured free flow of thought, presenting it as shifting abruptly among topics, jumping by association from one thing to another, and proceeding by incomplete sentences. It is such a writing technique that gives interior monologue its apparently mimetic quality, its vividness and liveliness. Possibly that is why the character of the protagonist in the novel is so fuzzy. Hence, it brings obstacles for translators to reproduce the style and thoughts of the original faithfully, closely, and expressively. Among a host of Chinese versions of *Mrs. Dalloway*, the present author chooses Sun Liang and Su Mei's version as a sample and attaches great importance to the translation techniques for analysis.

### III. PROPER ADDITION OF FUZZY WORDS

To vividly depict the flow of the protagonist's consciousness, the translators add a couple of Chinese fuzzy expressions. The translation of the following three sentences is worthy of note:

Sentence 1. She had reached the Park gate.<sup>2</sup>她不觉已走到公园门口。(Sun Liang, 2000, p.8)

Sentence 2. Her only gift was knowing people almost by instinct, she thought, walking on. 当下, 她向前走去, 心想, 她惟一的天赋是, 几乎能凭直觉一眼认透别人。(Sun Liang, 2000, p.9)

Sentence 3. But what was she dreaming as she looked into Hatchards' shop window? 此刻, 她向海德书店橱窗里张望时, 心里憧憬什么? (Sun Liang, 2000, p.9)

As already noted, this novel opens with the sentence "Mrs. Dalloway said she would buy the flowers herself", which is the exterior event. What follows, however, is a plunge into Clarissa Dalloway's past and into her memories of the open air at Bourton where she spent her adolescence long before she became Mrs Dalloway. In the first sentence, the translator intentionally inserts "不觉". It seems that "不觉" is meant merely for the idea of transitory time. In another respect, however, the inserted words imply that the protagonist's psychology is working all the time on the way and thus she feels the time is passing very swiftly. In the second and the third sentence, both"当下", which means at that time, and "此刻" meaning "at this time" are added to function as cohesive devices. Barry Dainton in his work *Stream of Consciousness* shows us that stream of consciousness is not a mosaic of discrete fragments of experience, but rather an interconnected flowing whole. To make the Chinese version smooth and easy to comprehend, it is necessary to add such devices. To sum up, the appropriate addition of the above fuzzy words enhance the expressive force and make readers easily get access to the original.

### IV. APPROPRIATE DOMESTICATION OF FUZZY EXPRESSIONS

In this novel, the rich and delicate psychology of the protagonist Mrs. Dalloway is being unfolded in the form of interior monologue. On this account, it is inevitable that the writing style is characterized by using more or less colloquial expressions. Moreover, although Mrs. Dalloway in her monologue claims that "she knew nothing; no language, no history", her elegant status and fine education contribute to her expressive style different from the common people. Thus, the language in the interior monologue should be elegant rather than vulgar. To faithfully and vividly reproduce the writing style of the original, the translators makes an attempt at employing appropriate both colloquial and literary expressions. To catch a glimpse of the appropriate application of domestication, the translation of the following sentences can be considered:

Sentence 1. She would not say of any one in the world now that they were this or were that. 现在她不愿对世界上任何人说长道短。(Sun Liang, 2000, p.8)

Sentence 2. Devonshire House, Bath House, the house with the china cockatoo, she had seen them all lit up once; and remembered Sylvia, Fred, Sally Seton—such hosts of people; and dancing all night; and the waggons plodding past to market; and driving home across the Park. 德文郡大楼、巴思大楼、那幢装饰着白瓷鸚大楼, 他曾看见它们灯火通明, 她还记得西尔维亚、弗雷德、萨利赛敦—那么多的人啊! 她曾经通宵达旦地跳舞; 尔后望着四轮运货车缓缓地经过, 向市场驶去; 她驱车穿过公园回家。(Sun Liang, 2000, p.9)

Sentence 3. How she had got through life on the few twigs of knowledge Fraulein Daniels gave them she could not think. 她真不明白自己怎么凭这点学问生活过来的。(Sun Liang, 2000, p.8)

Sentence 4. But that somehow in the streets of London, on the ebb and flow of things, here, there, she survived, Peter survived, lived in each other, she being part, she was positive, of the trees at home; of the house there, ugly, rambling all to bits and pieces as it was; part of people she had never met; being laid out like a mist between the people she knew best, who lifted her on their branches as she had seen the trees lift the mist, but it spread ever so far, her life, herself. 不过, 随着人世沧桑, 她在伦敦的大街上却能随遇而安, 得以幸存, 彼得也活过来了, 他俩互相信赖, 共同生存。她深信自己属于家乡的树木与房屋, 尽管那屋子又丑又乱; 她也属于那些素昧平生的人们; 她像一片薄雾, 散布在最熟悉的人中间, 她们把他高高举起, 宛如树木托起云雾一半, 她曾见过那种景象。然而, 她的生活, 她自身, 却远远的伸展。(Sun Liang, 2000, p.9)

<sup>2</sup> The part of the novel *Mrs. Dalloway* by Virginia Woolf analyzed in this paper can be retrieved from the following website: <http://www.harcourtbooks.com/bookcatalogs/bookpage.asp?isbn=0156628708&option=excerpt>.

It is evident that the translators' rendering reads smoothly and clearly. The key of smooth and clear translation, in a large extent, lies in the rendering of such fuzzy phrases as "were this or were that", "all night" and "on the ebb and flow of things". Actually, it is rather precise and proper to render the above phrases respectively as the four-word Chinese idioms as "说长道短" and "通宵达旦" and "人世沧桑". Likewise, considering the characteristics of the interior monologue, the translators render some fuzzy expressions into Chinese as some colloquial expressions. For instance, "such hosts of people" is rendered as "那么多的人啊", "few twigs of knowledge" as "这点学问". Pertaining to the rendering of the same fuzzy word, the translators adopt a rather flexible technique. Take the translation of "survive" for example. In rendering the first "survive", the translators first employ a four-word Chinese expression "随遇而安" and then use "得以幸存" to further illustrate the meaning. As a matter of fact, the two Chinese phrases drop a hint that the reason why Mrs. Dalloway is able to survive is due to her life attitude of "随遇而安".

In conclusion, through accurate comprehension of the original and a variety of translation techniques, Sun Liang and Su Mei reproduce the content and artistic style of the original. A scrutiny of the Chinese version, however, can find some imperfect renderings. For instance:

If you put her in a room with someone, up went her back like a cat's, or she purred.

如果让她和另一个人同住一室, 直觉会使她生气或满意。 (Sun Liang, 2000, p.9)

The underlined part of the original is the application of simile. The reader can comprehend the above rendering with ease. Such a rendering, however, is much too domestic, without conveying the original idea. The present author holds that the following rendering can not only faithfully retain the original idea but also demonstrate to the reader the foreign images: 如果让她和另一个人同住一室, 她会弓起后背的猫一样非常生气, 或像低叫的猫那样高兴异常。

Another instance can consider the rendering of the following sentence:

She had a perpetual sense, as she watched the taxicabs, of being out, out, far out to sea and alone;

她看着过往的出租车, 内心总有远离此地, 独自去海边的感觉。 (Sun Liang, 2000, p.8)

According to the context, to render the underlined part as above is much too mechanic and far from being precise. Actually, the underlined part is used in its figurative sense. When the protagonist watches the passing taxicabs, she has the feeling of loneliness as a tourist traveling far away from his or her hometown. Hence, it is better to put it into Chinese as the following:

她看着过往的出租车, 内心总有一种天涯孤旅的寂寞感。

To concentrate on the analysis of the rendering of the psychological description does not mean that fuzzy language only abounds in the portrayal of psychology. As already noted, language fuzziness, the intrinsic feature of language, can be found in different dimensions of description in literary works. However, the present author opts for the psychological dimension only because this one is inclined to allow fuller play to fuzzy language.

## V. REFLECTIONS

Being an inherent feature of language, fuzzy language forms a considerable part of language use, especially in literary works. Just as Zhou Fangzhu noted, since language is the carrier of literature, language fuzziness is also a fundamental feature of literature. (Zhou Fangzhu, 2004, p.265.)

This study is an effort to provide research on fuzzy language translation in terms of psychological depiction. As this is such a relatively new research topic, this paper could not provide an indepth nor comprehensive study. Rather, it should be seen as exploratory and the basis for substantial subsequent research. After all, "translating is a complex and fascinating task." (Nida, *Language*, 1993, p.1.)

The discussion in this paper might convince readers that the translation of fuzzy language is especially a complex and fascinating task. For one thing, the intrinsic feature of fuzzy language dictates that the choice of words or expressions in translating fuzzy language would be a really hard task to cope with. For another, the characteristics of literary language constitute another great difficulty for translators in translating fuzzy language. Additionally, the research and study have convinced readers that the successful translation of literary works is largely dependent upon that of the fuzzy language. Despite the difficulties encountered by the translators, the prominent translators whose classic translations have been delved into have fully and brilliantly exhibited their first-class fuzzy language translating skills. These translation versions referred to have provided food for thought. Thus, a question arises: how can translators have mastery of translating fuzzy language?

Although language fuzziness is a universally shared feature in human speech, it is diverse from language to language owing to different history, nationality, and culture. As a result, language fuzziness is endowed with characteristics of different languages, which adds to the difficulty of translation. As far as English-Chinese translation of literary works is concerned, both the target and source languages cannot fully fulfill this mutual conversion, neither in form nor content because of the lack of equivalence in connotation and denotation. In addition, some other factors, such as different rhetorical expressions and psychological associations incur, from time to time, inevitable misunderstandings and errors. Accordingly, the present author would like to suggest proposals concerning translating fuzzy language:

Firstly, it is a must for translators to have an excellent command of both source and target languages. As Eugene A. Nida has already indicated, the four basic processes in translating consist of analysis of the source text, transfer from source to target language, restructuring in the target language, and testing of the translated text with persons who

represent the intended audience. (Nida, 1993, pp.146-147.) In the four basic processes, no step should be detached from the good command of both source and target languages. There is no doubt that without good command of the two languages, translators would not go forward any further, let alone have a creative use of the target language. As for the prominent translator whose translation has been referred to in this paper, what has impressed the present author, in most instances, is their accurate comprehension of the original literary works and thus their outstanding translations into equivalent Chinese. It is sufficiently confirmable that these translators have an excellent command of both source and target languages and as well have wonderful competence in writing. Actually, their translations have been proven to be in conformity with Liu Zhongde's three-character principle of translation, and have been claimed as classic in the area of literary translation.

Secondly, they should know well the cultures of the source language and the target language. "It is always assumed that translators are at least bilingual, but this really not enough. To be a fully competent translator, one also needs to be bicultural in order to 'read between the lines'." (Nida, 1993, pp.134-135.) As one means of communication, translation is also a process of cultural transplantation. In the process of cultural transplantation, in addition to the form of cultural overlaps, cultural factors in the source and target languages manifest themselves in the forms of cultural blanks and cultural conflicts. Since culture is chiefly deciphered by language, the acquaintance of the respective culture is prone to facilitate the translator's adoption of appropriate strategies and techniques. As Professor Wang Zuoliang noted, "A translator must be a cultural person in its true sense." Only in this way, can translators achieve equivalence, not only at the linguistic level, but also at the cultural level.

Thirdly, they are obliged to read for depth and give their attention to the confining and illustrating function of the context. As far as context is concerned, B. Malinowski, the world-famous Polish anthropologist, pointed out in his paper entitled *The Problem of Meaning in Primitive Languages*, "Exactly as in the reality of spoken or written languages, a word without linguistic context is a mere fragment and stands for nothing by itself, so in the reality of a spoken living tongue, the utterance has no meaning except in the context of situation." (Zhou Fangzhu, 2004, p.78)

In summary, 'no context, no text'. The translation of the same word "crouch" in different context can serve as a prime example:

- (1) The cat crouched, ready to spring at the bird.
- (2) He crouched down to stroke the dog.
- (3) Breathing hard, he crouched fully down to the ground and his face turned pale. (Liu Miqing, 2005, p.8.)

Based on the context, translators can clarify the fuzzy meaning and determine the meaning of this word in different sentences. Thus, in the light of the context, the three sentences can be translated respectively as follows:

- (1) 猫儿弓下身子，准备扑向小鸟。
- (2) 他蹲了下来，抚摸着小狗。
- (3) 他蹲坐下来，脸色苍白，呼吸很急促。 (Liu Miqing, 2005, p.8)

As a matter of fact, the slips emerging in the instances noted in this paper, to a great degree, result from the neglect of the context of the literary works. This requires the translator's close, careful reading of the literary works rather like detective work. By using context clues, common sense and our knowledge (by connecting ideas and drawing conclusions), and by forming and testing ideas about what the author was trying to say, translators can discover the author's real meaning and thus conduct their proper translation.

Fourthly, they need to enhance their power of appreciation of literary works, because to accomplish, among other things, the aim of closeness to the style, translators must have the ability to appreciate different styles of literary works. Only translators with a good appreciation of literature are capable of fairly judging arts of literary works because of their keen artistic intuition, rich imagination, powerful association of ideas, and particularly their passionate resonance with literary works. In the process of translating, it is significant for a translator to have a profound insight into the style and the creative features of the literary work to be translated, which demands an appreciation of that literary work. Additionally, the knowledge of the author, himself, including his background, thoughts and his creative styles, is also of great help to the translation process.

Last but not least, literary translators are meant to learn translating by translating. From the present author's viewpoint, translation resembles swimming. The best and the most effective way of learning swimming is through swimming. Similarly, constant practice of translating varieties of literary work is bound to improve the translator's skills in translating literary works. Dr. Nida holds that since translating to some extent a skill, it can be best learned by doing rather than by studying the theories or principles which may or may not be applicable to actual performance. (Nida, 1993, p.152) However, besides constant practice, the present firmly believes that practical strategies and techniques can function as guides for translation. Liu Zhongde's three-character translation principle has often been dedicated to evaluating translations, and his principle was preeminent in translating the works cited in this paper. He concludes, "Whoever has a good command of translation both in theory and practice, can, of course, offer satisfactory translations. It is because translation is not only a science—a science with its own peculiar laws and methods, but also an art—an art of reproduction and re-creation." (Liu Zhongde, 1991, p.125)

The study of translation of fuzzy language is a relatively new-born discipline and therefore new to linguistic scholarship. There is still a long way to go before many fruits are yielded in this field. The present author hopes that this paper will inspire interest and encourage researchers to take up the challenge to discover, analyze, and enjoy the

richness of fuzzy language translation in literary works.

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# Skill Acquisition Theory and Its Important Concepts in SLA

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**Abstract**—Skill Acquisition Theory is not just a theory of the development of language, rather it is a general theory of learning ranging from cognitive to psychomotor skills (Mystkowska-Wiertelak & Pawlak, 2012). This theory, which is based on Adaptive Control of Thought model (ACT), claims that adults commence learning something through mainly explicit processes, and, through subsequent sufficient practice and exposure, proceed to implicit processes (Vanpatten & Benati, 2010). Considering the fact that each one of the SLA theories illuminates one aspect of SLA (VanPatten & Williams, 2007), this paper attempts to investigate this Theory and its basic constructs.

**Index Terms**—skill, priming, automaticity, practice, power law of practice

## I. INTRODUCTION

Pondering over the process of language acquisition has been one of the old endeavors of human beings to solve the enigmas of second language acquisition (SLA). This endeavor which has been reified into different forms (such as, theories, framework, or models) has obsessed scholars from ancient times to modern days, from the Plato's problem to Truscott and Sharwood Smith's (2004) MOGUL. Nevertheless, though many of these ideas seem to be competing, they can be considered to be complementary. That is, like the parable about four blind men and an elephant, SLA can be considered to be like a giant elephant which can be observed by different scholars from different perspectives (VanPatten & Williams, 2007). Therefore, each SLA theory might shed light on one aspect of SLA. Taking this point into consideration, Skill Acquisition Theory- as one of the prominent and influential SLA theories which has considered language learning to be on a par with general human learning- has been discussed in this paper with the aim of gaining a better insight into the process of SLA.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. Background

The scientific roots of Skill Acquisition Theory can be found in different branches of psychology, which ranges from behaviorism to cognitivism and connectionism (Dekeyser & Criado, 2013). This theory draws on Anderson's Adaptive Control of Thought (ACT) model which itself is a kind of cognitive stimulus-response theory (Ellis & Shintani, 2013). As mentioned by Parziale & Fischer (2009), it is a neo-Piagetian theory that amalgamates elements of both cognitive and behavioristic theories. In SLA there are a number of theories which have been devised based on models of skill acquisition in cognitive psychology. According to Chapelle (2009), this theory falls under the category of general human learning, i.e., it focuses "on language learning as a process of human learning". In other words, learning a second language in view of such theories is considered to be like learning any other skill, e.g., playing a musical instrument. Advocates of such theories consider practice to play the key role in learning.

### B. Basic Claim

The basic claim of Skill Acquisition Theory, according to Dekeyser (2007b), "is that the learning of a wide variety of skills shows a remarkable similarity in development from initial representation of knowledge through initial changes in behavior to eventual fluent, spontaneous, largely effortless, and highly skilled behavior, and that this set of phenomena can be accounted for by a set of basic principles common to acquisition of all skills" (p. 97). In sum, as mentioned by Speelman (2005), skill acquisition can be considered as a specific form of learning, where learning has been defined as "the representation of information in memory concerning some environmental or cognitive event" (p. 26). Therefore, according to him, skill acquisition is a form of learning where "skilled behaviors can become routinized and even automatic under some conditions" (p.26).

In other words, this theory assigns roles for both explicit and implicit learning in SLA. And, as a general theory of learning, it claims that adults commence learning something through largely explicit processes, and with subsequent sufficient practice and exposure, move into implicit processes. Development, within this theory, entails the utilization of declarative knowledge followed by procedural knowledge, with the latter's automatization (Vanpatten & Benati, 2010). According to Richards & Schmidt (2010), declarative knowledge is conscious knowledge of facts, concepts or ideas that can be stored as propositions. And procedural knowledge refers to unconscious knowledge of how an activity is

done. As elaborated by Vanpatten & Benati (2010), using declarative knowledge involves explicit learning or processes; learners obtain rules explicitly and have some type of conscious awareness of those rules. The automatization of procedural knowledge entails implicit learning or processes; learners begin to proceduralize the explicit knowledge they own, and through situational suitable practice and use, the behavior becomes second nature.

Ellis (2009) has referred to the following features as the characteristics of explicit and implicit knowledge. Of course, it should be mentioned that still there is no unanimous agreement over such characteristics.

- "Implicit knowledge is tacit and intuitive whereas explicit knowledge is conscious" (p. 11)
- "Implicit knowledge is procedural whereas explicit knowledge is declarative" (p. 11)
- "L2 learners' procedural rules may or may not be target-like while their declarative rules are often imprecise and inaccurate" (p. 12)
- "Implicit knowledge is available through automatic processing whereas explicit knowledge is generally accessible only through controlled processing" (p. 12)
- "Default L2 production relies on implicit knowledge, but difficulty in performing a language task may result in the learner attempting to exploit explicit knowledge" (p. 13)
- "Implicit knowledge is only evident in learners' verbal behavior whereas explicit knowledge is verbalizable" (p. 13)
- "There are limits on most learners' ability to acquire implicit knowledge whereas most explicit knowledge is learnable" (p. 14)
- "The learners L2 implicit and explicit knowledge systems are distinct" (p. 14)
- "L2 performance utilizes a combination of implicit and explicit knowledge" (p. 15)

In Pawlak's view (2011), the transformation from declarative knowledge to procedural knowledge entails qualitative and quantitative changes in the initial declarative representation. And such changes take place through *automatization* and *restructuring*, where the former refers to "speeding up the performance of a skill, reducing the error rate and inference from other tasks" and the latter to "changing the subcomponents of knowledge and the way in which they interact" (p. 13). Of course, as also mentioned later on such terms are not easy to define.

It should be mentioned that the great advantage of proceduralized knowledge over declarative knowledge is that it is available as "a ready-made chunk to be called up in its entirety each time the conditions for that behavior are met" (DeKeyser 2007b, p. 98). Moreover, Ellis & Shintani (2013) have referred to the skill-specificity in Skill Acquisition Theory. That is, as mentioned by them, this theory predicts that the effects of instruction are skill-based. In other words, input-based and output-based instructions will benefit receptive and productive skills respectively.

### C. Important Concepts

#### 1. Skill

There are several concepts which play a key role in this theory. One such concept is skill. The definition of skill is vague. As defined by Vanpatten & Benati (2010, p. 39) "Skill refers to ability to *do* rather than underlying competence or mental representation". To clarify this concept, Cornford (1996) has mentioned nine separate defining attributes of "skill" and "skilled performance" from a psychological perspective, argued to be the most valid in accounting for skill acquisition and performance by individuals. These defining attributes are:

1. skill is learned;
2. skill involves motivation, purpose and goals;
3. Schemas are prerequisite for skilled performance;
4. Skills require content and context knowledge;
5. Skills are performed and transferred in the presence of specific stimuli;
6. Skills involve problem solving relevant to the context;
7. Skill involves relative judgments with individual differences in skilled performance evident;
8. Standards of excellence are important;
9. Skill involves comparable replication;
10. Considerable periods of time are required to reach high levels of skill.

#### 2. Priming

The other important concept in Skill Acquisition Theory is "priming" which, according to Trofimovich & McDonough (2013, p. 505), "refers to a cognitive repetition phenomenon in which prior exposure to specific language forms or meaning facilitates speaker's subsequent language processing". For example, a words or structure used by a speaker will influence the comprehension and production of that word or structure by the interlocutor. Therefore, it "may underlie the interactive, communicative use of language" (Trofimovich & McDonough, p. 505). At the same time, it can be categorized under the implicit learning since it often happens with little awareness and conscious effort on the part of language user (Trofimovich & McDonough).

#### 3. Automaticity

The other concept within this theory is automaticity. According to DeKeyser (2007a), in skill acquisition models, the learning processes which are involved in the acquisition of skills entails a transition from attentive to automatic mode. Hulstijn (2002) believes that performance fluency is the outcome of implicit learning, and a concomitant, incidental feature of implicit learning is automatization. But defining automatization is not an easy task. As mentioned by Dekeyser (2007a, p. 4), "In the broadest sense, it refers to the whole process of knowledge change from initial

presentation of the rule in declarative format to the final stage of fully spontaneous, effortless, fast, and errorless use of that rule, often without being aware of it anymore. In a narrower sense, it refers to the slow process of reducing error rate, reaction time, and interference with/from other tasks that takes place after proceduralization. In the most specific sense, it designates a merely quantitative change in the subcomponents of procedural knowledge to the exclusion of any qualitative change or restructuring (i.e., excluding changes in which small subcomponents make up procedural knowledge at a given stage of skill development or how they work together)." In fact, as acknowledged by Cohen, Servan-Schreiber, & McClelland (1992), the term automaticity embodies some different phenomena that often differ from one definition to another. Nevertheless, the following core set of phenomena seem to reappear in most discussions of automaticity:

- "1. an increase in speed of performance with practice following a power law
2. diminishing requirements for attention with practice, with
3. a commitment release from attentional control - or involuntariness (i.e., the involuntariness of automatic processes)
4. immunity from interference with competing processes, and
5. the requirement that practice be "consistently mapped" for these phenomena to develop." (pp. 241-242).

It should be mentioned that DeKeyser (2007c) has chosen the term *automatized knowledge* to refer to the knowledge which may still be conscious but the learner has access to it in actual communication. In DeKeyser's view, automaticity rather than being an all-or-nothing issue has degrees.

#### 4. Practice

According to DeKeyser (2007b), among researchers who study skill acquisition processes there is a consensus that practice with a given task gradually decreases reaction time and error rate. Carlson (1997, as cited in DeKeyser, 2007a, p: 2) has defined practice as "repeated performance of the same (or closely similar) routines". As it can be observed, this definition is fairly vague and seems to reflect behavioristic views rather than those of cognitive psychology. DeKeyser (2007a) believes this is not what Carlson means. Therefore, he has found the definition by Newell and Rosenbloom (1981, as cited in DeKeyser, 2007a) to be more precise, i.e., "Practice is the subclass of learning that deals only with improving performance on a task that can already be successfully performed" (p. 2). Practice which is required for learning in skill Acquisition Theory, according to DeKeyser (2007b) should be meaningful. In fact, DeKeyser has questioned the utility of mechanical drills by considering them to provide just *language-like behavior* rather than language behavior.

#### 5. Power law of practice

Newell & Rosenbloom (1981) have studied practice and its following performance improvements both theoretically and experimentally. On the theoretical side, they have formulated 'chunking theory of learning' which is rooted in cognitive psychology. And on experimental side, they have argued that a single law, i.e., the "log-log linear learning law" or the "power law of practice" describes all of the practice data. According to Newell & Rosenbloom, this ubiquitous quantitative law of practice, states "plotting the logarithm of the time to perform a task against the logarithm of the trial number always yields a straight line, more or less". (p. 1)

Hulstijn (2002) believes that automatization conforms to the power law of learning both in what Gupta & Dell (1999) name "repetition priming" and "skill learning". The former occurs when we process identical stimuli over and over again (i.e., the same word is processed the many times), whereas the latter occurs when we process stimuli which (1) vary in some respect at the surface, but (2) share similarities or regularities at an underlying level of structure.

#### D. Theories

Speelman (2005) believes that there are two groups of theories regarding skill acquisition. The first group holds that skill acquisition results from a process of strategy refinement. This is the idea underlying the theories of Crossman, Anderson (ACT-R), Newell et al. (SOAR), MacKay, and some connectionist theories. And the other group holds that skilled performance is the results of improved memory retrieval. This idea can be found in the theories of Logan (Instance theory) and Palmeri (EBRW).

##### 1. Adaptive control of thought model (ACT)

According to Vanpatten & Benati (2010), Adaptive Control of Thought (ACT) model, developed by John Anderson, is the most well-known models of skill-based theories. Anderson (1982) proposed a framework for skill acquisition including two major stages in the development of a cognitive skill, i.e., declarative and procedural stage. In this framework "facts are encoded in a propositional network and procedures are encoded as productions" (Anderson, 1982, p. 369). According to Vanpatten & Benati (2010, p. 33), "Within this theory, development involves the use of declarative knowledge followed by procedural knowledge, with the latter's automatization." Therefore, SLA is conceived to be a progression through three stages, declarative, procedural, and autonomous. These three stages resembles the three stages of cognitive, associative, and autonomous stage which Fitts (1964, as cited in Taatgen, 2002) posits for skill acquisition. Taatgen (2002) has linked Anderson and Fitts stages by saying "In the cognitive stage knowledge is declarative and needs to be interpreted. Interpreting knowledge is slow, and may lead to errors if the relevant knowledge cannot be retrieved at the right time. Procedural knowledge on the other hand is compiled and therefore fast and free of errors, and can be associated with the autonomous stage. The associate stage is an in-between stage, during which part of the knowledge is declarative and another part compiled." (p. 103)

## 2. Ackerman's model

Ackerman (1988) theory posits that there are different abilities underlying performance at consecutive stages of skill acquisition. In phase 1, general ability measures (e.g., abstract reasoning) underlie performance. With the formation of the production systems for the consistent features of performance, the influence of these factors decreases, and perceptual speed abilities appear as important predictors of performance in Phase 2. Eventually, performance is determined mainly by non-cognitive psychomotor abilities in Phase 3.

### *E. Criticisms*

#### 1. Weak points

Like many SLA theories, the problem of the lack of an operational definition undermines the Skill Acquisition Theory. In fact, though some attempts have been made, still there is no unanimously agreed-upon operational definition for the basic concepts in this theory such as skill, practice, or automatization.

Moreover, Skill Acquisition Theory provides a rationale for the strong-interface position (Ellis & Shintani, 2013). And this "position holds that explicit knowledge can be transformed into implicit knowledge through the process of automatization, which is a consequence of practice" (Richards & Schmidt, 2010, p. 292). Therefore, it seems that this theory has not considered the important role which is played by the affective factors in the process of learning. That is, contrary to the claim made by Newell & Rosenbloom (1981) concerning the power law of practice, it can be claimed that if the beneficial affective factors are not observed (e.g., in stressed situations), "plotting the logarithm of the time to perform a task against the logarithm of the trial number" (p. 1) does not necessarily yield a straight line. That is, practice does not always make perfect, and one of the prerequisite conditions for the practice to work is what Krashen (1985) has referred to as the "low affective filter".

The other point which should be mentioned is that though Ellis & Shintani (2013) believe that Skill Acquisition Theory provides a rationale for the strong-interface position, as acknowledged by Ellis (2009), the evidence for all of the three positions (i.e., the noninterface position, the strong interface position, and the weak interface position) is mainly indirect, and they have not been empirically investigated. In fact, this is also the very problem which undermines Skill Acquisition Theory since, as mentioned by Dekeyser (2007b), this theory is under-researched. Dekeyser has attributed this scarcity of research to the methodological problems such as difficulty in gathering large numbers of participants over long periods of time which is usually required for investigating this theory, and also to difficulties in controlling the variables in such studies.

Also, practice emphasized in this theory, as mentioned by Dekeyser (2007a), is effective only for learning similar tasks which does not transfer to dissimilar tasks. Therefore, it can be claimed that this point disregards the creative potentials of human being.

The other criticisms leveled against Skill Acquisition Theory has been put forward by Ellis (2009, as cited in Ellis & Shintani, 2013) who believes that this theory does not account for two important aspects of SLA. That is, first, it fails to explain the sequence of acquisition. And, second, the idea that the acquisition of all L2 features starts with declarative knowledge is rather far-fetched, since both vocabulary and grammar acquisition in an L2 must involve incidental learning to a great extent and such learning does not need a declarative stage.

#### 2. Strengths

At the same time, there are other scholars, who adhering the advantages of the Skill Acquisition Theory, hold views some of which contradict with those of the critics of this theory. For example, Parziale & Fischer (2009) have discussed how skill theory can be applied in classroom settings.

1) "Skill theory can be used to study development during very short as well as long time periods, and across cognitive, social and language domains." (p. 97)

2) "Skill theory provides a coherent and practical means of defining and identifying the skills and sequences in learning activities." (p. 103)

3) This theory "predicts uneven development, not just across large domains, but even in narrow ones. For example, a student might be able to count a large number of beans from a jar but be unable to count the number of his classmates." (p. 108)

4) "By using a skill theory analysis teachers can begin to understand the effect of support and practice on range of performance. The range of performance observed during lessons that might have been used for many years suddenly can be understood and controlled." (p. 109)

In fact, in spite of the shortcomings leveled against Skill Acquisition Theory, as mentioned by Dekeyser (2007b), this theory fits very well with other aspects of cognitive science. Also, the approach to skill learning has proven to be robust over time, in spite of changes in emphasis, methodology, and terminology. Moreover, the procedure of research in this theory, whether conducted with behavioral data or through neuro-imaging or computer modeling is very explicit, e.g., power curves, computer programs and brain-scanners provides precise answers. Furthermore, research in this field is developmental and rather than providing snapshots of learners it can document learning day after day. Moreover, though research may have less to say about the acquisition order of the language elements in comparison to other more (psycho-) linguistically oriented approaches, but it is explicit and precise regarding the steps that a learner takes during the acquisition of a specific structure.

### III. CONCLUSION

Asides from merits and demerits of the Skill Acquisition Theory, there are two issues which highlight the importance of this theory in the field of applied linguistics. The first issue is the relation that exists between this theory and SLA. According to Dekeyser & Criado (2013), since second/foreign language proficiency involves a set of skills that permit speakers to comprehend and produce messages rapidly and efficiently, cognitive psychology in general and Skill Acquisition Theory, in particular, are also undoubtedly relevant to SLA. For example, one of the attempts to apply this theory to language teaching has been made by Johnson (1996). In the same vein, Chapelle (2009) has discussed the implications of this theory for CALL, believing that it "provides suggestions for learning through practice and for assessment of successful learning" (p. 744). Nevertheless, as acknowledged by Dekeyser (2007b), due to this theory's emphasis on the importance of explicit/declarative knowledge during the initial stages of learning, this theory is most easily applicable to cases where 1) adult learners of high aptitude are involved, 2) the structures to be learned are simple, 3) learners are at fairly early stages of learning, and 4) the context is instructional. The other even more important issue is that this theory does not claim to account for everything about SLA. That is, it does not compete with other theories to acclaim itself as the only valid theory of SLA (Dekeyser, 2007b).

To finalize, it should be mentioned that in spite of these merits, as acknowledged by Ellis (2009), though neurological studies and connectionist models of linguistic knowledge point to the dichotomous nature of explicit and implicit knowledge, there is still controversy over the dichotomous or continuous nature of these two types of knowledge. Considering this point and scarcity of research on the Skill Acquisition Theory in SLA (Dekeyser, 2007b), there is room for more merits or demerits to be revealed in the future.

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# Call for Papers and Special Issue Proposals

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