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Contents

"I Am Combined": Chinese Teachers' Cultural Identities and Pedagogical Learning

Johanna Ennser-Kananen
School of Education, Boston University, Boston, USA

Andie Fang Wang
Curriculum and Instruction, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, USA

Abstract—In order to become effective instructors of cultural sensitivity, teachers need spaces to engage in cultural identity work while developing their teaching practice. This qualitative case study analyzed the integration of cultural identity work and pedagogical learning of bicultural teachers of Chinese during a two-week long professional development (PD) course in the US. Data consisted of classroom videos, observations, and student work and was theorized within an identity-as-pedagogy framework. Findings revealed a bidirectional and dynamic relationship between teachers' cultural identity work and their pedagogical learning: Teachers did - although not consistently - appropriate pedagogical theories (e.g. on curriculum planning) by integrating them with their own cultural experiences and identities and vice versa. These appropriations were not always in line with the goals of the PD course but highlight a need to deliberately and systematically integrate teachers' cultural identity work with their pedagogical learning.

Index Terms—identity as pedagogy, cultural identity, culture teaching, teachers of Chinese, professional development, language teacher identity

I. INTRODUCTION

It's really, really hard for teachers to question themselves, like 'Oh, I've been teaching in the wrong way' - it's just hard like 'Am I wrong?' But just question yourself. [...] This [*points at amoeba*] is like culture, always changing, along the time, changing [...] so at different time, I have different culture, I have different conflict, so you cannot really say 'This is wrong' or 'That is right', they're just different, and so you have to keep questioning your teaching, yeah.

(Wenting, June 21, 2012)

Picture 1. Illustration of a "cultural amoeba" (Wenting, June 21, 2012)

With her teacher colleagues' eyes following her closely, Wenting pointed at the poster before her, where a delicate amoeba was drawn in the center. This amoeba was her, she said, never static, always in motion, flowing between cultures but never settling for one. But the amoeba was more than that. It was what every language teacher should be, she added.

Just as Wenting's metaphor of an amoeba represents her own identity as well as her model for all teachers, it reflects the important role identity work plays in the process of becoming a teacher. Similar to what Wenting expressed in her drawing, research with teachers has found strong connections between teachers' identities and teacher learning (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Izadinia, 2013). Evidences showed that explicitly exploring teacher identity in teacher education sparked positive changes in cognitive knowledge, self-awareness, sense of agency, confidence, and relationships with students, parents, and colleagues (Izadinia, 2013). In a review of studies on language teacher identity, Martel and Wang (2015) recognized the power inherent in integrating a focus of identity in language teacher education. They called for an identity agenda in language teacher education that subscribes to "an identity approach" (p. 296) to curriculum design and teacher assessment, for example by engaging teachers in critical reflections on their identities (Miller, 2009).

In the area of culture teaching in language classes, Duff and Uchida (1997) highlighted that learning to teach culture means developing an identity as a culture teacher by critically looking at one's own cultural and biographical roots. They suggested that "in examining such abstract constructs as culture and identity, collaborative inquiry and self-

reflection on the part of participant, including researchers and students, are very valuable" (p. 479). However, their call for such collaborative inquiry on culture teaching has been unanswered within the scholarship of teacher identity. As we will describe below, research has further revealed that language teachers' cultural identities interacted with various aspects of their teaching (e.g. material selection, teaching approaches) in significant ways (Duff & Uchida, 1997; Fichtner & Chapman, 2011; Menard-Warwick, 2008). This important link between cultural identity and teaching practices points to the value of teachers doing cultural identity work within teacher education contexts.

Two implications of this prior work are that a) language teacher education needs to pay more attention to teachers' cultural identities in order to be able to train and maintain effective practitioners and b) research is needed to better understand how teachers' cultural identity work interacts with their pedagogical learning.

This article reports on a study from a professional development (PD) course for foreign language (FL) teachers of Chinese, where cultural identity was a central topic of the classroom discourse and language teachers negotiated and developed their cultural identities collaboratively. The article's overall purpose is to show how language teachers' cultural identity development takes place and could be supported in teacher education. It aims to dialogue with previous work on language teacher identities as outlined in the following section.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Although a number of studies from various contexts have described the development of language teachers' identities (e.g., Kanno & Stuart, 2011; Kayi-Aydar, 2015; Pavlenko, 2003; Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2013; Simon-Maeda, 2004; Tsui, 2007; Xu, 2012; Xu 2013), most of this prior work has focused on the professional identity development of language teachers. The cultural dimension of language teacher identities has only appeared as a focus of investigation in a few empirical studies (Martel & Wang, 2015). We introduce these studies as they address a) teachers' cultural identities and b) interconnections between cultural identities and teaching practices.

A. Cultural Identities

Studies following the first thread examined cultural identities through a variety of lenses. Fichtner and Chapman (2011), for example, investigated twelve German and Spanish language teachers' affiliations with their home and target cultures and the way these affiliations shaped their practice. The majority of the teacher participants, both native speakers (NS) and non-native speakers (NNS) of the target languages, claimed to have multiple cultural identities, yet identified with one of them more than with the others. Most of the teachers saw their national identities as primary and enacted these nationality-based identities relatively consistently. As the authors put it, even "meaningful engagements with experiences of other cultures may not necessarily lead to a profound restructuring of one's own cultural identity" (p. 126). Whereas the teachers all recognized a place of cultural identity work in the classroom, they questioned their own legitimacy as an "authentic representation" of culture and expressed discomfort in being perceived as cultural experts of the target language. Many rejected performing or representing what they claimed to be their secondary identities, arguing that they embraced but did not embody their secondary cultures.

Whereas teachers drew a clear line between primary and secondary cultural identities in Fichtner and Chapman's study, Menard-Warwick's (2008) participants, two NNS English language teachers, described themselves within the frame of a hybrid identity of home and target cultures, with a blurred boundary between the two. Ruby, a Brazilian teacher of ESL in California, for instance, commented on herself being more American than Brazilian, while also identifying her communication style as Brazilian and prioritizing passing on Brazilian values to her daughters. Paloma, who was teaching EFL in Chile and had lived in the US for twenty years, felt that she belonged to both Chilean and American cultures and used metaphorical "umbilical cords" to describe her connections to both cultures. As the two teachers addressed cultural topics in the classroom, they further engaged in and modeled a process of constructing "intercultural identities", which Menard-Warwick (2008) defined as "a negotiated investment in seeing the world through multiple cultural lenses" (p. 622).

The process of doing this complex cultural and social identity work was analyzed by Duff and Uchida (1997), who examined how four English as foreign language (EFL) teachers' sociocultural identities interacted with their institutional and interpersonal environments in Japan. Viewing identities as "co-constructed, negotiated, and transformed on an ongoing basis by means of language" (p. 452), this ethnographic case study found that the teachers' sociocultural identities developed along two dimensions: a biographical/professional one (e.g., past learning and teaching experiences) and a contextual one (e.g., the local classroom culture). Thus, on the one hand, the teachers' sociocultural identities were heavily informed by their prior experiences; on the other hand, they continuously negotiated their identities in interaction with the local curriculum, the institutional expectations of them, and their teaching preferences.

As revealed by these studies, the cultural dimension of language teacher identity is often associated with teachers' inter- or trans-cultural experiences, their understandings of what constitutes culture, and their positioning vis-à-vis multiple cultures. The teacher participants were in general bi- or multicultural and had significant cross-cultural experiences. Also, culture was frequently viewed as dynamic and complex and described as "split, hybrid, mixed" (Menard-Warwick, 2008, p. 635), "heavily textured" (Duff & Uchida, 1997, p. 476), and "subject to constant negotiation" (p. 460). Cultural identity was further conceptualized in relation to the constructs of affiliation, belonging,

and positioning. Fichtner and Chapman (2011) viewed "cultural affiliation" as constitutive of cultural identity and explored it as equivalent to cultural identity. In comparison, Menard-Warwick (2008) defined cultural identity as a "sense of belonging or not belonging to particular groups based on his or her history and participation in particular practices and systems of meaning" (p. 624). Likewise, Duff and Uchida (1997) linked cultural identity to constructs of positioning, belonging, and interculturality. Reflecting the difficulty of defining "culture", terms such as "sociocultural identity", "social identity", and "cultural identity" refer to various aspects of cultural identity and the terms "role" and "identity" are used interchangeably.

In our study, we align our terms with the recently described distinction between "role" (shaped by external expectations) and "(role) identity" (shaped by internalized expectations). The distinction is crucial in understanding teacher identity construction processes because the constant negotiation between external and (selectively) internalized role expectations is often a space for teacher learning and source of teachers' struggle (Martel, 2013). We understand cultural identity broadly to describe how our participants expressed cultural affiliation and belonging, but also include our participants' cultural perspectives. We further acknowledge that as teacher educators, our role expectations for culture teaching were sometimes distinct from our participants' (role) identities. Overall, there is still a need to explore what the concept of intercultural identity entails in different contexts, especially with regards to teacher learning.

B. Connections between Cultural Identity and Teaching Practice

Notably, the reviewed studies all provide evidence for connections between language teachers' cultural identities and teaching practices, albeit at different levels. According to Menard-Warwick (2008), the two English language teachers' transnational life experiences contributed to development of intercultural competence and a meta-awareness of the competence, which served as pedagogical resource in their teaching practice. Both teachers drew on their intercultural experiences as resources to address linguistic, ideological, and cultural issues in class. For example, Ruby referred to her long-term residence in the US to illustrate an intercultural attitude for her students and emphasized that one can be a life-long cultural learner in the target language. Through sharing transnational experiences and modeling intercultural identities, the two teachers were able to "open up identity options not previously imagined by their students" (p. 636).

Fichtner and Chapman (2011) explained that the relevance the teachers ascribed to their cultural identities in class developed on a continuum, subject to their "familiarity and level of comfort with the target culture(s)" (p. 131). For example, some teachers found it challenging to represent the target culture because of lacking practical experience to do so; others chose to teach only cultural topics or aspects they were acquainted with. This indicates that language teachers need and could be better prepared, mentally and practically, to teach culture.

Interestingly, the teachers in Fichtner & Chapman's (2011) study were found to rely largely on their personal experiences and immediate context in teaching culture, rather than drawing on their teacher education experiences to inform their practice. This finding points to a need for an "open dialogue" (Fichtner & Chapman, 2011, p. 135) about cultural identity in teacher education that invites emergent and in-service teachers to articulate and reflect on their cultural history and positioning (Duff & Uchida, 1997; Fichtner & Chapman, 2011; Menard-Warwick, 2008). As Duff and Uchida (1997) put it,

If culture is such a dynamic negotiation site and not just a body of knowledge and, indeed, if all educational contexts are themselves cultural sites, just as all teaching/linguistic actions are also cultural actions, there is much in teachers' everyday pedagogical (and other) routines and identities to be deconstructed and understood (p. 476).

Like Fichtner and Chapman (2011), we argue that such deconstruction and understanding needs to be given space within teacher education and PD programs. However, a review of literature found no study that explored connections between culture identity and practice in the professional development context. The lack of relevant research led us to believe that there is a gap in research that needs to be filled in.

This study, therefore, investigated teachers' cultural identity discourse in a professional development setting, where such open talk around cultural identity was in place. Our work was guided by the following research questions:

How do teachers of Chinese use "cultural identity as pedagogy"?

a. How did teachers in the PD course identify culturally?

b. What characterized the relationship between the teachers' cultural identities and the pedagogical content of the course?

To answer these questions, we used and adapted Brian Morgan's "identity as pedagogy" framework as outlined below.

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: IDENTITY AS PEDAGOGY

Theorizing his experience of teaching English to Chinese (mostly Cantonese) adult speakers in Toronto, Brian Morgan (2004) adopted concept of "image-text", which Simon (1995) used to describe the particular identities students construct of their teachers that are shaped by the context of higher education (e.g. the difference in status between professors and students or the students' desire to acquire knowledge) as well as by students' interpretation of aspects of a teacher's personal life (e.g. their religion). Varghese, Morgan, Johnston, and Johnson (2005) elaborate on the concept of image text as

composite portrait, based on interpretations of immediate and observable phenomena – teacher-student interactions, formalized instruction, evaluations, and so on – but shaped as well by indirect and often imperceptible factors – the attitudes a student might have toward a teacher based on the latter's race or gender, or conversely, a teacher's low expectations for a group of students based on the socioeconomic status of the neighborhood where the school is located.
(Varghese et al., 2005, p. 32)

Such image-texts comprise multiple and sometimes contradictory voices, are in constant flux, and do not exist outside of their processes of being constructed. Because being confronted with image-texts promotes self-awareness, such confrontations open possibilities for compliance and resistance. Simon's concept underlines the importance of teacher-student discourses as spaces of identity construction. As Varghese et al. (2005) put it, "[t]he interpersonal relations generated between teachers and students are not simply a *context* for language learning. At times, they are *texts* themselves, indivisible from the meanings produced through schooling" (p. 34).

Morgan's study describes how he foregrounded various aspects of the image-text students constructed of him (e.g. his involvement in household chores and childcare) in order to shift the discourses around gender roles and race in his class. In other words, he used his identity as pedagogy. Similarly, in our research study, we describe how emerging and practicing teachers engage in identity work in a classroom. Through analyzing their discourse in a PD context that focuses on culture and language teaching, we examine how teachers use aspects of their bicultural and bilingual identities to inform their pedagogical learning.

IV. METHODOLOGY

A. Design and Context

This study is designed as qualitative, partially participant-observer case study with the case being the bounded unit of a two-week-long professional development (PD) course. As Yin (2009) argues, "the case study method allows investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events" (p. 4), which was crucial to our investigation of cultural identity work and pedagogical learning. We approached the "real-life event" of the PD classroom with the intention to describe how its participants created and developed their cultural identities and pedagogical learning. With these aims, the study is situated within an interpretive/inductive research paradigm. Further, as Andie Wang acted as an outside observer and Johanna Ensser-Kananen as participant observer (i.e., she was as course instructor as well as observer), the study brings together participant and outside observations of the case.

The need for this study was first communicated to us by the instructional team of a two-week-long summer institute, which was entitled *Culture as Core in the Second Language Classroom* and geared toward pre- and in-service teachers of Chinese. This team consisted of a university professor (Heidi), a PhD student (Xue), an experienced Chinese teacher (Yaolan), (all pseudonyms) and Johanna. The course was funded through the STARTALK initiative for less commonly taught languages. Some important objectives of the class as stated on the syllabus were to "[r]eflect upon own cultural understandings, experiences, beliefs, and boundaries", "[a]nalyze, critique, and apply theories and research about culture and culture learning, and "[e]xamine curricular models for integrating language and culture". The instructional team had taught the class twice before and found that past participants struggled to accept or process the paradigm shift the course content entailed. In particular, the following ideas seemed to challenge many participants:
• critical reflections on Chinese cultural practices and perspectives (especially regarding minority rights)
• definitions of culture beyond "high culture" or "big-C-culture" (arts, history, literature, etc.)
• definitions of culture beyond the "food-festivals-fashion" approach
• including multiple and diverse perspectives, for example from everyday cultures, pop cultures and youth cultures
• bringing together culture teaching and language proficiency in student-centered lesson planning
Key resources for the course included Bennett's (1993) Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity, a theory that describes the development of intercultural sensitivity in six stages from the most ethnocentric one, Denial, to the most ethnorelative one, Integration, as well as the Standards for foreign language learning ("5 Cs") (NSFLEP, 1999)

Course requirements included writing reflections on readings and creating lesson plans. The most important summative assessment was a "culture quilt piece", a creatively designed poster, which the participants worked on throughout the two weeks. On their quilt piece, they were asked to respond to the following questions: What is culture?, Who are you as culture being?, and Who are you as language/culture teacher? Although we did not have explicit goals for their identity development, we were hoping to stimulate discussion about complex and multiple identities in order to challenge cultural stereotypes and clichés.

The group of 25 participants was diverse in age and teaching experience. While some had been teaching for almost a decade, others were planning to start their careers in the following academic year. All except one white male self-identified as ethnically Chinese. As for the self-identified ethnically Chinese participants, they came from a wide range of regions in China and all spoke Mandarin Chinese. Although our participants likely knew or had been exposed to regional dialects of China, we adopted their own ethnic identification as Chinese for this study and did not explore intra-cultural differences unless they emerged in the data. All of them were working or preparing to work as teachers of Chinese in K-12 schools. They registered for this optional summer course in the hope of finding tools that would allow them to integrate meaningful culture content with target language instruction in their classrooms.

The instructors hoped to receive information from this study that would inform their teaching. Against this backdrop, we designed this case study with the goals to understand a) which cultural identities teachers enact in our PD classroom and b) how the teachers build (or do not build) connections between their learning and their cultural identity.

B. Data Collection

In order to obtain trustworthy data (Lincoln & Guba, 1986), we triangulated our data collection by drawing on four sources:

First, we video recorded every lesson of the course, often with two or three cameras to capture multiple perspectives. Course participants sometimes took the cameras to film their work and offered impromptu reflections on the course content. Some of our richest data came from final presentations of their culture quilt pieces.

Second, classroom observations were either conducted by one of the instructors or an outside observer (Andie Wang). Observation notes were taken and shared between the researchers.

Third, Heidi, Xue, and Johanna kept journals about their experiences in class and reflections on them.

Fourth, we collected readings, worksheets, and student work (reflections on readings, formative assessment quizzes, etc.) and took pictures of posters, notes, and writings on the board.

C. Data Analysis

After organizing and transcribing about a third of our classroom videos, we engaged in a process of open coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) of all our data (video transcripts, observation notes, journals, classroom documents), during which we started to see recurring topics. In this process, we mainly relied on video transcripts and observation notes to identify themes and referred to the journals and student work for the sake of triangulation to confirm or amend potential themes). Based on them, we selected further data for transcriptions and applied codes more inductively. Finally, we merged the most dominant codes into three themes, which we called "critical cultural awareness", "identity as pedagogy", and "cultural identity". We defined them and assigned them subcategories as shown in the table below:

TABLE 1.
DATA ANALYSIS - THEMES AND CODES

theme	definition	subcategories/codes
critical cultural awareness or lack thereof	participants did (not) talk about culture in ways that align with the course goals, i.e. in a critical, non-stereotyping way	● (not) integrating products, practices and perspectives ● (not) complicating topics by addressing multiple perspectives ● (not) moving away from a big-C-culture approach to everyday or popular culture ● (not) reinforcing or deconstructing cultural stereotypes
identity as pedagogy	participants used aspects of their identity to illustrate pedagogical beliefs or concepts	● making connections between self and use of cultural products/materials ● making connections between self and authenticity ● making connections between self and pedagogical concepts ● making connections between personal experiences and teaching culture
cultural identities	participants talked about their cultural identity (development)	● addressing hybridity or flexibility of bicultural/ multicultural life ● claiming being monocultural ● expressing feelings of belonging ● positioning as insider and/or outsider

When interpreting our data, we shared and discussed our most important findings with an outside expert (Martha Bigelow) for intercoder reliability (Krippendorff, 2004), which helped strengthen or revise our interpretations.

V. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Our analyses led us to the following findings:

A. There Was a Wide Range of Teachers' Positionings vis-à-vis Multicultural Identities.

Our teacher participants' enacted cultural identities were linked to their affiliations with or positioning vis-à-vis home and host cultures. In particular, our findings indicated a mixed picture of how they identified in terms of Chinese and US American cultures. One teacher participant, Meng, explained, "For me, 10 years here, I don't consider myself as an American, but I don't consider myself as a pure Chinese any more" (Meng's presentation, June 29, 2012). Her dilemma was influenced by the way others, both Chinese and US Americans, perceived her culturally. She said, "The

way I talk and the way I dress, I don't think (Chinese) people will think I'm Chinese… they (US Americans) still think I'm a Chinese based on the way, how I look" (Meng's presentation, June 29, 2012). In contrast, some participants accepted two or more cultures as co-existing within themselves. Yet they insisted on one part of their identities, usually the Chinese one, being stable and inflexible, which echoed Fichtner and Chapman's (2011) finding that the teachers' nationality-based identities tended to be the dominant ones and remain stable. Liping, for example, represented her identity on her poster as two body halves in one human being. She commented, "Some things will never change and I will automatically defend them … because I want to be a little safe" (Liping's presentation, June 29, 2012). This suggests that she considered changes of her identity as a potential threat and associated them with a feeling of being unsafe. Another common statement teachers made was the expression of pain when losing part of their cultural identities, even when they were "not ready to give up" (Min's presentation, June 29, 2012). Min, for example, regretted failing to retain Chinese values in parenting her daughter, who she described as being "Americanized" and who "rejects anything Chinese" (Min's presentation, June 29, 2012).

The diversity in teachers' positioning vis-à-vis multiple cultures reinforces that construction of cultural identities is ultimately an individual process that is heavily shaped by individual factors, such as time spent in the target culture and parenting responsibilities (Varghese et al., 2005). As Menard-Warwick (2008) put it, intercultural identity is "a negotiated investment in seeing the world through multiple cultural lenses" (p. 622). Following this definition, our teacher participants negotiated and constructed their cultural identities in this PD course, especially when cultural identities became a focus of discussion and aspects of identities were explicitly explored and examined. The importance of doing this cultural identity work was echoed by Yun in her statement, "every immigrant has a story" and her call to learn to listen to these vastly different stories (Yun's presentation, June 29, 2012).

Regarding the relationship between our participants' cultural identity work and their pedagogical learning, we found disconnects as well as misconnects, as we show in the following sections.

B. Disconnects and Misconnects between Pedagogical Learning and Cultural Identities

We found a pattern of disconnects and misconnects between course content and concepts and our participants' creation of cultural identities, in other words, instances in which participants either did not make a connection between their cultural identities and their pedagogical course concepts (disconnects), or the connections they made did not align with our goals for the class (misconnects). Disconnects and misconnects surfaced in four different ways:

Performance. We noticed that course participants frequently "performed" course concepts, especially during presentations. We use the word "perform" here to describe discourse that is disconnected from the main topic or purpose of communication and instead serves other purposes, such as identity and relationship building. According to Goffman (1959), performances are directed at an audience, which, in our case, consisted of the teachers' peers as well as the course instructors. Wenting, for instance, referred to a large number of pedagogical concepts and terms in her presentation: the 5 Cs of the Standards for Foreign Language Learning, Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS), the triangle of culture learning (products, practices and perspectives), authenticity, and the idea of "complicating culture". However, her comments about the concepts remained very general and did not show evidence of deep understanding. In fact, her interpretation of the DMIS suggested that she had a positive image of "Denial", the most ethnocentric stage during which "people of other cultures, insofar as they are perceived at all, seem less human, lacking the 'real' feelings and thoughts of one's own kind" (Bennett, Bennett, & Allen, 2003, p. 23). Also other comments ("I just really liked this"; "Johanna presented this"; "is like that") did not explain why she used these terms on her poster and how she appropriated them for her work and thinking. Finally, when she talked about her teaching practice, she said,

I'm not sure I'm gonna change it because it's it has been great, but do you think the 5 years old kid will really tell you 'I don't know I want this [unintel.]'? No, they probably won't question, so how do you really stand out their perspective?. (Wenting's presentation, June 29, 2012)

As Wenting prefaced her reference to the triangle of culture learning (products, practices, and perspectives), her reflection contained uncertainty ("I'm not sure") about teaching culture perspective and confidence in her current way of teaching ("because it's it has been great"), which implied that she had not addressed the perspective aspect of culture learning in class. She expressed serious doubts about the possibility of teaching cultural perspectives to five-year-old children in her class ("No, they probably won't question"). What is important to know is that ways of addressing cultural perspectives, especially with younger students and students with lower proficiency levels, had been discussed and addressed in our course. However, Wenting still denied this possibility and showed reluctance to even attempt such teaching in her context. It might have been worth further probing why she did not consider teaching perspective to her students as a real possibility. In all, her mentioning of the triangle of culture learning did not necessarily show deep understanding of the concept or a willingness to connect it with her teaching practice. It is reasonable to conclude that Wenting's list of course concepts was disconnected from a larger string of discourse about making changes to one's pedagogy as a teacher.

Misinterpretation. The word that was most frequently misinterpreted was "authentic". This was surprising to us, considering that authenticity was emphasized throughout the program. However, the course participants had their own understandings of it as the following two examples show:

I like this question 'Am I authentic?' I say yes am I as Chinese. I am authentic as Chinese person because I live there for 30 years. I speak Chinese, I have a Chinese face, like this, and I love Chinese culture. I enjoy Chinese food. I eat Chinese food daily. I lived there for almost 30 years, and uhm I'm authentic as Chinese person. (Wu's presentation, June 29, 2012)

When I started my teaching career, I just like a Chinese carp, very authentic, very authentic. Everything came from Chinese, pure Chinese. [...] My Mandarin Chinese pretty standard because China's TV host, radio host, most of them from my hometown. So if you could take my Chinese everyone could understand your Chinese in China. Is so authentic. (Yang's presentation, June 29, 2012)

These examples do not simply differ from our definition of authenticity, they are evidence of an understanding of authenticity that is in stark contrast to the goals of our class: Wu and Yang, among many others, used "authentic" to define "appropriate" and "real" Chinese culture, which seems to be associated with the prestige and power of dominant social groups. By evoking such traditional understandings of Chinese identity and culture, they implicitly, and probably without intention, reinforced an existing yet commonly unchallenged hierarchy within diverse Chinese-speaking communities, with traditional ways of being Chinese on the top and non-mainstream ways on the bottom. This is the opposite of our course goal of encouraging teachers to include minoritized and hybrid cultural identities in their Chinese instruction.

Misuse. A third type of misconnect between pedagogical learning and participants' identities occurred when course participants understood the literal meaning of an idea or concept but used it in ways that we had not intended and thereby, again, created meaning that ran counter to the main ideas of our class. For example, one participant, Mei, argued that with minimization being the most common stage, it was legitimate for her to remain in it ("I'm fine." - Mei's presentation, June 29, 2012). She further explained she was "totally Chinese" when coming to the U.S. and that she wanted to "stay in Chinese culture" because it was her "root" and that she was interested in exploring other cultures only "a little bit". In her presentation, Mei showed that she had a good understanding of the DMIS as she was able to apply the stages of the model to her narrated life experience. Interestingly, she did not use this knowledge to push herself to the next stage, but to find justification to remain in the status quo of her intercultural development. While her use of Bennett's model and terminology showed understanding, it appeared to serve the purpose of justifying an absence of development. This exemplifies how course participants connected pedagogical learning with their own identities in unintended and potentially problematic ways.

No connection. A fourth and final disconnect between pedagogical learning and participants' cultural identities was the absence of course ideas and concepts in situations that would have lent themselves to using them. One example is Yan's narrative of the international festival that her daughter's school puts on every year. She described how her daughter participated in the following narrative:

She made a big poster. I did not expect that. She wrote her Chinese name. She introduced her favorite food, noodle, and then she used calligraphy and also she wrote the zodiac animal. She wrote a lamb, that's her, and for her dad, he is a lamb too. Yeah, I am very proud of her, but yeah, she is American. Only her face is Asian.

(Yan's presentation, June 29, 2012)

Such moments made us instructors wonder why the concepts and ideas from our course did not transfer to participants' stories like the above. Our very explicit critique of a traditional approach to cultural festivals as they are commonly put on in schools laid out how presentations of different cultures in these contexts tend to essentialize cultures and their representatives by focusing merely on idealistic and traditional ways of "the four Fs: food, festivals, famous people, and folklore". Although the examples we gave in our critique were very close to Yan's story, she described the school's festival uncritically. This is even more surprising as her story follows her description of her daughter as "American with a Chinese face", in which she emphasized her daughter's orientation towards US American culture. A critical view on the school's cultural activities based on the concepts from our class might have empowered Yan to distance herself from a restrictive and imposed view of Chinese and American identities and claim acknowledgment of her daughter's multiple identities. Yan's story is evidence for the absence of course concepts in participants' identity narratives, and thus for the disconnect between their cultural identities and their pedagogical learning.

Overall, the disconnects and misconnects we described are evidence of a discrepancy between the expectations we had for our teacher participants and their selective internalization of them. Put differently, misconnects and disconnects originated in the gap between "roles" and "(role) identities" (Martel, 2013).

C. Teachers Made Two-way Connections between Cultural Identities and Pedagogical Learning

Apart from misconnects and disconnects, we found strong evidences for two-way connections between the teacher participants' cultural identities and their pedagogical learning. On one hand, they drew on personal cultural experiences and their understandings of these experiences in learning to teach culture in this two-week PD course; on the other, their learning in this course shaped the way they interpreted their experiences, which constitute their cultural identities.

Using cultural identity to learn pedagogy. First, the teachers in our study used their personal experiences, often cross-cultural ones, and their understandings of these experiences to make sense of pedagogical content and concepts, similar to previous studies (Duff & Uchida, 1997; Menard-Warwick, 2008). Sometimes, this reference to personal experiences and understandings was prompted by the instructors; at other times, the teacher participants chose to

connect with their experiences and understandings while processing new concepts introduced in this PD course. One such reference occurred in a session when the teacher participants were asked to find examples of essential questions. This was part of a review from the previous day when essential questions were introduced as a tool for lesson planning (see Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). Many teacher participants shared personal stories and from these stories generated questions that aligned with newly learned pedagogical content. We found teachers' integration of stories and essential questions powerful as they illustrated their sense-making of a pedagogical concept with stories that were deeply meaningful for them and critical to their identities and life course. One question, for instance, came from a teacher participant, Liping, as she reflected on religion. She said:

Should a person have a religion? Because my family, my background, my mother and my grandma, they, Buddha, they believe in Buddha. So now my husband's family, my husband, they believe [in] Christian. But I don't have any. [laughs] So I, sometimes I think I should [act] like my mother and my grandma believe in Buddha, or should I [act] like my husband, my husband's family? So I'm just don't know what to do. Or just nothing. (Liping's presentation, June 21, 2012)

In many cases like the one above, the reference to experience was cultural as well as personal. Liping's question on religion did not necessarily develop as a result of her cross-cultural experiences. Yet, her reference to Buddhism and Christianity can be seen as an act of cultural identity work. She was torn between religious choices and came up with a fundamental anthropological question: Should a person have a religion? Liping's personal experience of being part of a bi-religious family brought to the fore her attitude towards religion, which was rooted in her growing up in China and augmented by her marrying and living with her US American husband in the US. This positioning vis-à-vis religion, or a sense of belonging or not belonging to a group, constituted her cultural identity in this moment.

Another, perhaps more elaborate, example was offered by Feili, who had an essential question to ask: How big a dream one can have and how far one can go? The question was essentially evidenced, if not answered, by her own life before and after coming to the United States. She said,

In Chinese, we always teach us ... don't have too much dream, because you know that bring you up in the sky, you are floating, you don't have a root, that's all Chinese cultures teach me … and that time we saw the commercial. I was in Hong Kong. … And they have this commercial about the Toyota, the car. The picture is like there is the house, you know, the family, husband and wife, have two kids, and they were washing their car really happy, ..., that's the ideal life. You know, I thought, it's like I want that life. But that time in China I know it's impossible because in China we can only have one child. .... But ten years later, fifteen years later, you know, I met someone on the internet who was in the US, (laugh) who was in the United States. that's interesting, you know, how I, I am here, you know, I have my ideal life, we own Toyota. We both have Toyota and the house. We have two kids. You know, [interrupted by the audience's comments]…. it's like this is the life I always wanted to be. ... I've always been dreaming." (Feili's presentation, June 29, 2012)

Feili's evolvement of the question describes her journey from a young girl dreaming about a middle-class American family life in a commercial she saw accidentally to a now wife, mother of two, and house/car owner in the United States. Based on her experience, Feili questioned the Chinese value of being grounded and not dreaming big. She then supported this questioning with her success story of having big dreams and making them come true.

These examples of developing essential questions out of cross-cultural experiences were evidence that the teacher participants were to some extent developing "critical cultural awareness through the juxtaposition of opposing values" (Menard-Warwick, 2008, p. 631). More importantly in this context, this awareness served their learning to teach culture by incorporating their personal understandings of the course content into the PD course.

Pedagogy shaping cultural identities. Second, pedagogical content and concepts also shaped our teacher participants' cultural identity building processes, which were largely reflected on the way participants used pedagogical concepts to frame their cultural experiences and identity work. One example is Fan, who used course concepts in telling her cross-cultural experiences and cultural identity in her presentation of her cultural quilt piece on the last day of the course:

Actually I used uhm big ideas and then essentional question essential question to make this poster the last several days I have a lot of ideas a lot but not be organized so I used this to organize my thinking uhm the first one big idea is 'Who is Fan?' or 'Who am I?' that is my big idea. And then continue that is my essential question overarching is 'What is my culture being? American? Chinese?'. And then I have different essential question for about the topic and to answer to reflect myself 'Who is Fan?', like that. (Fan's presentation, June 29, 2012)

Here Fan connected her skills of developing essential questions with the cultural quilt project in which she was supposed to reflect on her cultural beings. In the following part, she elaborated on how this connection had helped her understand herself.

I need to jump out jump out from my own thinking. And then through the teaching about the reading and the teaching about the DMIS right? [...] Actually because I have ever been in a lot of country I always think I'm very open mind very you know and then you know I can accept adapt and integrate other culture but actually through this course I just understand actually, not at all. Actually I still Denial Defense and most of the time I still just stay here [points at Minimization] uhm Minimization. Yeah, so this help me to understand myself. (Fan's presentation, June 29, 2012)

Using the DMIS framework she had learned from the PD course, Fan readjusted her identity with reference to the DMIS' stages of intercultural competence. It is fair to say that learning about DMIS framework brought to her attention

those she was unaware of or had misconstrued. She was thus able to articulate changes from a seemingly simplified self-perception of being open-minded to a more critical understanding of herself and her intercultural competence. According to Fan, this critical self-understanding could be attained by opening her heart and not being afraid to ask this question of "who I am?", as the quote below shows:

And the other [point] is complicate myself [...] that help me to understand myself more deeply you know like deeper anyway. And just don't be afraid to ask why because sometimes because I'm scared to ask this question because I'm scared I don't have answer for myself right now. So I just think It's OK I just open my heart maybe I can have this question I can reflect myself and then through everyday life daily life I can try to find an answer for myself one day. So if I use in my class, just don't be afraid to ask why. [...] We have this struggle because we wonder if we can give students an answer but that's a Chinese culture for teacher. First I think we need to have the correct answer for students but actually no. We just to have this question actually we can that's a very good chance we can have good interaction and then we can understand each other and then, yeah, so then is open-end, you know, open discussion. (Fan's presentation, June 29, 2012)

As Fan said, learning in the PD course opened up a space for her to "complicate herself", where it was acceptable not to have an answer about her identity. Such a space was the "open dialogue" that Fichtner and Chapman (2011) suggested, inviting teachers to articulate and reflect on their cultural identities. Because this self-reflection was done in a group presentation, it was also "collaborative inquiry", as Duff and Uchida's (1997) called it, on the teachers' part. As Fan's quotes showed, this space for collaborative inquiry and self-reflection contributed to her knowing that cultural identity is a dynamic concept and involves constant reflection on one's own. Overall, these episodes illustrated Fan's incorporation of course concepts into reflections on her identity and cultural sensitivity development.

Interestingly, this reflection also made Fan reconsider what she expects of teachers. Rather than having one correct answer ready, she now embraced the idea of having open discussion with students. This indicates a back-and-forth relationship between pedagogical learning and cultural identities. Whereas it was commonly found in literature that language teachers utilized their cultural experiences and understandings in teaching (Duff & Uchida, 1997; Menards-Warwick, 2008), such bi-directionality was not explicitly reported. Rather, previous studies focused on how teachers' cultural identities served language teaching rather than the other way around.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

As our findings show, the relationship between cultural identities and pedagogical learning is bidirectional. Thus, not only do cultural identities shape the process of becoming a teacher, pedagogical learning also interacts with how teachers identify and position themselves. This interaction seems to be more dynamic than the one-directional development from identity work to pedagogy that previous literature has suggested (Morgan, 2004). In other words, the classroom discourse in our PD course was characterized by constant shifts between identity work and pedagogical learning. Thus, rather than merely transferring identity-related topics into a PD classroom, we suggest cycling back and forth between identity and pedagogy foci to ensure a deep integration of both areas. Not only could such an integration strengthen both areas, it might also enhance the quality of teacher education programs and PD courses. As Martel (2013) has observed, the "washout effect", i.e., the gradual deviation of first-year teachers from their teacher education program's contents after program completion, poses severe challenges to teacher education programs. Integrating pedagogical learning and cultural identities in a bidirectional/cyclical and dynamic way could help reduce this washout effect.

Further, our findings point to the importance of individual differences for both cultural identity building and pedagogical learning. The broad spectrum of stages of cultural development that our participants represented sparked many discussion or moved them along, but also challenged us as instructors with an ambitious agenda. Differentiating our instruction according to cultural development would have been critical, yet our differentiation was mostly based on language, teaching context, and teaching experience. What remains open is what theoretical basis could be used for such differentiation. Commonly, the DMIS (Bennett, 1993) has been promoted to categorize learners according to their development intercultural competence and design instruction based on their developmental stages (Bennett, Bennett, & Allen, 2003). However, this model cannot capture the complexities of our participants' cultural experiences and ever-changing nature of their identity construction processes. In contrast, PD courses for language educators that are created around cultural identity building could carve out space and time for participants to do this complex work and thus be more successful in the long run.

Based on these findings, we suggest that further research is needed that analyzes the classroom data within an identity-as-pedagogy framework. Such work could shed light on the intersection of teacher identities and student learning or teacher identity and student identities, both of which would fill a great dearth in the research about how teacher identities impact student learning and wellbeing.

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Johanna Ennser-Kananen is a clinical assistant professor of language education at Boston University. Her research is situated in teacher education and language learning and focuses on issues of language and power. For example, her work seeks to answer questions such as: How do language learners become legitimate users of their linguistic resources? Ennser-Kananen is the co-editor of the *Routledge Handbook of Educational Linguistics* and has published, among other places, in the *Modern Language Journal*, the *International Journal of Language Studies*, and the *Education and Language Research Journal*.

Andie Fang Wang is a Ph.D. candidate in Second Languages Education at the University of Minnesota and currently a visiting instructor at the Department of Asian Languages and Literature at Macalester College, St. Paul, MN. She has both experiences of teaching English as a Foreign Language in China and teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language in the U.S., at university levels. Her research interests include Chinese as a second language acquisition, culture teaching in Chinese language classrooms, and cross-cultural language teacher identity development.

Developing Critical Reading of Argumentative Text: Effects of a Comprehension Strategy Intervention

Michael Tengberg
Karlstad University, Sweden

Christina Olin-Scheller
Karlstad University, Sweden

Abstract—**This article reports a single-group intervention study designed to improve critical reading proficiency among adolescents. Critical reading in the study is defined as 1) being able to identify written argumentative structure; 2) being able to analyze arguments in terms of relevance and sustainability; and 3) being able to evaluate argumentation through written, critical response. A multiple strategy approach for critical reading instruction was implemented over the course of six weeks (15 lessons) in four classes in Swedish 9th grade (N=74). Classroom activities included reading of argumentative texts, teacher modeling of three strategies (*identifying*, *analyzing*, and *evaluating*), frequent discussions, and response writing to argumentative texts. Results indicated that low and middle achievers made significant and large improvements from pretest to posttest, while for high achievers the intervention seemed to have no effect at all. Closer analysis also revealed that the ability to analyze arguments accounted for the largest proportion of improvement.**

Index Terms—**argumentative text, critical reading, comprehensions strategies, dialogue, intervention study**

I. Introduction

The development of critical reading practices reflects a key component in an education for democratic citizenship. Recent curriculum reforms in many countries emphasize that a major challenge for future schooling of adolescents' literacy is to improve their ability to cope with argumentative texts. Research demonstrates that critical reading of argumentative text is important for a rich involvement in modern social and cultural life and for many concrete real-life decisions, but also immediately important for students in the large variety of text-based assignments awaiting them across the curriculum (Larson, Britt,& Larson, 2004; Knudsen, 1992). However, empirical research on the reading of argumentative texts indicates that explicit classroom instruction is rare, that students at both secondary and tertiary level are generally not very skilled at identifying key components of argumentative structures in texts, and that students often conflate provided arguments with cases they build themselves while reading, especially when reading arguments of controversial content (Chambliss, 1994, 1995; Haria, MacArthur,& Edwards Santoro, 2010; Larson et al., 2004; Newell, Beach, Smith,& VanDerHeide, 2011). Newell, Beach, Smith, and VanDerHeide (2011) also argue that although research programs emphasize argumentative reasoning and modeling of argumentative reading, future research should pay more attention to the instructional activities that facilitate a development of critical reading behaviors. A particular focus in that line of research, they argue, would be to investigate in what way instructional discourses influence students' reasoning about written argumentation.

This paper reports an intervention study designed to improve critical reading proficiency among adolescents. The working definition of critical reading in the study includes 1) being able to identify written argumentative structure (author's claim, supporting arguments[1], evidence, and counter arguments); 2) being able to analyze arguments in terms of relevance and sustainability; and 3) being able to evaluate argumentation through written, critical response.

Comprehension strategies instruction

For a couple of decades, empirical research has confirmed that comprehension strategies instruction may contribute strong and lasting improvements of students'reading comprehension (Block & Duffy, 2008; Duke & Pearson, 2002; Graesser, 2007; National Reading Panel [NRP], 2000). These effects of teaching strategies,such as summarizing, monitoring, generating questions and making predictions,have extended to both narrative (Janssen, Braaksma, & Couzijn, 2009) and expository (Elbro & Buch-Iversen, 2013; Spörer, Brunstein, & Kieschke, 2009) texts. However,whilethe term 'strategies instruction' seems to emphasize the strategies themselves, many researchers have also suggested that the context (e.g., the type of classroom interaction or motivational factors such as engagement)of the instruction is also a criticalaspect (Almasi& Hart, 2011; Wilkinson & Son, 2011). Drawing on theories about the socio-

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[1] In this article, the term *argument* is used parallel to how *warrant* is used in Toulmin's (1958) model.

cultural aspects of learning (Vygotsky, 1978) and dialogism (Bakhtin, 1981), a strand of research have accentuated the need for reading instruction thatcombinesexplication and critical examination of textual features with open-ended discussions about different reader positions or stances (Hobbs & Frost, 2003; Nystrand, Gamoran, Kachur,& Prendergast,1997; Soter, Wilkinson, Murphy, Rudge, Reninger, & Edwards, 2008). The dialogic approach aims, for instance, to givestudents control of their own learning process and to make learning an active and collaborative enterprise (Pressley, Beard El-Dinary, Gaskins, Schuder, Bergman, Almasi, & Brown, 1992).More specifically, the dialogic component of instruction also entails that different ideas and interpretations of text are contrasted and examined collaboratively in the classroom (Almasi, 1995; Nystrand, 2006).In this sense,dialogue refers both to oral and written circulation of ideas and interpretations, especially sinceintegratingreading and writing, by training students how to produce proficient written responses to texts,has also proven effective for fostering comprehension (Graham & Hebert, 2010; Headley, 2011).

In the following study, these pedagogical principles are united within an instructional framework referred to asdialogic strategy instruction (DSI). DSI draws on theories of metacognition (Israel & Block, 2005) and dialogism (Nystrand et al., 1997; Wilkinson & Son, 2011) in stressing the necessity of making content learnable by visibility and by public sharing of learners' perceptions.Itis characterized by a combination of three different features:1) structured text discussions based on open-ended questions and a high degree of student engagement; 2)explicit introduction of carefully selected comprehension strategies by way of a five-step gradual release model (cf. Duke & Pearson, 2002); and3) continuous and challenging response writing, which is in turn responded to by peers and teachers (cf. Tengberg, Olin-Scheller, & Lindholm, 2015). Thus, DSI share a number of traits with other multiple strategies programs like Reciprocal Teaching (RT) (Palincsar & Brown, 1984) and Transactional Strategies Instruction (TSI) (Pressley et al., 1992). Distinctive from these instructional models, however, is the integration ofshared response-writing in order to help students deepen their analysis of texts and of their own understanding of texts. By getting time and opportunity to formulate their own interpretations carefully, it is also expected that students may contribute more substantially and more confidently to classroom dicussions about the texts they read (Wong, Kuperis, Jamieson, Keller, & Cull-Hewitt, 2002).In this way, the study incorporates and explores an additional dimension of the effectiveness of multiple strategies instruction.

In line with the pedagogical aims of the intervention, i.e., to improve critical reading proficiency, the comprehension strategies employed in the interventionalso differ from the ones used in RT and TSI. Strategies were defined as identifying, analyzing, and evaluating. The motivation for the choice of strategies is outlined in next section.Strategies were introduced in the first phase of intervention and trained continuously while reading, discussing and responding to a mixture of argumentative texts appropriate for the participants, who were Swedish students in 9th grade (15 yrs old).

Previous research has also indicated that explicit instruction of comprehension strategies may be of particular benefit for low-achieving readers (Tengberg, Olin-Scheller, & Lindholm, 2015; Brown, Pressley, Van Meter, & Schuder, 1996; Gersten, Fuchs, Williams, & Baker, 2001). This may be consistent with theoretical propositions that reading strategies are usedprimarily fordecoding or used when comprehension provesdifficult (Afflerbach, Pearson, & Paris, 2008) and thatdifferent sorts of strategiesare appropriate at different levels of reader competence (Alexander, 2006; Skaftun, 2011). For this reason, we will examine not only the intervention effect on group level, but also its possible relation to students' initial levels of reading proficiency. As previous research demonstrates strong correlations between amount of reading and reading achievement (Baker & Wigfield, 1999; Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998; Gottfried, Schlackman, Gottfried, & Martinez, 2015; OECD, 2010), we are similarly interested in the relationship between reading habits and intervention effect.

Thus, the main purpose of the study is to investigate whether dialogic strategy instruction can serve to improve adolescents' critical reading of argumentative texts by training their capacity for identifying, analyzing and evaluating argumentative structure in text.A second purpose is to examine whether students' initial level of reading proficiency as well as their reading habits are factors that relate to the intervention effect.

Critical reading
Historical and social perspectives
The term critical reading clearly includes a range of perspectives on how and why education should prepare students for analytic and reflective reading not only of argumentative texts but of any text at all. Similarly, critical reading is closely tied with historical ideas of living the 'examined life', i.e.,to pursue critical and systematic inquiry into both political life and one's own actions (Nussbaum, 1998; Saunders, 1987). The term critical reading also connects with progressive and reformist thinking about deliberative literacy in order to promote social change,including critical traditions of sociology and pedagogy (Freire, 1972; Janks, 2010). These traditions obviously cover much more than strategies for critical reading of text; yet a common feature of modern attempts to champion equity, to challenge systems of oppression etc. has been to promote literacy among the subjugated (Luke, 1988).From the social perspective, then, critical literacy, as a component of educational endeavor,carries a number of connotations that relate not specifically to habits of text processing but to habits of mind.These habits of mind include sensitivity to ideological markers, affinity to go beyond surface level understandings and ability to connect actions and performance to social context, power structures, personal experience, and to individual opportunities and ambitions (Freebody & Freiberg,

2011; Shor, 1992). From the social perspective, critical reading also contains a component of personal growth in terms of developing ethical, moral, and ideological awareness.

Textual practices and knowledge of argumentative structure

While habits of mind to encourage awareness, deconstruction, and potential resistance to textual ideologies constitute the core of a critical literacy, none of these traits are possible without essential knowledge of textual and rhetorical structures.Freebody and Freiberg (2011)argue, for instance, that critical reading should be understood as "a body of curricular knowledge […] on the matter of knowledge about textual practices to do with reading, constructing, analyzing, and evaluating texts and interpretations of texts." (p. 447)Similarly, Chambliss (1995) argues that competent reading of argumentative textincludes identifyingspecific text cues and applyingthe appropriate strategies for comprehension of written argumentation. According to Chambliss, reading instruction should,thus,focus on both argumentative structure and comprehension strategies. Following Toulmin's (1958) claim-evidence-warrant model, she investigated advanced high-school readers' response to lengthy written arguments. In the Toulmin model,theclaimis the assertion or case put forward, e.g.,a plea of guilt or of innocence; theevidenceis facts or examples supporting the claim; and thewarrant(called argument in the present study)is the link between the two by defining the conclusion drawn from the evidence (cf. Chambliss, 1995, p. 781). Chambliss also draws on Meyer's (1985) notion about successful strategies for competent reading. According to Meyer, competent reading involves the ability to identify rhetorical structures usedby authors and link them into a summary of the argument structure, helping readers to recall the gist of the text. While the 12th-grade advanced readers (N=80) in Chambliss'study were influenced by textual structure (e.g., placement and explicitness of claims), they were able to identify both claims and evidence and to construct gist representations of the argumentative texts.

Influenced by Chambliss, Haria et al. (2010) designed a comprehension strategy intervention in order to enhance fifth-graders (N=7) ability to identify and critically analyze written arguments. The instruction focused on identifying structural elements, summarizing, and critically evaluate the overall argument. Thus, in addition to Chambliss' model, Haria et al. (2010) focused on helping students to summarize the author's arguments and develop their own views in response to the text. After 21 training sessions, participants showed substantial progress on measures for all three aspects (identifying, analyzing, summarizing). Although not having been taught explicitly to write persuasive responses, their capability to do so also improved significantly.

The instructional objective in the present study and the assembly of strategies for developing critical reading builds on the studies mentioned above, although the participating students are older and the classroom instruction is performed by ordinary teachers and not by the researchers. We also include a larger sample of students than Haria et al. (2010) in order to be able to verify results by statistical analysis. In the study, we relate to the interactive perspectiveon argument promoted by Newell et al. (2011), viewing argumentation and analysis of arguments from both a cognitive and a social perspective. Argumentation is, thus, not only dependent on task-specific knowledge and familiarity with a model for argument analysis (cognitive perspective), but also on the awareness of the social practices, the literacy events (Prior, 2005), in which arguments are provided and responded to (social perspective).

We hypothesize that by combining strategy instruction (emphasizing the cognitive aspects) with structured classroom discussion using the implications from dialogic theory (emphasizing the social perspective),teachers may scaffold students' comprehension of and capability to respond to written argumentation. The design is based on the anticipation that students will be able to integrate knowledge drawn from reading, responding in writing, and from discussing the argumentative texts. Some previous studies have indicated significant correlations between comprehension and writing of arguments (cf. Parodi, 2007), and there are theoretical motivations for a transfer to occur between both writing and reading and discussion and reading (cf. Newell et al., 2011). Some studies indicate, however, that integrated reading and writing instruction of persuasive text have a significant effect on writing quality, but not on reading recall (Crowhurst, 1991). Similar results have been reported for transfer from discussion to writing and reading, i.e., effects were observed for persuasive writing but not for recall of text (Reznitskaya, Anderson, & Kuo, 2007). In the present study, however, the integrated writing mode is closely connected to the reading analysis and takes the form of analytical response writing. Similarly, the discussions aim at a mutual and deepened understanding of the argumentative structure in the texts that the students read. Thus, our anticipation is that writing and discussion in this setting may contribute to levels of comprehension rather than recall. In sum, the following research questions are pursued in the study:

1. To what extent may DSI serve to improve adolescents' critical reading of argumentative texts by training explicitly their capacity for identifying, analyzing and evaluating argumentative structure in text?
2. Is the effect of the intervention dependent on students' initial level of reading proficiency?
3. Is the effect of the intervention dependent on students' reported reading habits?

II. METHOD

Participants

The intervention was implemented during six weeks (15 lessons) in four different Swedish 9th grade classrooms (students being 15–16 years old). The classes came from three public schools in two different small-sized cities. The average class size was 22.0, although some students chose not to participate and some were missing for the posttest. Thus, complete data for the analysis were collected from 74 students (34 girls and 40 boys).Of the participants in the

study, 63 students reported Swedish as L1 and 11 students (15%) reported another(all non-Scandinavian)L1. 4 of these 11 students reported to be enrolled for Swedish as a second language instead of L1 Swedish. The sample of students was not selected by randomization. Rather, students were nested in classes and chosen because their teachers had previous experience of participating in intervention studies and of working with DSI.

All participants were informed of the purpose of the study and written consent was collected. For students who were under 15 years of age (N=2), written consent was also collected from their parents. Participants were informed that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any point, and that the data collected would be treated confidentially and used for research purpose only.

Design

The study uses a single-group pre-test/post-test design to determine the impact of DSI on 9th graders capacity for critical reading of argumentative texts.Unfortunately, we were unable to include a control groupin the study, which means thatwe cannot establish whether DSI provides a more efficient learning environment than any other instructional approach would. Results from the study should therefore be treatedcautiously and subsequent corroboration is necessary. However, to use control groups as a way of comparing educational efficiency has its own problems. If the study had been targeting narrative reading, a control group might have included classrooms of naturally occurring instruction in narrative reading to represent a business-as-usual condition (common in intervention designs). Instruction in critical reading of argumentative text, on the other hand, is less frequently occurring in second grade classroom and was not available at the time of data collection. A business-as-usual condition would, thus, have meant that the studentshad received reading instruction but no specific training in critical reading. The comparison would, therefore, be a comparison of more and less instruction on the given topic,as much asit would be a comparison of two different instructional approaches. Alternatively, the control condition might have constituted another intervention. In our case, we would then have had to design a second intervention for the particular purpose of demonstrating an effect of DSI. Both these alternatives raise questions about the scientific appropriateness and the validity of the comparative data.Nonetheless, the present design still clearly suffers from the lack of a control condition.

Analytical procedure

Statistical analyses related to pre-test/post-test results in the study are based on paired sample t-testing and effect sizes are calculated using Cohen's *d* (Cohen, 1988).In order to examine whether students' initial levels of critical reading ability was associated with the effect of the intervention, the sample was split three ways based on rank orders from pre-test results (low achievers, middle achievers, and high achievers) and a repeated measures ANOVA was used to determine interaction between time and group. Similarly, in order to control whether students' reading habits was associated with the intervention effect, data from a questionnaire, administered by the researchers two weeks before the intervention started, was used to compare improvement rates for those who reported frequent, medium and non-frequent leisure time reading.The samplewas consequently split three ways by rank orders on a reading habits index[2]and repeated measures ANOVA was used to analyze interaction between time and group.

Strategies

The strategies selected for the particular aims of the intervention were defined as *identifying*;*analyzing*; and *evaluating*. Identifying means identifying structure and structural components such as claim, argument, evidence and (sometimes) counter argument within argumentative texts. Analyzing means recognizing the types of arguments such as argument by authority, by emotional connection or by logic. It also includes assessing arguments by relevance (is the argument related to the claim?) and sustainability (does the argument justify the claim?).Evaluating, finally, means to arrive at an evaluative judgment and to provide an independent response to the claim by taking departurein both prior knowledge of the topic and in an analysis of the argumentative structure in the text.

Teacherpreparation and implementation of instruction

Intervention teachers were provided with training of the teaching model, including theoretical baselines and plans for classroom procedures, in three 3-hr seminars before the intervention started and in an additional two 3-hr seminars during the intervention. In these sessions, plans for classroom procedures, including detailed written instructions, were presented by the research team and discussed in the group of teachers and researchers. Teachers were allowed to provide suggestions for revisions in order to match instructional procedures to the participating students. The final version of the instructions then served as script for lesson plans for all four teachers.

DSI was implemented in four 9th grade classrooms (87 students in all) and taught over a period of six weeks (November–December), 15 lessons in all. Classroom activities included reading of argumentative texts, teachers' modeling of the three strategies, discussions in pairs, groups and whole class, at times arranged as classroom debates, and response writing to argumentative texts followed by peer response and whole-class evaluation. The intervention at large was divided into four phases: 1) introduction including definition of argumentative text and argumentative structure; 2) the construction of arguments and evidence, analytical perspectives; 3) analysis and response to argumentative texts; and 4) argumentation in various formats. A brief description of the text material selected for the intervention and the activities included in each phase is provided in Table 1.

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[2] Items included in the index were five four-point Likert scale items asking students how often they read magazines, novels, facts, blogs, and for pleasure. Question formulation, except for the one about reading for pleasure, were taken from the PISA Student questionnaire, section on Individual engagement in reading (OECD, 2009, p. 269). The scale ranged from "Never or almost never" to "Daily or almost daily".

TABLE 1.
THE STRUCTURE OF THE INTERVENTION

Phase	Text types in use	Activities
1) Introduction Lessons 1–3	Debate articles	Classroom debates to warm up. Introduction of the argumentation unit and of learning objectives. Introducing classical rhetorical analysis. Identifying theses.
2) Arguments and evidence Lessons 4–7	Debate articles and columns	Introducing *Identifying* as strategy. Practicing argumentation and identifying author claims and arguments. Introducing *Analyzing* as strategy. Practicing analysis of arguments.
3) Analysis and response Lessons 8–12	Debate articles, columns	Responding to argumentation, peer-evaluation of responses. Introducing *Evaluating* as strategy. Practicing written responses based on argumentation analysis. Classroom debate.
4) Argumentation in various formats Lessons 12–15	Public service video campaign, columns, commercial ads and reviews	Discussing multimodal argumentation. Ideological markers in the frame. Practicing analyzing arguments. Writing a debate article.

The materials selected for the 15 lessonsconsisted of nine argumentative texts (including columns, debate articles, reviews, and commercial ads) and a short section of a public service video campaign. Topics were wide-ranging and included, for instance, the roleof private, independent schools in Sweden, wolf hunt, furnishing minors with alcohol etc., but they also included texts with purely commercial interests, a category of text that the teachers found particularly useful for the purpose of the intervention. A corner stone of the implementation was that the teaching would focus both on comprehension strategies themselves and on the issues dealt with in the texts. Teachers were also instructed to be especially observant to students' levels of emotional engagement as they read and discussed texts on various topics and to use these observations as grounds for meta-discussions with students. Previous studies (cf. Chambliss, 1994) show that when students are emotionally engaged in the content of the text, they often show signs of biased processing in that they fail to remember arguments correctly or are less able to accurately identify claims that contradict their own opinions. In this study, we tried to make this aspect an object of analysis in the classroom and to have teachers discuss their own levels of engagement in order to raise students' awareness of their processing of emotionally engaging content.

In phase 1, after having been warmed-up with a series of short classroom debates, and introduced to the theme and objectives of the six-week teaching unit, students were given an introduction to classical rhetorical analysis by the teacher. Identifying arguments in a text requires a particular type of search-reading (Khalifa & Weir, 2009) based on the reader's formal knowledge of the text type structure. For this reason, an initial step in the intervention was to make students familiar with the classical rhetorical structure, which is often reproduced in debate articles and columns. These experiences were then operationalized, at first in whole-class analyses, then in smaller groups, of debate articles.

In phase 2, students were introduced to the first two strategies (identifying and analyzing). They also practiced argumentation by writing various claims on the black board and discussing the relevance and sustainability of arguments in support of or opposed to the claims. These exercises were mixed with continued shared reading of debate articles, now including topics (e.g., wolf hunt) chosen particularly to stir some emotional engagement in some of the readers.

Phase 3 included repetition of previously used themes, including for instance meta-discussions about the relationship between emotional engagement and the ability to be attentive to argumentative structures. Students were also introduced to the third strategy (evaluating), which was then practiced in response to debate articlesand columns. Students also read each other's texts and engaged in a whole class debate.

In phase 4, elements of multimodal argumentation was discussed and examined in groups and in whole class. Students read, analyzed, and produced critical responses to an online public service video campaign, to commercial ads, and a film review.To round off the unit, students were assigned to individually compose a debate article on a topic of their own choice. These texts were then circulated and critically examined by a classmate.

Critical reading measures

Students' ability to identify, analyze, and evaluate written argumentation was tested before and after the intervention using a researcher-designed critical reading test (designed by the research team). Thetest was not designed as a standard reading test, but rather as a combination of different performance tasks with a set of more regular reading assessment tasks. It was based on the reading of two texts, representing the genre of debate articles,to which similar sets of items were given. The test aims at measuring students' ability to accurately identify author's claim and supporting arguments and to analyze arguments in terms of relevance and sustainability. Items to measure the ability to identify author's claim were in the multiple-choice format, where students were to select the correct answer from a list of four alternatives. Items to measure ability to analyze arguments included short answer questions asking the students to identify arguments, select the type of argument, and to define with a motivation whether the arguments were relevant and sustainable. In order to measure students' ability to evaluate by responding critically to the author's claim and arguments, the test also included two open-ended response items. Student responses to these two items were coded and quantified on three different variables (engagement with claim; engagement with author's argument; and provision of their own arguments). All test results were blind rated by a faculty member at Karlstad University, who was trained to use the coding guides, but otherwise not associated with the research team. In order to ensure reliability in coding, 25 % of the test results

(including short-answer and open-ended questions only) was re-coded by one of the researchers. The agreement between coders according to Cohen's kappa statistics was .82 on pre-tests and .87 on post-tests, which was considered to be sufficient for the purpose of the study.

Since the study is based on repeated measures, we used an ABBA design in order to avoid order or practice effects, i.e., two test versions (A and B) were composed and half of the students (each class was split randomly) received the A-test for pre-test and the B-test for post-test, while the other half took the tests in the reversed order. An independent t-test, conducted to ensure that the two tests were equally, or almost equally, difficult, indicated no significant difference between pre-test means in the two groups (M_A=8.95, SD_A=4.59; M_B=9.03, SD_B=5.48; t (74)=.069, p=.95). Using a two sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, it was also verified that the two distributions were equal ($p = .98$).[3]

Fidelity of implementation

All classes were observed at three different occasions (beginning, middle and end of intervention period)in order to verify the quality and pace of implementation of the intervention.From these observations, we were able to conclude that the intervention teaching was implemented in a similar pace and manner and in accordance with the lesson guide in all four classes. Obviously, the discussions about texts took different directions and initiated opportunities for different types of reflection about text and argumentation. Yet, the same texts and assignments were read and responded to in the course of the six weeks. The observations also revealed a large degree of positive student engagement and several signs of a dynamic learning environment. At the same time, we observed that both students and teachers often found it difficult to correctly identify the claim and the arguments in the texts. Arguments were, for instance, conflated with evidence or with background references, which sometimes lead to confusion in the students' written responses.

III. RESULTS

Measurement of intervention effects

In order to determine the impact of DSI on 9th graders capacity for critical reading of argumentative texts, pre-test and post-test scores were analyzed using paired samples t-test. Descriptive statistics are reported in Table 2 along with results for significance tests and effect sizes. All scores were approximately normally distributed with all values for skewness and kurtosis non-significant, i.e., z-values within the range of -1.96 to 1.96 at both pre-test and post-test, thus making the distributions appropriate for parametric analysis.

TABLE 2.
TEST SCORES FOR ALL STUDENTS AND BY ACHIEVEMENT LEVELS AND READING HABITS FREQUENCY

Student group		N	Pre-test Mean[a]	SD	Post-test Mean	SD	Effect size (d)	p
All students		74	8.99	5.02	13.00	5.89	0.60	0.001
Proficiency	low achievers	25	3.76	1.72	11.48	6.26	1.41	0.001
groups	middle achievers	25	8.52	1.74	12.84	5.53	0.85	0.001
	high achievers	24	14.92	2.67	14.75	5.64	Ns	
Reading habits	non-freq. readers	24	7.17	3.75	11.21	6.58	0.63	0.008
	med-freq. readers	24	8.50	5.38	13.25	5.35	0.65	0.007
	freq. readers	24	10.96	5.24	14.96	5.29	0.76	0.001

[a] Max. 30 points

Paired samples t-testing of pre-/post-test scores was conducted to evaluate the impact of the intervention on sample level. The increase from pre-test (M_{pre} = 8.99, SD = 5.02) to post-test (M_{post} = 13.00, SD = 5.89) wasstatistically significant [t (73) = 5.14, p<.001 (two-tailed)]. In addition, an estimate of effect size(Cohen's d = .60) tells us that the impact was medium sized according to Cohen's (1988) guidelines.In order to assess intervention impact for different achievement levels, a repeated measures ANOVA was run indicating a significant and large between-subject effect for the interaction between time and group [F(2, 71) = 34.68, p< .001, partial η^2 = .47].Pairwise comparison showed that all groups were significantly different from each other in this respect. We then conducted paired samples t-tests for each achievement group in order to analyze the effects for each group individually. As shown in Table 2, the improvements made by both low achievers and middle achievers was statistically significant with large effect sizes [t_{low} (24) = 6.01, p< .001 (two-tailed), Cohen's d = .1.41] [t_{med} (24) = 3.71, p = .001 (two-tailed), Cohen's d = .85]. For high achievers, on the other hand, mean post-test score was slightly lower than the pre-test mean score, although the difference was not statistically significant [t_{high} (23) = .14, p = .89 (two-tailed)]. A graphic illustration of differences in improvement between the three achievement groups is provided in Figure 1.

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[3] A *p*-value below .05 would have indicated that there was a significant difference between the two distributions. In this case, we can safely draw the opposite conclusion.
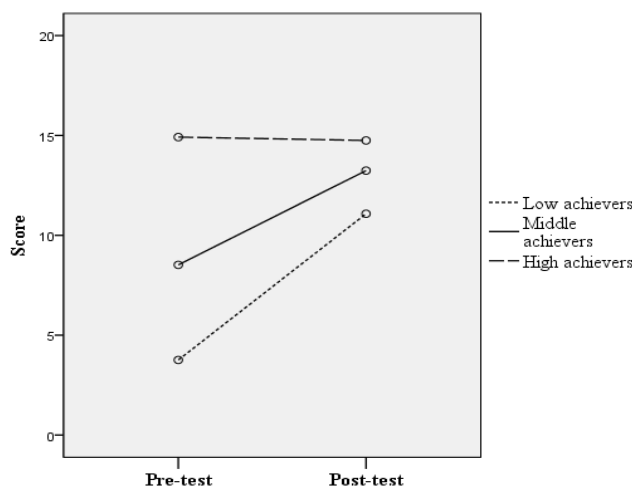
Figure 1.Improvement from pre-test to post-test for low, middle, and high achievers.

In order to control whether the effects of the intervention was related to students' reading habits, a repeated measures ANOVA was run,indicating a significant difference in training effectsbetween frequent and non-frequent readers (p = .002). The differences in effect between non-frequent and medium-frequent readers on the one hand, and medium-frequent and frequent readers on the other, were both non-significant. As shown in Table 2, the intervention effect is larger for the frequent readers (d = .76) than for medium- (d = .65) and non-frequent (d = .63) readers. This result suggests, contrary to what we might expect based on previous research,that the low achievers on the test are not necessarily the same students as those who report low frequency of reading. Similarly, the high achievers on the test are not necessarily the frequent readers. A Chi-squared test for independence verified this assumption, suggesting that there was no significant association between the two variables achievement level and reading habits [χ^2 (4, N = 72) = 5.69, p = .22, phi = .20].This result is unexpected since previous research demonstrates a strong correlation between amount of reading and reading achievement (Baker & Wigfield, 1999; Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998; Gottfried, Schlackman, Gottfried, & Martinez, 2015; OECD, 2010). It should be notedthat the sample size in the present study might be too small for this type of analysis,and that the findings, therefore, do not exclude the possibility of detecting an association between reading habits and intervention effect by using a larger sample.

At this point it is also interesting to analyze more specifically on which aspect of the critical reading the students made the largest improvement. The reading test was designed to measure the ability to 1) identify author's claim and supporting arguments;2) to analyze arguments in terms of relevance and sustainability; and 3) to evaluate by responding critically to the author's claim and arguments. Descriptive statistics for the threeaspectsmeasured are reported in Table 3. By conducting paired samples t-tests for each aspect separately, we found that no significant improvement was made in terms of identifying author's claim, whereas significant and large improvement was made both in terms of analyzing arguments [t_{ana} (73) = 5.79, p< .001 (two-tailed), Cohen's d = .69] and in terms of evaluating [t_{eva} (73) = 4.014, p< .001 (two-tailed), Cohen's d = .47].

TABLE 3.
DETAILED DISTRIBUTION OF TEST SCORES

Aspect		Pre-test		Post-test		Effect size	p
	N	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	(d)	
Identifying claim[a]	74	3.53	2.24	3.69	2.31	Ns	0.63
low achievers	25	1.56	1.96	3.36	2.34	0.60	0.006
middle achievers	25	3.72	1.57	3.24	2.28	Ns	0.36
high achievers	24	5.38	1.25	4.50	2.17	Ns	0.07
Analyzing arguments[b]	74	2.59	2.28	4.95	2.62	0.69	<0.001
low achievers	25	1.00	1.35	4.80	2.99	1.41	<0.001
middle achievers	25	2.24	1.62	4.92	2.50	1.04	<0.001
high achievers	24	4.63	2.14	5.13	2.42	Ns	0.41
Evaluating[c]	74	2.86	2.41	4.36	2.68	0.47	<0.001
low achievers	25	1.20	1.35	3.32	2.56	0.89	<0.001
middle achievers	25	2.56	1.92	4.68	2.48	0.75	0.005
high achievers	24	4.92	2.26	5.13	2.76	Ns	0.76

[a] max. 6 points, [b] max. 12 points, [c] max. 12 points

When inspecting the details of improvements by achievement groups, it is revealed, however, that, consistent with the general pattern in the study, the low achievers seem to make large improvements (d = .60) from pre-test to post-test even on the identifying claims variable. This improvement is corresponded by small, but non-significant, impairments

in the groups of middle and high achievers. As can be expected, judging from the general results reported in Table 2 above, the high achievers make no significant improvement on any of the three aspects of the test.

IV. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The study was designed to investigate whether dialogic strategy instruction can serve to improve adolescents' critical reading of argumentative text. Critical reading, in the study, was defined as the capacity for identifying, analyzing and evaluating argumentative structure in text. We also set out to investigate whether the intervention effect would be related to students' initial levels of critical reading proficiency and/orto the reading habits they reported.

Summary of the results

The results indicate first of all that the six-week intervention of DSI indeed helped to improve students' critical reading ability. The size of the effect for the whole group was large according to standard mean statistics, yet, for high achieving students, the intervention seemed to have no effect at all. Conversely, low and middle achievers seemed to benefit extensively from the intervention. By analyzingthe subsets of the test, we foundthat low achievers were the only ones to demonstrate significant improvement in identifying arguments in a text. For analyzing and evaluating arguments, however, middle achievers also demonstrated large improvement. Finally, the results indicate that students' reading habits were associated to their response to the intervention, in the sense that frequent readers made significantly larger improvements than non-frequent readers.

Comparative measures

Although these results are interesting and valuable to both researchers and practitioners, the study design suffers from the lack of a control condition, by which the intervention effects could be compared. An alternative way to assess the impact of the intervention is to relate the effect size to some previously known measureof progress in reading comprehension for the similar age group.In Sweden, no data of this sort is available, but in Norway an example is offered by the national reading tests taken each year by students in 8th and 9th grade, and thereby providing a measure of progress in reading comprehension over the period of one school year. From the average mean differences over the last five years, the effect size of a school year can be estimated to equal $d = .36$[4], compared to $d = .60$ in six weeks for the whole group in our study. It should be noted that this is a quite rough measure, and although there is an overlap between the national reading test and the researcher-designed test that we used in the study, one should be careful when drawing conclusions based on this comparison. It has been confirmed, for instance, that intervention effects are generally larger when using researcher-designed comprehension tests than when using standardized reading comprehension tests (Rosenshine & Meister, 1994).The researcher-designed test obviously focuses on a much more narrow area of skills, which makes it reasonable to expect larger effects from intense instruction, as was provided in the study.

Bearing these limitations in mind, the comparison still offers a relevant reference to the effects reached in the present study. It may not support conclusions about the pedagogical potential of the instruction as compared to other possible approaches to critical reading instruction.But it provides at least a small indication that the size of the learning effect in the present study is quite large compared to what is normally expected over a school year in the similar educational topic.

Relation to previous research

In concurrence with earlier studies designed to analyze and improve students' ability to read and comprehend written argumentation (e.g., Chambliss, 1995; Haria et al., 2010; Reznitskaya, Anderson, & Kuo, 2007), our findings suggest that explicit teaching of argumentative structure in text, including identifying key elements such as claim, argument, and evidence, plays a crucial role in enhancing students' comprehension and their ability to respond critically to argumentative text. The results of the study also support suggestions made in previous research (e.g., Crowhurst, 1991; Parodi, 2007) that the writing and reading of persuasive discourse are highly integrated capabilities and that the synergy effects from the mutual dependency of productive and responsive facets of comprehending argumentative structure should be utilized in instruction. The fact that the intervention seems to contribute especially well to the improvement for low achieving students is interesting and aligns with previous research on strategy instruction (Tengberg, Olin-Scheller, & Lindholm, 2015; Brown et al., 1996; Gersten, et al., 2001).

In this way, the studyoffers some crucial implications for classroom practice. If students are provided with the opportunity both to engage in dialogues about argumentative text and to learn models for identifying and analyzing these texts, their capacity for critical reading may be strongly supported. In addition, DSI, like some other comprehension strategy approaches,seems to have the potential of contributing to an increase of equity between students, by offering the most to those who are initially the weakest readers.To some extent, the instruction thereby serves the progressive purpose of a deliberative literacy as discussed above. Finally, a distinctive contribution of the present study is the suggestion that these effects are not exclusive to some specially designed experimental condition, but available in ordinary classrooms after only a modest amount of teacher preparation.

Limitations

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[4] Data is gathered from approximately 120 000 students each year (2010–2014) and available in annual official reports (Eriksen & Roe, 2011; Eriksen & Roe, 2012; Eriksen & Roe, 2013; Roe, 2014; Vagle & Roe, 2010). The effect size is calculated using the average difference between mean scores and the standard deviations in 8th and 9th grade respectively each year.

The study also has a number of limitations that need to be considered. First of all, since the intervention was composed of several different instructional features, it is not possible to pin down which of them were more or less important for the end result. It is often suggested, for example, that the complexity of classroom teaching cannot be analyzed into the sum of the different parts. Rather, it should be expected that there is an interaction going on between, for instance, close analysis of structural elements in written arguments and open-ended discussion on engaging topics. Although this interaction may contribute, for instance, to an integration of cognitive and social perspectives on critical reading, known to be important for high-quality teaching (cf. Newell, 2011), and to general robustness in relation to classroom diversity, it may also cause problems when there is a lack of effect in some aspect of the instructional target.

Second, as noted above, the improvement with regard to identifying author's claim was confined to low achievers only, which was unexpected given that identification of author's claim was a recurrent topic of discussion during the whole intervention. If this problem was related to some deficiency of the intervention (it could for example also have been related to the level of difficulty in the test), there are many possible adjustments that can be made and we have little evidence to decide on which one of them to choose. We know from observations that identification of author's claim in the text was sometimes experienced as difficult even for the teachers. Therefore, we need to consider both the instructional design and the level of complexity in the text sample used during instruction. Distracting information in the text may conceal nodal elements such as claim and argument, and the argument structure encountered in a text may not match the expectancies that students bring from instruction. So, while complexity, just like emotionally engaging content, contributes a challenge necessary for creating a meaningful literacy learning environment, it may also hamper students' comprehension in a way that compromise transfer effects from learning. A suggestion for future research, therefore, would be to trace the discursive patterns from classroom dialogue in speech and writing to the discourses of analysis brought to use in the students' post-test responses. That may help to explain why some features of instruction are less useful to students than others.

Third, in the study, both students and teachers were quite aware of the fact that they were part of an educational intervention, i.e., that they were trying out something different from their ordinary teaching andalso being monitored by researchers. This awareness may contribute a Hawthorne-effect, which might be difficult to evade in educational interventions unless the design involves several different intervention conditions, in which case the effect can be considered neutralized.

Fourth, in the present study, neither alternative interventions nor a regular control group was used. The findings reported need, therefore, to be corroborated by subsequent studies. As we argued in the methods section, using a control condition in order to estimate instructional effects of an uncommon educational content, such as explicit teaching of critical reading ability, carries its own limitations. On the other hand, one might argue that any comparison is better than no comparison. A suggestion for a follow-up study would, thus, be to include both a business-as-usual condition as controls and an alternative intervention condition. In order for the latter to make an appropriate comparison, it should preferably constitute some other 'best practice' strategy design,such asReciprocal Teaching (Rosenshine & Meister, 1994), but using only argumentative texts as reading material.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the results of the study suggests that it is possible to scaffold the improvement of adolescents' critical reading of argumentative texts by using dialogic strategy instruction, focusing on the capacity for identifying, analyzing and evaluating argumentative structure. Even in a short intervention period like 15 lessons, the learning effects may be relatively strong compared to baseline measurement. However, the effects observed in the study are limited to low-achieving and middle-achieving students only. For high-achieving students, thus, instruction in critical reading must be accompanied by supplementary pedagogical measures.

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Michael Tengberg, Karlstad, holds a PhD in Humanities in education from the Department of Literature, History of Ideas and Religion, University of Gothenburg, Sweden, 2011. The thesis is an empirical investigation of literature discussions in the classroom and the learning potential of such discussions.

He has extensive experience of teaching at all educational levels and has been a Secondary school teacher of mathematics, science and Swedish, Senior lecturer of comparative literature, Senior lecturer of educational work and is currently holding a position as Associate professor of educational work at Karlstad University, Sweden. He is the author of several scientific articles, including "National reading tests in Denmark, Norway, and Sweden. A comparison of construct definitions, cognitive targets, and response formats" in *Language Testing* and "Improving students' narrative comprehension through a multiple strategy approach: Effects of dialogic strategy instruction in secondary school" in*L1–Educational Studies in Language and Literature*, and also co-editor of several anthologies, such as *Bedömning i svenskämnet* (Stockholm: Natur & Kultur, 2015). Tengberg's research has centered on reading instruction from a dialogical perspective and the learning effects of various instructional approaches. He is currently doing research into the asessement of reading comprehension, primarily within high-stakes testing.

Dr. Tengberg Scheller is a member and coordinator of the National network for research on Swedish in education. He is also a member of the Association for Educational Assessment – Europe.

Christina Olin-Scheller, Karlstad, holds a PhD in comparative literature from the department of Aesthetics and Social Sciences, Karlstad University, Sweden, 2006.The thesis dealt with upper secondary school student's fictional text worlds in and out of school.

She has broad experience from teaching at all educational levels and was Lecturer in comparative literature for two years. Since 2008 she has been Senior lecturer at the Institution for Pedagogical Studies, Karlstad University, Sweden, where she currently holds a position as full Professor in Educational Work. She has published articles, f.e. "Literary Prosumers. Young people's reading and writing in a new media landscape", Olin-Scheller, C. & Wikström, P. *Education Inquiry* 1:1, 2010 and "'Let´s Party.' Fan fiction sites as arenas for young girls' gender construction", Karlsson, M. & Olin-Scheller, C., *Gender and Language*, 9 (2) 2015.She has also contributed with book chapters which turn to researchers, as well as teacher educators and teachers, f.e. together with Michael Tengberg, *Läsa mellan raderna* [*Reading between the lines*], (Malmö: Gleerups, Olin-Scheller; C & Tengberg, M., 2016). In her present research Olin-Scheller has a focus on questions dealing with literary and education at different levels and her research interests are about young people's reading and writing in a new media landscape as well as questions dealing with reading instruction and reading development.

Prof. Olin-Scheller is a member and coordinator of the Swedish National Literacy Network as well as a network of national and Nordic network of L1-researchers (www.kau.se/smdi).

A Survey of University Students' Knowledge of Vocabulary Learning Strategies and Influential Factors in Middle East

Amin Rasti Behbahani
University of Jyvaskyla, Finland

Abstract—In this study, the most and the least common vocabulary learning strategies was explored among Eastern Mediterranean University international students. Besides, the role of personal factors such as gender and English proficiency level of students were considered. After distributing the questionnaire, the data were analyzed applying t-test and ANOVA. It was revealed that the level of importance of vocabulary learning strategy use was moderate for the EMU international students. Furthermore, it was found that metacognitive strategies and social strategies are the most and the least common vocabulary learning strategies respectively utilized by EMU international students for learning vocabulary. Regarding the role of gender and proficiency level, the t-test and ANOVA results indicated that gender was an effective factor; whereas, proficiency was not an influential factor in preference of students for using vocabulary learning strategies. Male students preferred detrimental strategies but females preferred metacognitive strategies.

Index Terms—vocabulary learning strategies, proficiency, gender, EFL context

I. INTRODUCTION

"Vocabulary plays a crucial role in English language acquisition, particularly for college students" (He, 2010). If students acquire a deep and rich vocabulary knowledge-base they can convey their message more efficiently. But learning vocabulary is not easy. New words will be forgotten if they are not used. Practitioners and applied linguists have always been trying to not only emphasize the importance of vocabulary learning but also propose a way for efficient learning of new vocabulary items.

Recently, an effective tool for accelerating language learning is learning strategies. Oxford (1990) emphasizes on the influential role of language learning strategies and defines them as "behaviors, actions, and techniques that students apply to ameliorate their progress in producing and comprehending L2" (p. 2). She believes if students learn the strategies they will be faster and better in their learning route. Gu (1994) and Schmitt (1997), considering language learning strategies, provided "Vocabulary Learning Strategies" (VLS). They hold that if language learners learn VLS, their vocabulary learning enhances this knowledge assists the process of acquisition.

Different learners have different methods and preferences of learning because of the effects of various personal variables and contextual factors. Factors like gender, level of proficiency, age, etc can distinguish learners in their choice of methods for vocabulary learning, especially VLS. Recent researches have revealed the probable impact of these factors (Siriwan, 2007; Lachini, 2008; Amirian & Hashemifar, 2013). These factors also vary in different contexts of the study. For example, language learners, in Rainkamol's (2008) study in a Malaysian university, chose VLS different from Hogben and Lawson's (1996) in an Australian university.

There have been many studies on various aspects of language learning strategies in the past decades (LLS hereafter). However, the studies involving language teachers in the EFL context are very limited. So far, the pertinent research has shown the importance of the LLS for the language learning process, as well as positive educational outcomes. Previous studies on the characteristics of the "good language learner" as well as "unsuccessful language learners" has proved that language learning strategies plays an important role.

As it is discussed, knowing about language learning strategies, especially vocabulary learning strategies are very important for language learners. On the other hands, studying the factors that can affect the choice of these strategies seems necessary. Besides, being aware of difference in choosing these strategies due to difference in context and lack of this study in an international university like Eastern Mediterranean University, It seems necessary to conduct a research studying vocabulary learning strategies while considering factors like gender and language proficiency.

Considering the importance of vocabulary learning strategies and factors like gender and proficiency, conducting researches on VLS choice in different contexts is crucial. Lack of such a study, in this paper, the researcher tries to investigate the VLS choice among male and female international students in different levels of proficiency at Eastern Mediterranean University (EMU), North Cyprus. The results of this study could be useful for international universities where students need to attend English language preparatory courses as well as EMU.

Significance of the Study

This study's outcome is significant for both English language teachers and researchers. English language teachers at EMU can use the findings of this study to help their student learn vocabulary items as fruitful as possible. Knowing the most and the least VLS among international students and being aware of the impact of factors like gender and proficiency level help these teachers to provide the most sufficient and proper way of teaching vocabulary and vocabulary learning strategy. The researchers can use the results of this study to improve their knowledge about the vocabulary learning strategy and come up with a possible theory or hypothesis that make their future studies more scientific.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

Vocabulary knowledge is very essential for language learners. Teaching them vocabulary learning strategies can be very productive in teaching vocabularies. Fan (2003) believes that there are five steps in the most of the vocabulary learning strategies: "1. facing with the word, 2. getting an image of the word in mind, 3. learning the meaning, 4. making a strong connection between form and meaning, 5. using the word". Holding this concept, many researchers studied different aspects of vocabulary learning strategies. For example, Oxford (1990) emphasizes on encouraging language learners to learn VLS they makes learners autonomous and responsible for their own learning. Benson (2001) also believes that EFL/ESL learners' level of independency will increase if they were taught vocabulary learning strategies explicitly. Nation (1990) believes that one of the most important ways for learning language is knowing and using vocabulary learning strategies. Schmitt and Schmitt (1995) posits the importance of vocabulary learning strategies knowledge they believe that educational programs and syllabuses must contain teaching VLS. Lajtai (2013) also found that language learners who are aware of vocabulary learning strategies outperform others with little knowledge of vocabulary learning strategies at Pecs University. Graves (1987) believes that students must try to learn independently. In so doing, they must learn how to use strategies for learning. In vocabulary learning, which is a very personal activity, teaching language learners to use vocabulary learning strategies is essential. Willerman and Melvin (1979) found that students, when learning vocabulary, use different kinds of strategies after a month studying French. They conclude that VLS learning is necessary. Nation (2001) introduces the learning burden in vocabulary learning as the amount of effort that learners needs for learning new vocabulary items. He adds "different words have different learning burdens for learners with different backgrounds and each of the aspects of what it means to know a word can contribute to its learning burden" (p. 23). Teachers must help students to learn VLS for decreasing the learning burden of learning new vocabulary items. Oxford and Crookall (1990) advise that teachers must try to find the best way for teaching vocabularies effectively. They continue by emphasizing the knowledge of VLS by teachers as well as students. They put that teachers must be aware of different types of vocabulary learning strategies because greater knowledge of vocabulary means greater progress in language learning.

Factors Affecting Vocabulary Learning Strategy Use

1. The Most and the Least Common VLSs

As the importance of vocabulary learning strategy was discussed in previous session, many researchers tried to identify most and least common vocabulary learning strategies that were used by language learners in different contexts.

Hogben and Lawson (1996) observed 15 students who were trying to study and learn new Italian words to know what types of vocabulary learning strategies they use. Most of EFL learners try to learn new vocabulary items by repetition of new words and their meanings as their vocabulary learning strategy. While the grammatical or physical aspects of the words were paid little attention.

Riankamol (2008) investigated the vocabulary learning strategies adopted by English gifted students of Udomuska School in the first semester. Using Schmitt taxonomy, a 25-item questionnaire adopted for the purpose of the study. Using frequency, percentages, and means, it was divulged that high proficient students at that school were using metacognitive strategies frequently. They also use "I learn words by listening to vocabulary CDs" as less frequent strategy in that category.

Asgari and Bin Mostapha (2011) examined the types of vocabulary learning strategies by TESL students at University Putra Malaysia. By an open-ended interview, 10 students were asked about their type of strategy use. They concluded that the most popular strategies were learning through reading, using monolingual dictionary, using various English language media, and use of the words in daily conversation.

Amirian and Heshmatifar (2013) searched for most and least common strategies among Iranian EFL learners at Hakim Sabzevari University, Iran. They asked 74 male and female learners by Schmitt vocabulary learning strategy questionnaire. The results revealed that determination strategies and social strategies were the most and the least common types the learners use generally in that context respectively.

2. Gender

Gender has always been considered as an important issue in language learning. Being important, many researchers hold an empty space for gender in their studies. In vocabulary learning strategy studies, gender is also controversial. Results are different in this area of study.

Siriwan (2007), in her thesis, explored the role of different learner's variable in vocabulary learning strategy choice at the Rajabhat University. Regarding gender, she found that it has a significant role in choosing vocabulary learning strategies.

Heidari Soureshjani (2011), in a comparative study, explored gender-oriented vocabulary learning strategy among Iranian EFL learners. He observed a significant difference in male and female use of vocabulary learning strategy. He ascertained that proper vocabulary learning strategy must be used considering the sex of the learners.

Hassanzadeh, Khatib, and Rezaei (2011) investigated the role of gender in vocabulary learning strategy use among 146 undergraduate EFL students, after evaluating their level of proficiency, at the University of Vali-e Asr, in Rafsanjaan, Iran. They found no significance difference between learners' gender and selection of vocabulary learning strategy.

Pourshahian, Rezvani Kalajahi, and Yousefi Azarfam (2012) studied variation in vocabulary learning strategies use according to gender difference in Turkish EFL learners. The results of their study revealed that gender is highly correlated with vocabulary learning strategy use. Female respondents' frequency of vocabulary strategy use was slightly higher than males in metacognitive and psycholinguistic vocabulary learning strategies.

3. Level of Proficiency

Reckoning the level of proficiency, many researchers have studied its relation with vocabulary learning strategy use to know the possible correlations.

Lachini (2008) investigated the impact of level of proficiency in L2 on Creative, Reflective, Effective, Active, and Motivated (CREAM) vocabulary learning strategies. 120 language learners were participated in his study. A 60-item questionnaire was administered in a 5-point Likert scale and distributed among them with three different levels of proficiency. Using MANOVA, it was revealed that these types of strategies are used variably among learners based on their level of language proficiency. Participants, in the same level of proficiency, use the same strategies with same frequencies.

Barekat and Karami (2012) studied the possible correlation between proficiency level of Iranian EFL learners and their vocabulary learning strategy use in Rasht. Categorizing learners into three levels of proficiency: elementary, intermediate, and advanced, they asked the subjects about their vocabulary learning strategies by a questionnaire. It was revealed that proficiency level is highly correlated with frequency of vocabulary learning strategy use. Advanced learners were using most common vocabulary learning strategies noticeably more than intermediate and elementary level learners.

Ajideh and Jafari (2013) explored whether there were differences in the selection of vocabulary learning strategies among Iranian EFL learners with different levels of proficiency. They selected 102 participants randomly for the study after their proficiency levels were evaluated. Participants received questionnaire regarding the aim of the study. They found that there were significant differences among frequency of learners' choice for using vocabulary learning strategies in different levels of proficiency statistically.

Lin-Fang (2013) studied the effects of different learners' variables, such as motivation, family background, and proficiency level, on the use of vocabulary learning strategies. He conducted his study on 450 first grade students at Fooyin University. His results revealed that proficient learners were better users of vocabulary learning strategies. They watched English TV programs, listened to radio in medium of English, read English newspapers, and playing computer games in English more than less proficient learners.

Azimi Mohammad Abadi and Baradaran (2013) conducted a study to investigate the "relationship between learner autonomy and vocabulary learning strategy with regard to different level of proficiency". In their study, by using two proficiency tests they classified learners and 190 female and male EFL learners were asked to fill in questionnaires. The results revealed that proficiency level is highly positively correlated with learners' autonomy and vocabulary learning strategy use among learners. Learners, in advance level, developed more autonomy with regard to vocabulary learning strategy use than intermediate level learners.

Khezrlu and Sadeghi (2013), in their study named: self regulated vocabulary strategy use, considered learner's variables like proficiency. Their experimental groups experienced learning new vocabulary items in the form of printed textual definition with pictures, glosses provided in L1, and glosses presented in L2. Finally, they were asked to fill in a self-regulated capacity vocabulary learning strategy questionnaire. The results showed that learner's variables were influential on final results but not for proficiency level. There was a weak correlation between learners' level of proficiency and their use of vocabulary learning strategies.

III. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Knowing the necessity of learning the most helpful vocabulary learning strategies and the effective learner's variables, I have tried to answer the following questions in this paper:

1. To what extent do International students at Eastern Mediterranean University use vocabulary learning strategies?

2. What are the most and the least common vocabulary learning strategies applied by international students at Eastern Mediterranean University?

3. Is there any significant difference in vocabulary learning strategy regarding gender?

4. Does English proficiency level affect using vocabulary learning strategies among groups?

IV. METHODOLOGY

A. Descriptive Research

This study is descriptive in design. Using this method the current status of phenomena is interpreted (Farhady, 2008, P. 144). There are three groups of descriptive studies. Survey is the most famous one. Using questionnaires and interviews data are collected (Dornyei, 2007). The role of personal factors such as gender and proficiency level of the students on their use of vocabulary learning strategies are also studied. Thus this study is correlational as well.

B. Context

This study was conducted in an EFL context. The study was conducted at Modern Language Division, Eastern Mediterranean University, North Cyprus. Students who are going to begin their study at postgraduate levels such as master and doctorate, if their proficiency scores in English proficiency test does not meet the language requirements, they must pass one or two deficiency language courses in   Modern Language Division.

C. Participants

76 international male and female language learners answered the questionnaire in this study. 48 males and 28 females were asked to participate in this study. Their age ranged from 22 to 47 years old. All of them had at least one deficiency English language course to pass. They were from different countries involving Asia to Europe. They were mostly from countries such as Iran, Turkey, North Cyprus, Libya, Iraq, Syria, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Russia, Austria, and Ukraine.

D. Instruments

Two instruments were used in this study. At first, the English language proficiency test, designed by the School of Foreign Languages at Eastern Mediterranean University and is a standardized test considering the reliability and the validity, was used for measuring proficiency level of the language learners. The top score, in this test, was 100.

A 5 points Likert-scale questionnaire containing 52 questions adapting from Schmitt's (1997) taxonomy of vocabulary learning strategies was used as the second instrument (Riankamol, 2008; Pourshahian & Rezvani Kalajahi, 2012; Amirian & Hashemifar, 2013). The questionnaire contains three sections: a consent letter, personal information questions, and the batteries. According to Schmitt (1997), the learning vocabulary strategies are divided into five main categories in which these 52 questions are placed: Determination Strategies (DET) or strategies that are used by learners themselves for finding the meaning of the words or retention of the meaning without taking any help from others, Social Strategies (SOC) or strategies that learners use for finding or retention of the meaning by interacting with other people, Memory Strategies (MEM) or Strategies that are utilized by the learners for retention of the words by relating them to their previous knowledge, Cognitive Strategies (COG) or strategies for vocabulary learning that engage learners more in mechanical processing rather than mental processing, and Metacognitive Strategies (MET) or strategies that learners use for managing their cognitive processes such as decision making, monitoring, and evaluating learner's progress.

E. Procedure

To conduct the study, after preparing the adapted questionnaire, the researcher requested the permission for conducting the research at the university. When the permission was offered, the researchers distributed the questionnaire among the participants. It takes three days to distribute and collect the questionnaires. Finally, questionnaires were analyzed by the computer and results revealed.

F. Data Analysis

For finding the most and the least common vocabulary learning strategies used by the learners, frequency, mean, and standard deviation were applied. To find the possible role of language proficiency level and gender in using VLS, T-test and ANOVA was applied. Data were analyzed by *Statistical Package for the Social Sciences* (SPSS) for windows, version 21.

V. RESULTS

A. Research Question 1

To what extent do International students at Eastern Mediterranean University use vocabulary learning strategies?

Regarding the following established means categorization, the data were analyzed (Griffiths, 2007; Oxford, 1990); accordingly, The highest mean is 3.5-5. The analysis of the EMU international students' survey data revealed that VLS importance was low (M=2.8621). In other words, the use of vocabulary learning strategies is moderate between the EMU international students. The results are presented in the Table 1 below. A is the overall average level of importance.

TABLE 1.
EMU INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS' VOCABULARY LEARNING STRATEGY USE

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
A	76	2.8621	.42076
Valid N (listwise)	76		

B. Research Question 2

TABLE 2.
THE MOST AND THE LEAST COMMON VOCABULARY LEARNING STRATEGIES AMONG EMU STUDENTS

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
MET	76	3.0711	.57383
DET	76	3.0320	.67677
COG	76	2.9649	.72127
MEM	76	2.8427	.54225
SOC	76	2.6165	.65868

What are the most and the least common vocabulary learning strategies used by international students at Eastern Mediterranean University?

The most common strategies that EMU international students used for vocabulary learning are metacognitive strategies (MET) with mean of 3.0711. Whereas, the least common type of vocabulary learning strategy was social strategies with mean of 2.6165.

Besides, it was revealed that among all 52 VLSs in the questionnaire, *Take notes in class, Continue to study over time, Use the vocabulary section in your textbook, Use English-language media, Connect the word to its synonyms and antonyms, and Study the spelling of a word* with numbers *43, 52, 48, 19, and 28* respectively in the questionnaire were the most common vocabulary learning strategies among EMU international students. Moreover, *Skip or pass new word, Peg Method, Ask teacher for L1 translation, and Underline initial letter of the word* owning numbers *51, 16, 8, and 32* respectively in the questionnaire were the least common vocabulary learning strategies among EMU international students. Results are listed in the table 3 below.

TABLE 3.
THE MOST AND THE LEAST COMMON VOCABULARY LEARNING STRATEGIES AMONG EMU STUDENTS

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation
The Most	Q43	76	3.87	.914
	Q52	76	3.71	.964
	Q44	76	3.61	.981
	Q48	76	3.61	1.386
	Q19	76	3.55	1.300
	Q28	76	3.50	1.149
The Least	Q51	76	1.96	1.076
	Q16	76	1.92	1.017
	Q8	76	1.87	.914
	Q32	76	1.87	1.181

C. Research Question 3

Is there any significant difference in vocabulary learning strategy regarding gender?

T-test was applied to the reveal that if there was any significant difference in selecting VLS due to gender factor (See Table 4).

TABLE 4.
T-TEST COMPARISON RESULTS BETWEEN GENDERS FOR EMU INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Gender	No.	Mean	SD	t-value	p-value
Male	48	2.9423	.44114	2.2329	0.0286
Female	28	2.7246	.34923		

Confidence level of significance established as of 0.05. There were significant differences between males and females in their choices of VLS Since the p-value for the predictive variable was lower than 0.05.

It is also revealed that males tended to use Determination Strategies (DET) (M=3.080) more than female; whereas, females tended to use Metacognitive Strategies (MET) (M=3.257) more than males (Table 5 & 6).

TABLE 5.
STRATEGIES USED BY EMU INTERNATIONAL MALE STUDENTS

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
DET	48	3.0804	.74313
COG	48	3.0486	.82797
MEM	48	2.9810	.56204
MET	48	2.9625	.58150
SOC	48	2.7143	.52303

TABLE 6.
STRATEGIES USED BY EMU INTERNATIONAL FEMALE STUDENTS

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
MET	28	3.2571	.51885
DET	28	2.9490	.54740
COG	28	2.8214	.46686
MEM	28	2.6056	.41786
SOC	28	2.4490	.82636

Moreover the results shows that EMU international male students prefer to use VLSs such as *Take notes in class, Connect the word to its synonyms and antonyms, Study the spelling of a word, Use new words in sentences, Use the vocabulary section in your textbook, Monolingual dictionaries, Analyze part of speech, Continue to study over time, Associate the word with its coordinates,* and *Group words together to study them* with item numbers *43, 19, 28, 26, 44, 7, 1, 52, 18,* and *24* respectively the most. While most of them didn't tend to use VLS such as *Skip or pass new word, Peg Method,* and *Underline initial letter of the word* with item numbers *51, 16,* and *32* respectively. (Table 7)

TABLE 7.
STRATEGIES USED BY EMU INTERNATIONAL MALE STUDENTS

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation
The Most	Q43	48	4.00	.875
	Q19	48	3.81	1.142
	Q28	48	3.75	1.212
	Q26	48	3.63	.937
	Q44	48	3.56	1.009
	Q7	48	3.56	1.335
	Q1	48	3.50	1.130
	Q52	48	3.50	.945
	Q18	48	3.50	1.011
	Q24	48	3.50	1.130
The Least	Q51	48	1.88	.937
	Q16	48	1.81	.960
	Q32	48	1.63	.937

For females, the results divulged that EMU international students mostly tend to use *Continue to study over time, Use English-language media, Use the vocabulary section in your textbook, Image word's meaning, Guess from textual context, Take notes in class,* and *Connect word to a personal experience* with numbers *52, 48, 44, 22, 5, 43, 17,* and *3* respectively for vocabulary learning. Additionally, females prefer not to use mostly VLSs such as *Put English labels on physical objects, Configuration, Use Key word Method,* and *Ask teacher for L1 translation* with item numbers *46, 33, 34,* and *8* respectively. (Table 8)

TABLE 8.
STRATEGIES USED BY EMU INTERNATIONAL FEMALE STUDENTS

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation
The Most	Q52	28	4.07	.900
	Q48	28	3.89	.994
	Q44	28	3.68	.945
	Q22	28	3.68	1.056
	Q5	28	3.68	.945
	Q43	28	3.64	.951
	Q17	28	3.64	.826
	Q3	28	3.57	.690
The Least	Q46	28	1.93	1.120
	Q33	28	1.93	1.016
	Q34	28	1.89	.994
	Q8	28	1.64	1.062

D.   Research Question 4

Does English proficiency level affect using vocabulary learning strategies among groups?

In order to figure out whether or not there are any significant differences between EMU international students concerning their level of proficiency in English, ANOVA was applied to the related survey data. Participants, in this study, were divided into three proficiency level based on their score in EMU proficiency test: Elementary (40-60) (M=2.66), Intermediate (61-80) (M=2.92), and Advanced (81-100) (M=2.90). Considering the mean of the groups, we can state that the importance of using VLSs is moderate for all participants regarding their proficiency level.

The results of ANOVA also show that there are no significance differences among groups concerning their level of proficiency. As the results show in the table 9 below, p-value (0.135) is higher than level of significance (0.05). Thus,

there are not any significance differences among three groups of elementary, intermediate, and advanced students in their choices for using VLSs.

TABLE. 9
ANOVA RESULTS FOR THE EMU INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN TERMS OF ENGLISH PROFICIENCY

Groups	No.	Mean	SD	f-value	p-value
Elementary	15	2.66	0.24	2.201	0.118
Intermediate	18	2.92	0.41		
Advanced	43	2.90	0.45		

VI. DISCUSSION

In this study, it was tried to investigate the most and the least common vocabulary learning strategies among EMU international students. Additionally, the role of factors like gender and the level of proficiency in English were considered. Considering the first question: *to what extent do International students at Eastern Mediterranean University use vocabulary learning strategies?,* it was revealed that using vocabulary learning strategies for learning and retention of new vocabulary items is moderate. The main reason for this outcome could be lack of enough knowledge about these strategies. EMU international students may lack enough knowledge about usefulness of vocabulary learning strategies. During their language classes, VLS probably have not been introduced for them or if they know anything about them, it is something personal that have been gained by experience or his/her preferred style of learning.

Regarding the second question: *what are the most and the least common vocabulary learning strategies applied by international students at Eastern Mediterranean University?,* the findings were converging with previous studies (Riankamol, 2008; Amirian & Heshmatifar, 2013). The most common types of vocabulary learning strategies were metacognitive strategies whereas the least common type of VLSs was social strategies. Amirian and Hashemifar (2013) believe that the best explanation is that vocabulary learning and retention is something more personal and individual than social. They also add that in EFL contexts negotiation of meaning is not necessary; as a result, social strategies are not used widely among EFL learners (as cited in Kafipour, 2006). The other reason could be the educational system in which these students have learned English (Riankamol, 2008). Mostly, there are not any separate sessions for vocabulary learning during the courses for language learning. Language learners mostly experience learning vocabulary by themselves either implicitly during the classes that are devoted to learning other skills or in their free time out of the language learning classes. In EFL contexts, teachers mostly focus on the main four skills such as writing, reading, listening, and speaking. They have no time for teaching vocabulary separately. Thus, there is no wonder if language learners tend to learn vocabularies via metacognitive strategies.

Considering the third question: *is there any significant difference in vocabulary learning strategy regarding gender,* I found that there is a significant difference between male and female international students in their selection of vocabulary learning strategies. The results revealed that males tend to use determination strategies whereas females preferred to use metacognitive strategies. The results of this study confirm the previous researches' findings related to the role of gender in choosing vocabulary learning strategies (Siriwan, 2007; Heidari Soureshjani, 2011). According to Siriwan (2007) females are more strategy user than males when they are trying to learn new vocabulary items. Consequently, they have learned which strategies are more useful for them to learn better due to experience and test of different types of strategy. So, the type of strategy that they use is not only contingent with their style of learning but also differs from males. Moreover, because of the differences exist between males mind and females in their minds, their mental routes for vocabulary learning are completely different. Therefore, what males choose as strategy for learning is more congruent and convergent with the processes in their mind that is completely different from females' (Pourshahian, Rezvani Kalajahi, & Yousefi Azarfam, 2012). Thus there is significant difference between males and females in their use VLSs.

Finally, the role of level of proficiency in VLS use was the main focus of the forth question of this study. *Does English proficiency level affect using vocabulary learning strategies among groups?* The analysis of related survey data indicated no significant difference in VLS use among elementary, intermediate, and advanced EMU international students. The finding of this study rejects previous findings regarding proficiency and VLS. Most of the previous findings indicated a significant difference in VLS choice concerning participants' level of proficiency (Barekat & Karami, 2012; Ajideh & Jafari, 2013; Lin-Fang, 2013). There might be different reasons why the proficiency level of students has not had any significant effect in VLS use. First, according to Azimi Mohammad Abedi and Baradaran (2013) proficiency level can play an important role in the VLS use if the participants have gained the different levels of autonomy. Holding this idea, it could be assumed that although EMU international students had different levels of proficiency, there was not any significant difference in their VLS use due to their equality in the level of autonomy. Second, the proficiency test might be the reason. The participants were in three groups of proficiency based on the EMU English Proficiency Test. Although the test is assumed as a standard test of English proficiency, it must be reevaluated again to ensure whether it is still reliable; and it has measured the level of proficiency precisely. Any issue with the test might have caused the results of the study to end up with lack of significant difference among groups based on their level of proficiency.

VII. CONCLUSION

The results of this study were very amazing. Comparing with findings of the other identical studies in the other EFL contexts, it could be concluded that vocabulary learning strategy use is very context-specific. Different contexts reveal different patterns of VLS use. Moreover, personal factors like gender and proficiency are not directly affecting preference for the VLS use among language learners. I found that there is a very complex system with interwoven and interrelated factors that differ from context to context and affects learners VLS use. Factors like previous language learning experiences, autonomy in language learning, self regulation, educational system, the nature of the proficiency test, etc. Thus, if there are courses for vocabulary learning in EFL contexts vocabulary learning strategies must be taught while the mentioned factors are taken into consideration strictly because they can influentially change the outcome of the courses.

Besides, inferring the results of this study, it can also be claimed that: 1. most of the English teachers may not be aware of the importance of vocabulary learning strategies in Middle East, 2. they are aware but does not consider them as effective factors for learning vocabularies, or 3. they do not teach vocabulary at all. Although proficiency increased, no change in knowledge of VLS revealed. In the other words, even students with high level of proficiency don't know about the importance vocabulary learning strategies. It is the same for both male and female learners. Nation (2001) and Nation and Webb (2010) mention key word method and flash cards as the most influential vocabulary learning strategies that provide permanent effects on the retention of vocabulary learning. Nevertheless, none of the Middle Eastern students was aware of them. Thus, surly we can report that vocabulary learning strategies are ignored in Middle East English classrooms.

Teachers, especially Middle Eastern teachers, must consider vocabulary teaching as one of the major activities in their classrooms. Moreover, they must not only teach vocabulary and vocabulary learning strategies, but also they must help their students to get to the mastery level of them. Because, as mentioned before, strategy learning helps students to be more autonomous. The more autonomous students, the better outcome.

VIII. IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

A. Implications for Teachers

The findings of this study are very useful for EFL international universities where English preparatory programs and deficiency courses are considered for their international students. The English lecturers could benefit from these results and they can not only involve vocabulary strategy training sessions in their English courses but also be aware of most beneficial type of VLS regarding attributes of each group of learners.

B. Implications for Researchers

Researchers can consider the differences that exist between the findings of this study and other identical study in other EFL contexts and go deeper into factors that can affect VLS use. They can consider factors like context, autonomy, self-regulation, educational system, background of the language learners, and vocabulary size of the students and study their effects on VLS use. They can also measure their indirect impact on VLS use in terms of language proficiency level.

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Amin Rasti Behbahani is an Iranian living in Finland, Jyväskylä He received his both B.A and M.A in TEFL from Islamic Azad University, Iran. Currently, He is a PhD researcher in applied linguistics, at the department of languages, university of Jyvaskyla.

He used to work as a lecturer in Islamic Azad University, Behbahan for 4 years. He published a series of book for teaching general and basic academic English for Islamic Azad University, which is titled as: Basic Academic English (Payame Emruz, Tehran, 2013). His main area of interest is vocabulary learning, and video game based learning. Of his papers regarding video games and learning, the effect of video games on EFL learners' vocabulary learning (2013, Reading Matrix) is very important and crucial.

Strategy Based Instruction Facilitated by Technologies to Enhance Reading Comprehension

Miguel A. Ochoa

Universidad Estatal de Sonora/Licenciatura de Enseñanza del Inglés, Hermosillo, México

María S. Ramírez

Tecnologico de Monterrey/Escuela de Educación, Humanidades y Ciencias Sociales, Monterrey, México

Abstract—**This study was set to determine the level of reading comprehension achievement for university students when instructed cognitive and metacognitive strategies in a learning environment mediated by technologies. Accordingly, the paper tried to answer this research question: Which is the effect of using cognitive and metacognitive strategies in a technology enriched environment on students to achieve the B1 English proficiency level according to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) in reading comprehension? This study took place in Universidad Estatal de Sonora (UES), México through a sequential-explanatory mixed method research design which focused on a sample of 96 students who received 15 hours of instruction in Language Learning Strategies (LLS) by 6 teachers. A reading comprehension pre-test/post-test, a self-reported questionnaire in the use of cognitive and metacognitive strategies, a semi-structured interview and document analysis were used to gather data. For data analysis, a paired samples t-test technique and a phenomenological approach were conducted to analyze quantitative and qualitative data, respectively. The study showed contrasting results given that the reading comprehension test reflected low scores even though the students developed a better understanding of cognitive and metacognitive strategies and an improvement in their reading comprehension skills in class.**

Index Terms—**technology, reading comprehension, cognitive strategies, metacognitive strategies**

I. INTRODUCTION

An effective instructional class design plays a significant role in positively affecting the teaching and learning process through addressing key elements such as the students' different learning styles and previous academic experiences and knowledge. Consequently, cognitive processes and behavioral changes in students can be enhanced by the instruction and use of learning strategies in class as well as effective classroom management and the creation of a stimulating environment which promotes active participation and openness to opinions. In that sense, the teacher's critical understanding of learning strategies applied effectively to language learning in class can lead to a more satisfying academic success. Rahimi & Katal (2011, p. 1) defined learning strategies as "techniques for understanding, reminiscence and use of information that is intentionally used and consciously controlled by the learner". Furthermore, Oxford (2003) represented them as steps, actions, behaviors, or techniques used by students to enhance their own learning, that is, to make it easier, faster, enjoyable, self-directed, effective and transferable to new situations. In sum, learners may have metacognitive knowledge about their own thinking and learning approaches, a good understanding of what the activity or task involves and the ability to come up with cognitive strategies that best meet the demands of the assignment and their own learning strengths.

Additionally, the use of multimedia learning materials or technological devices to heighten the instructional content of LLS in class can mean a whole different approach to achieving the learning goals insomuch as it may prove a more significant and enjoyable learning journey and experience. In that sense, Web-based technologies, the powerful Internet connections and multimedia learning materials provide a wide range of possibilities to the development of educational technology that supports flexible, well-designed, efficient, interactive, affordable, and students cantered e-learning environments (Sarica & Cavus, 2009). The result will be an English language learning that is more enjoyable and easier.

English communicative skills, specifically reading comprehension, can benefit a great deal from taking all of these elements into account while developing it effectively in English as Foreign Language (EFL) students or no-native speakers of the language. According to Suwantharathip (2012), the reading comprehension abilities are necessary to acquire knowledge and learning of new information, especially for those students who want to study at the university. To better understand a text, he argued that students use two main strategies: cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies. Moreover, Nejabati (2015) argued that "reading comprehension is assumed to be the ability to construct meaning before, after and during reading through linking reader`s background knowledge and the presented information by the author in the context". (p. 1345).

In conclusion, the all-around purpose to integrate strategy based instruction (SBI) in a technology enriched environment to enhance reading comprehension skills may bear bruit since it has been shown time and again that proficiency levels accomplishments in Mexico's Public Educational System and, specifically, in higher education remain scarce at best. According to the Mexico's Minister of Education (Secretaria de Educacion Pública, 2016), about 150,000 teachers from elementary to post-secondary public schools were evaluated on the basis of teacher performance in November and December 2015. The subject in which teachers' performance results were the worst was English. A little more than half of the English teachers evaluated got an insufficient note. It is thus recognized that the Mexican State has never invested in ELT in a sound and consistent manner and with a strategic plan. Finally, the purpose of this mixed-method study is to determine the level of reading comprehension for EFL university students with a level of proficiency B1 according to the CEFR that can be achieved when instructed cognitive and metacognitive strategies in a technology enriched environment.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The instruction and use of language learning strategies has become common household in nowadays English classrooms. According to Xu (2011, p. 204), "learning strategies have been extensively employed in the educational field because of its significance". Meanwhile, Motallebzadeh & Mamdoohi (2011) claimed that LLS contribute to facilitating the process of acquisition, storage, retrieval, and use of information in students' learning through operations and procedures that they employ. On the other hand, Strategy Based Instruction (SBI) advocates an approach that enables students not only to get the gist of what can be learned in class, but also how it can be learned more appropriately. Motallebzadeh & Mamdoohi (2011, p.3) argue that SBI "helps learners become more aware of what kinds of strategies are available to them, understand how to organize and use strategies systematically, and learn when and how to transfer the strategies to new language learning and using contexts". What's more, Chamot (2004) pointed out that the explicit instruction of LLS consisted of students' realization of the strategies they commonly use and those new and potentially helpful to them, teacher modelling of critical thinking, student self-evaluation of the strategies used, and transferring strategies to new tasks. Consequently, students must exercise a critical thinking process in order to determine what exactly they intend to do or learn, how to do or learn it, that is, the specific actions to be taken to achieve those goals related to language learning. In other words, students should be able to select appropriate learning LLS according to what best fits their learning styles so as to develop a set of skills that will make them more autonomous, self-directed and responsible of their own learning.

According to different kind of taxonomies of strategies to language learning defined by a series of respected researchers on the matter, there is one-O'Malley's Classification of Language Learning Strategies- which classifies it in three main categories: Cognitive, metacognitive and socioaffective strategies (Zare, 2012). Pham (2011) defines cognitive strategies as a control and internal process by which learners select and modify their ways of attending, learning, remembering, and thinking, that is, developing internal processes that enable them to perform complex tasks. Besides, Kasimi (2012, p. 162) claims that "cognitive strategies help students form and revise internal mental models and receive and produce messages in the target language with a conscious manner". On the other hand, Wichadee (2011) defines metacognitive strategies as effective tools which make learners consciously aware of what learning has taken place and recognize situations in which that learning could be of use. Iwai (2011) extends on classifying metacognition into four categories: knowledge, self- experience, assignments, and actions or strategies to be applied. The regulation of cognition refers to planning, monitoring and evaluating different strategies in order to get the most adequate for a specific reading task. In sum, metacognitive instruction has a positive influence when students and teachers try to improve reading comprehension.

Multimedia instructional contents can be designed with relative ease through the use of a Microsoft PowerPoint application which has an enormous potential to positively impact in student's learning. A PowerPoint presentation facilitates a smooth and easy class flow and provides a defined structure. (Lai, Tsai & Yu, 2011). On the other hand, the production of Open Educational Resources (OER) allows the development of competencies related to the use of technology and their integration in instructional contents. In that sense, Ramirez (2013) describes the OER as a series of materials, resources, elements or multimedia and textual applications to be integrated into virtual or traditional learning environments. Furthermore, they feature a free license given by the author him/herself. In sum, both technologies provide tangible benefits for students' learning when their use is optimized.

According to Alharbi (2015), "The ability to read and comprehend efficiently is essential for meeting the needs of everyday life as well as for success in the academic arena" (P.1257). In that sense, reading is one of the most important skills in the process of acquiring or learning a second language such as English. Both culture and reading strategies are strongly related in the development of successful text comprehension (Kasimi, 2012). Explicit reading strategies have a positive impact when the purpose is to improve reading proficiency, so teachers must include them in the development of a Reading second language class (Aghaie and Zhang, 2012). In that sense, Chellamani (2013) emphasizes the importance of teaching metacognitive strategies for students so reasoning may represent a difference of successful development when reading in the target language.

As said by Tezcan and Deneme (2016), so much research has been conducted on LLS attempting to identify how the use of these strategies provide an efficient language teaching and learning process. In that sense, a study conducted by

Motallebzadeh and Mamdoohi (2011) explored the effects of LLS on students' performance through a non-intensive TOEFL training program with emphasis in developing reading comprehension skills in which an experimental group received SBI instruction while a control group a traditional one. The results showed that the experimental group significantly outperformed the control group, heightening the use of cognitive strategies as those with greater effect on improving reading comprehension. It also concluded that the teacher should encourage those less competent students to imitate and practice the strategies used by the more skilled ones through constant practice.

Likewise, Marzban (2011) conducted a study that compared the effects of articles written by using multimedia technologies with those based on paper, both on reading comprehension. 68 EFL pre-intermediate students from northern Iran participated in the study. The results showed superiority when combining audio, video and photographs compared with only text when new knowledge was presented. Nevertheless, it concluded that the merits of using multimedia technologies could be affected, to a large degree, by the many obstacles teachers faced during its handling such as infrastructure problems, lack of training on technologies, a teacher centered approached, weak technical support and the use of workbooks. Finally, Nacera (2010) conducted a study to evaluate the use of LLS by second-year students from Mouloud Mammeri University in Argelia, while acquiring and expanding new vocabulary in English through measuring their basic knowledge of word meaning. The results showed that the students used a wide range of direct and indirect strategies, being the metacognitive the most employed. Additionally, the strategies more commonly used by students with an extensive repertoire of vocabulary were summarizing, inferring and predicting, all of those in a combined form.

III. Research Question

The study took place in Universidad Estatal de Sonora, a higher education institution that is located in the state of Sonora, México and holds 18 different majors of fields of study throughout its five main Campus. English, in that sense, is a curricular basic subject which is taught through the first four semesters. The study focused on regular students with an A2 English proficiency level, according to CEFR, coming from several majors. On the other hand, developing reading comprehension skills is essential if learners want to follow higher studies. Unfortunately, it has been shown that most students in Mexican public universities do not have sufficient reading comprehension skills to undergo graduate or postgraduate education. According to a study conducted by the National Association of Universities and Higher Education Institutions (ANUIES) in Mexico between 2001 and 2002, all the first-year college students from nine Mexico City higher institutions underwent a test on English communicative skills to measure their language proficiency. The results showed a grim picture of the situation. Almost all of the students failed the test with very low marks (Secretaria de Educacion Pública, 2006). Consequently, the need to support higher education to achieve reading comprehension competencies in level B1 has been identified through this investigation. To contribute to the educational scientific field, the following research question was formulated: Which is the effect of using cognitive and metacognitive strategies in a technology enriched environment on students to achieve the B1 English proficiency level, according to CEFR in reading comprehension?

IV. Method

A. Participants

The convenience non-probabilistic sampling technique, which selects a participant sample of the population based on their accessibility, acquisition and availability to the researcher, was used to select the participants (Battaglia, 2008). The sample included six groups of 16 students on average, that is, 96 students (63 women and 33 men) which belonged to three different majors (International Commerce, Tourism and Sports Training) and voluntarily accepted to participate. In addition, six teachers from each group (three women and three men) were included. All participating English teachers had at least a Teaching Knowledge Test (TKT) certificate from Cambridge University and more than five years of teaching experience. Additionally, the students were registered in a curricular intermediate English –B1 proficiency level- subject or class in the fourth semester and had an A2 English proficiency level according to CEFR. They were formally invited to participate in the study through the signing of an informed consent letter and were notified of the investigation procedure before starting the data collection. The students' age range was between 19 and 23 years old.

B. Instruments

An EFL reading comprehension pre-test and post-test was administered to the students before and after the SBI to evaluate the impact of the use of cognitive and metacognitive strategies meditated by technologies on enhancing reading comprehension competences. Additionally, a self-reported questionnaire in the use of cognitive and metacognitive strategies was applied by the learner's at the end of the course. Also, a semi-structure interview was conducted with teachers to get an overall sense of their experience through the investigative process. Finally, document analysis through a students' progress reflections format posted in an e-portfolio was executed in order to find out their feelings towards the use of reading strategies to improve reading comprehension.

C. Procedure

The study took place in an EFL classroom where the researcher was an active participant as the English class teacher alongside his fellow five peers. The students had two and a half hours a week for six weeks of instruction in LLS (cognitive such as visualizing, making connections, predicting, re-reading, summarizing, using text structure, thinking-aloud and using visual representations of text; and metacognitive such as planning, monitoring and evaluating) mediated by technology such as PowerPoint (PP), OER and E-Portfolio. The students underwent several text passages a week which highlighted the use of two different reading strategies per passage. Teachers explicitly taught how the strategies work, in which context they should be applied, and how to use them, all by using PP presentations and drilled through OER on their own personal computer. Additionally, the students' learning reflections were posted through a graphical organizer known as K-W-L (acronym for what students Know, Want to know and Learned) chart in their e-portfolio. Finally, the teacher was prompt to make suggestions in how to choose the strategies effectively, that is, by taking their own learning styles and preferences into account while they were working on the text. At the end of each learning activity, the teacher also gave sound feedback and sensibly corrected any mistake where needed.

D. The Design of the Study

Mixed methods combine qualitative and quantitative approaches in order to explain and describe a phenomenon. Burke Johnson & Onwuegbuzie (2004) define it as an inclusive, pluralistic and complementary method in which the researcher takes an eclectic approach to the selection of the method and conduction of the study. According to the different types of mixed methods research designs, a sequential-explanatory was selected to conduct this study. According to the nomenclature commonly used in mixed methods research, a QUAN ⟶ qual was used. This means that obtaining quantitative data has a prominence and is executed in a sequential manner. That is, once this method is completed, the qualitative is performed, indicating that the use of the qualitative method is executed mainly to complement the analysis of the quantitative method (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010).

V. FINDINGS AND RESULTS

A. Inferencial Statistic of the EFL Reading Comprehension Exam

In order to establish the existence of significant changes in reading comprehension achievement for 96 students after being instructed on cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies mediated by technology, the following null hypothesis is presented: There is no significant changes in scores from pre- and post-test (reading comprehension exam) for students after participating in a SBI course mediated by technologies. In order to validate the quantitative instrument, it was decided to use an existing reading examination format, sufficiently tested in various contexts and institutions of higher education with safe levels of validity and reliability (Liu, 2009). In short, this instrument is validated by itself for its application in field work because of its wide experience applicability in various studies on the development of reading comprehension skills in the university context.

A paired sample t-test was performed to confirm or reject the null hypothesis as well as determine whether the t-test was significant. Then, tables 4.1 and 4.2 related to this analysis are presented:

TABLE 4.1
PAIRED SAMPLE STATISTICS OF THE EFL READING COMPREHENSION EXAM

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Sd. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pretest	14.30	96	7.236	.739
	Posttest	15.66	96	7.387	.754

TABLE 4.2
PAIRED SAMPLE TESTS OF THE EFL READING COMPREHENSION EXAM

	Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (bilateral)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Sd. Error Mean	95% Confidence interval of the difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Pair 1 Pretest - Posttest	-1.354	6.237	.637	-2.618	-.090	-2.127	95	.036

A paired sample t-test was conducted in order to assess whether there was a statistically significant difference between mean scores of pre- and post-test (reading comprehension exam) before and after an SBI course mediated by technologies. The test indicated the absence of violations to assumptions. The results of the paired sample t-test were significant, t (95) = 2.127, p < .05, n2 = .05, indicating a significant increase in test scores in reading comprehension pretest (M = 14.30, SD = 7.236, N = 96) to posttest (M = 15.66, SD = 7.387). The effect size was small, Cohen's d = .22, based on Cohen conventions (Cohen, 1988). The mean increase was 1,354, with 95% of confidence interval for the difference between the means of .090 to 2618. In conclusion, the researcher rejects the null hypothesis.

B. Descriptive Statistic of the Self-reported Questionnaire in the Use of Cognitive and Metacognitive Strategies

In order to understand the nature of the strategies used by learners in the resolution of a reading comprehension test, this study adopted and translated into a Spanish a self-reported questionnaire format on the use of cognitive strategies

and meta-cognitive in Likert-scale from Phakiti (2003). The questionnaire allowed evaluating, out of 30 items, the frequency in which the different types of strategies were used. For this purpose, a descriptive statistical analysis was made. The validation of the cognitive and metacognitive strategies constructs of the instrument were based on a number of item-level analysis (Phakiti, 2003). Cognitive strategy factors included comprehending, memory and retrieval strategies. On the other hand, the metacognitive strategy factors had to do with planning, monitoring, and evaluating strategies. The descriptive statistics for 30 observed variables are presented in Tables 4.3 and 4.4. The items could be considered normally distributed. All variable skewness and kurtosis statistics were within the acceptable limits, which was suggestive of univariately normal distribution. The following statistical tables 4.3, 4.4 and 4.5 related to the analysis and report of results are presented:

TABLE 4.3
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF COGNITIVE STRATEGIES

Strategies	N Stats	Mean Stats	SD Stats	Skewness Stats	Kurtosis Stats
1. I made short notes or underlined main ideas during the test.	96	2.11	1.055	1.085	.780
2. I translated the reading texts and tasks into Spanish	96	3.14	1.166	.056	-.963
3. I used pictures or titles of the text to help comprehend reading tasks.	96	3.93	1.098	-.926	.470
4. I used my own English structure knowledge to comprehend the text.	96	3.53	1.222	-.233	-1.202
5. I spend more time in difficult questions.	96	3.68	1.061	-.451	-.584
6. I tried to understand the texts and questions regardless of my vocabulary knowledge.	96	3.77	1.041	-.496	-.657
7. I tried to find topics and main ideas by scanning and skimming.	96	2.90	1.031	.213	-.631
8. I read the texts and questions several times to better understand them.	96	3.91	1.179	-.837	-.281
9. I used my prior knowledge to help understand the reading test	96	3.90	.968	-.571	-.282
14. I attempted to identify main points of the given Reading texts and tasks.	96	3.56	1.024	-.352	-.543
22. I tried to understand the questions adequately before attempting to find the answers.	96	4.21	.917	-1.015	.200
26. I used multiple thinking strategies to help answer the test questions.	96	3.48	1.114	-.389	-.330
29. I selected relevant information to help me understand the reading texts and answer the test questions.	96	3.54	1.123	-.470	-.454

TABLE 4.4
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF METACOGNITIVE STRATEGIES

Strategies	N Stats	Mean Stats	SD Stats	Skewness Stats	Kurtosis Stats
1. I tried to identify easy and difficult test tasks.	96	3.74	1.136	-.746	-.124
2. When I started to complete the test, I planned how to complete it and followed the plan.	96	2.83	1.158	.125	-.771
3. I was aware of what and how I was doing in the test.	96	4.07	.997	-.734	-.607
4. I checked my own performance and progress while completing the test.	96	3.45	1.160	-.202	-.903
15. I thought through the meaning of the test tasks/questions before answering them.	96	3.63	1.039	-.112	-1.150
16. I was aware of which strategy to use and how and when to use it.	96	3.45	1.025	-.036	-.883
17. I corrected mistakes immediately when found.	96	3.79	1.104	-.533	-.668
18. I asked myself how the test questions and the given texts related to what I already know.	96	3.51	1.036	-.405	-.425
19. I determined what the test tasks/questions required me to do.	96	3.72	1.013	-.338	-.693
20. I was aware of the need to plan a course of action.	96	3.11	1.150	-.186	-.657
21. I was aware of how much the test remained to be completed.	96	4.05	.988	-.775	-.156
23. I made sure I understood what had to be done and how to do it.	96	4.05	.875	-.584	-.431
24. I was aware of my ongoing Reading and test taking.	96	3.98	.917	-.543	-.565
25. I kept track of my own progress to complete the questions on time	96	3.40	1.138	-.482	-.497
27. I made sure to clarify the goal and know how to complete it.	96	3.63	1.018	-,286	.200
28. I checked my accuracy as I progressed through the test.	96	3.64	1.037	-.429	-.514
30. I carefully checked the answers before submitting the test.	96	4.08	.970	-.665	-.752

TABLE 4.5
DISTRIBUTIONS FOR VARIABLES USING COGNITIVE AND METACOGNITIVE STRATEGIES

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
Cognitive strategies	3.51	1.077
Metacognitive strategies	3.65	1.045

The interpretation of a mean score guide in relation to the strategy used by the student to do an exercise or reading comprehension test indicates that an elevated use of a strategy will indicate a mean of 3.5 or higher, a moderate use will indicate a mean between 2.5 to 3.4, and low use a mean of 2.4 or less (Mokhtari and Reichard, 2002). In table 6, the results of the analysis are shown in terms of the mean scores obtained in carrying out the questionnaire of the use of cognitive and metacognitive strategies after completing the EFL reading comprehension test.

In that sense, it can be seen that both types of strategies are used with high mean frequency (3.51 for cognitive and 3.65 for metacognitive, respectively), being the cognitive memory strategies 22 (M = 4.21, SD = .927), related to trying

to understand the questions adequately before attempting to find the answers and 8 (M = 3.91, SD = 1.179), related to repeatedly read the texts and questions to better understand them; and cognitive understanding 3 (M = 3.93, SD = 1.098) related to using photographs or titles of the texts to help understand reading tasks, as the most used by the participants. Also, the metacognitive evaluation strategies 30 (M = 4.08, SD = 0.970), related to carefully reviewing the answers before submitting the exam,; and metacognitive monitoring 12 (M = 4.07, SD = .997) related to being aware of what and how a student was doing in the test, and 21 (M = 4.05, SD = .988) related to being aware of how much the test remained to be completed were among the ones with the highest average.

C. Phenomenological Approach to Semi-structured Interviews

A phenomenological approach was used to analyze the transcripts of teachers' semi-structure interviews. Out of six transcripts, 48 significant statements were extracted from the lived experience of teachers facilitating the learning and use of language strategies in a technology enriched environment to improve reading. Every significant statement was reduced to 12 formulated meanings. Consequently, the formulated meanings were clustered resulting in 4 themes common to all of the participants' transcripts. In order to validate the final findings, the researcher approached some participants once again to prove their sayings or conclusions. The results of these topics are presented below:

Theme 1. Expectations and positive effects on strategy instruction. A number of considerations about SBI are reflected in this interview with the views of many teachers, who noted an improvement in the aspects of utility; better learning opportunities, specifically effective reading comprehension and their possible application in other disciplinary areas. Also, one respondent noted that the SBI teachers, "offer the possibility to identify what best suits their learning needs and level of understanding, and enhance their capacity and scope in the development of activities with the expectation of better results". About the effects that SBI has on students, the respondents asseverated an effective assimilation of the information, a much wider range of options offered more quickly and effective and better attention given by students during the development of several learning activities, "in a specific class we find multiple intelligences and diverse and varied learning styles. Thus, the effects will become better and more positive because they are covering the various types of students' learning".

Theme 2. Critical thinking through the different cognitive strategies. Specifically in the strategy of asking questions, one of the teachers interviewed explained the range of possibilities offered by making judgmental opinions about the reading, where students can increase their knowledge about the issue in the text and relate it directly to the context in which they are immersed, "when the student/reader raises certain questions about the information in a text, he/she is forming his/her own view on it". The strategy of making predictions or inferences about the text, a set of perceptions through which teachers promote the practice of critical reading based on previous knowledge of the student was raised. The student somehow tries to interpret or deduce the situations contained in the text. Also, by predicting, students are intended to put aside consideration of right or wrong answers, "there are no right and wrong answers, they are just your predictions, what you think to be or go, and just express it "said one of the teachers.

Critical thinking by clarifying certain ideas contained in the text and/or making connections between reading and personal experiences or events in the world contribute to the expansion of vocabulary and improving knowledge. The students themselves are the ones who help to clarify the doubts about the reading. Furthermore, making connections between prior knowledge and new information, that is, from their own experience with a specific reading leads to relate the content of the text with the student's environment or real situations, "It's important that they relate all the knowledge they bring to the reading ... how they can give an opinion if they do not know what they're talking about. Then, when they make connections maybe they watched something on television, in Spanish, and they have now an idea in English". Through visualization, teachers focused on mentioning various techniques which, on their own experience, have allowed a deeper understanding of the text through recreating mental images, producing "mental movies" and achieve the objectives previously outlined in the activity of reading, "visualizing is essential ... the use of imagination is basic, if you can visualize something, you can achieve it, if you can see it you can do it, it's something that I tell my students," declared one of the teachers.

Theme 3. Impact of meta-cognitive strategies in reading comprehension and its phases. In the first phase of implementing metacognitive strategies, which is planning, teachers said that these are useful to see what is going to be read from the information contained in the text, as well as the selection of interesting topics for the students. A teacher argues that "analyze the title, illustrations, key words, think about what the student would be interested on and wants to know about the topic, so human mind is predisposed to try to deepen in the acquisition of knowledge". In the second phase of monitoring, teachers say they use different cognitive strategies such as visualization, re-reading, cause and effect, among others. At the same time, they relate the topic of reading with issues of current interest for students-readers, "to predict the information on text, make connections between previous knowledge and the reading, make inferences, to use certain features of the context of the text itself." The third and final phase of meta-cognition, evaluation, teachers argued discrimination between the strategies which were successfully applied according to the teacher's and student's perception, from those whose implementation was far from being a significant difference, "when the reading is done, we reflect on the strategy followed, which was applied for understanding. If it works, great; if not, we must see what was wrong in order to change it".

Theme 4. Technological resources and contributions in the course instruction and the evaluation of competences. Teachers reported that the computer, the Internet, the projector, and the audio have a great impact on learning in the

classroom, Also, OER can mean a very significant advance through the appropriate facilitator's guide, "to properly use technologies during the EFL teaching-learning process, it entails that the student had diverse and varied resources. All of this won't be possible if the instruction and the facilitator's guide are not the appropriate ones". On the other hand, the e-portfolio contributed significantly to the evaluation of students' competences, showing information such as a description of the contents of the text using own ideas and/or concepts, "the development of competences is daily seen in the classroom". Also, the use of reliable tools in the development of teaching-learning process of reading comprehension, as noted one of the teachers, is essential, "the combination of electronic portfolios with what takes place in the process of teaching-learning would be essential to determine its success".

D. Phenomenological Approach to Document Analysis

The same phenomenological method was used to analyze the reflections of eight students (four outstanding students and four under average) in a K-W-L format. Out of eight transcriptions, 32 meaningful statements were extracted from the lived experience of some students who were exposed to LLS in a technology enriched environment to improve reading. Every meaningful sentence was reduced to 8 formulated meanings. Consequently, the meanings formulated were clustered resulting in 2 themes common to the entire sample of participants' transcripts. In order to validate the final findings, the researcher approached some participants once again to prove their sayings or conclusions. The results of these topics are presented below:

Theme 1. Impact of cognitive and meta-cognitive reading comprehension strategies in reading comprehension. In this section, students reported to understand a specific text more meaningfully, choose the strategies that best adapt to their learning styles, be more independent in their development of reading comprehension, and to be able to apply and use the different cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies, "the truth is that I have read a little bit better and personally I understood more all the contents of the sections we've had," said one student. Another of the students said: "I understand the reading very well, it wasn't so difficult and I could apply the strategies of predicting and making connections in order to remember things that I have experienced to and belong to reading, I like this strategy". When using meta-cognitive strategies, students were able to auto-evaluate themselves and reflect on those strategies that worked better for them, so they can use them during the reading. It also allowed them to become aware of what to do before (planning) starting a reading and get the main idea through visualizing headers, drawings, summary reports, graphics, illustrations, among others, as well as during the development (monitoring) of the activity and adapt what was necessary, "I will reflect and remember what I have read by applying and remembering the strategies that I applied in the texts, how I applied each strategy".

Theme 2. The impact of technology in teaching-learning process. The resources with a greater impact in learning were the Internet and PowerPoint (PP) since the first one represents a tool with a wide range of use and the second a variety of content anytime, anywhere, "I can use the Internet at home and somewhere else, and search what I need. It is a big thing that I can use it for my classes, it is very fun and dynamic", said one of the students. On the other hand, technologies such as OER and PP are widely recognized as important tools in the teaching-learning process, but might be frustrating if not used comprehensively and with a clear objective, "at first, it was pretty fun to see a class with so many images and videos during the presentations, but then it became monotonous and predictable. Always the same way of presenting things…" said some students. Finally, the e-Portfolios contribute to the students themselves in order to reflect about their own advance, learning and areas to improve, as well as providing an opportunity to constantly monitor their own development through representative evidence of their progress, "the portfolio seems a good way to have what I did in the classroom and in the English subject, see where I was wrong and how I can improve", said one student.

VI. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The comprehensive analysis of data collected through quantitative and qualitative instruments showed a somehow moderate relationship between instruction/use of cognitive and metacognitive strategies and the improvement of reading comprehension skills. According to Table 2, there was a significant increase in test scores in reading comprehension pretest (M = 14.30, SD = 7.236) to posttest (M = 15.66, SD = 7.387). Also, Table 6 indicated the use of language learning strategies by learners in an elevated average frequency (3.51 to 3.65 for cognitive and metacognitive) in reading comprehension activities. However, the mean scores of pre-test and post-test represent a far from satisfactory performance when contrasted in terms of the number of test items (40). Prior knowledge of a certain level of proficiency in English language plays an important role in the development of the ability of reading comprehension. In this sense, Lin (2002, p.172) states the significance of prior knowledge of the competent reader as a "crucial knowledge for reading, which is categorized into two types: the knowledge of how and knowledge of substance." In short, the result of pre-test and post-test perhaps was related to factors other than the use of strategies such as their level of language proficiency, the method of examination, etc.

Although the students showed a lack of knowledge and practice in the use of learning strategies in class at the beginning of the study, an improvement in their performance was experienced as soon as there was an immersion in the subject. According to the data from interviews and reflections of students, one teacher said, "visualizing is essential ... the use of the imagination is basic, if you can visualize something, you can do it, and if you can see it you can do it".

Meanwhile, a student said "the meta-cognitive strategy of planning allows us to get the main idea of the text by making reviews derived from headers, drawings, summary reports, graphics, etc. ..." Also, one of the cognitive strategies whose frequency of use was the highest, according to Table 4, was the number three (M = 3.93, SD = 1.098) which is related to the use of photographs or titles to help with the reading comprehension. In that sense, Motallebzadeh and Mamdoohi (2011, p.3) argue that SBI "helps students become more aware of what kind of strategies are available to them, how to organize and use them systematically, and learn when and how to transfer them to new contexts for language learning". This probably means that a meaningful learning may have taken place even though the performance on the test showed the opposite due to an arguably number of other factors different from the variables considered.

Finally, technologies, in particular e-portfolio, improved the student's meta-cognition when exercising constantly their critical thinking during the reading analysis reflected in the K-W-L charts. According to the themes of the interviews and reflections, the electronic portfolio contributed significantly to the evaluation skills of students in terms of describing contents of the text using ideas and/or own conceptions. It also allowed students to reflect on their own progress, learning and areas that can be improved, as well as providing an opportunity to constantly monitor their own development through representative evidence of their performance, "the portfolio seems like a good way to keep what I did in class, see what was wrong and how I can improve, "said one student. In this sense, Lin, Yang and Lai (2013, p.18) argue that e-portfolios "improve student's personal development and assist them on their evaluation skills in a student-centered educational context." It also facilitates the learner handling of their own learning process and allows the educator to observe and evaluate the student's progress from the collected evidence. In short, we conclude that electronic portfolios are thoughtful and helpful, besides being an excellent means of linking theory with practice.

In general terms, the reading comprehension test results were slightly negative, although a significant increase was experienced in terms of differences in average scores between the pre-test and post-test. However, such overall low marks can be explained for the learner's poor knowledge or low proficiency in the language level to be assessed. In other words, proper competence plays a decisive role in the effective implementation of a test because even if the reader is aware of the implications of the task, maybe he/she is not able to achieve an optimal performance when they lack relevant language skills according to the level task. In that sense, this factor of linguistic competence may be the language skills that obstruct cognitive and metacognitive learning in order to reach the B1 level, according to the CEFR for reading comprehension. In other words, teachers should work on improving students' language proficiency while exercising LLS during reading tasks in order to achieve better leanings and test performance.

On the other hand, the students developed a better understanding of cognitive and metacognitive strategies, and their reading comprehension improved significantly. Conducting this research practice was very pleasant, since we observed students have a better perspective of the text while using a combination of LLS in class, so from a pedagogical standpoint it would be a meaningful learning experience to comprehensively integrate SBI in every teacher's curriculum and teaching practice given that it contributed to the student's exercise of critical thinking.

Even though the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) such as PP and OER in class represented a novel concept and was recognized as facilitating tools to the creation of a significant learning environment during the strategy based instruction, it was not comprehensively and coherently integrated into the curriculum in terms of planning and executing its use in an effective fashion. In that sense, teachers must be competent enough in the pedagogical use of ICT in class to maximize results.

It is important to recognize some limitations of the findings of this study. The given sample size was perhaps not sufficiently large and homogeneous, since participants came from various educational programs or majors of the university, which means that students of certain programs are likely to have communication skills of language more in line with the level examined. Also, the number of hours to instruct and practice the LLS in class was fewer than expected given the time constraints.

Finally, future research in the implementation of instructional content based on cognitive and metacognitive strategies will probably include a more extensive and probabilistic sample. Furthermore, the application of a diagnostic test to determine if the learner has the appropriate level of competence to undertake the study should be considered even though they are supposed to be competent enough given that they have been sharing and passing through several curricular courses up to this point of the expected English proficiency level. Besides, it would be wiser to have students just coming from one educational program. Also, a number of hours of LLS instruction or practice can be extended if adopted a hybrid or blended educational model which may be supported by a technological platform, so the curriculum can be expanded and students may be given the opportunity to increase their exposure to the lessons and/or tasks at home or away from the classroom. Probably, it will be desirable to determine a format of participant-observation of the researcher with a tool that allows obtaining weekly data about progress and the type of strategies more used by students. It would also be interesting to explore gender issues to see if there are significant differences in the use of such strategies.

<div align="center">REFERENCES</div>

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Miguel A. Ochoa was born in Hermosillo, Sonora, México, in 1973. He received his B.A. in Business Administration in 1997 from the Universidad de Sonora. Now he is a PhD candidate in Educational Innovation at Tec de Monterrey. He is teaching EFL courses at Universidad Estatal de Sonora. His areas of interest are language learning strategies, multimodal learning environments, action research and also reading comprehension.

María S. Ramírez holds a doctorate in Philosophy and Educational Sciences from the University of Salamanca. Her research interests include teaching strategies, technology resources for education, training of educational researchers and open education movement. She works as a research professor at the School of Education, Humanities and Social Sciences of the Tecnologico de Monterrey (Mexico) in the master's and doctoral Education programs. She is director of the UNESCO Chair "Open Educational Movement for Latin America", director of the International Council for Open of Distance Education (ICDE): OER Latin America office, lead researcher on the Strengthening Information Society Research Capacity Alliance (SIRCA) network, main organizer of the Regional Open Latin American Network for Social Research and Education (CLARISE) and coordinator of the Research and Innovation in Education Group (GIIE) at Tecnologico de Monterrey. She is a member of the National System of Researchers in Mexico.

Transition from Setswana to English: A Policy Dilemma

Eureka Mokibelo

University of Botswana, Botswana

Abstract—This paper examines learners' transition from Setswana in Standard One to English at Standard Two in line with the implementation of the language-in-education policy in selected Botswana primary schools. Using data from classroom observations, open ended questionnaires and interviews, this paper scrutinizes the effectiveness of such transition especially where learners do not speak both languages of instruction. The transitional education model is used as a theoretical framework for this paper to better understand how transition could be done from one language to another. The findings of this study indicate that transition from Setswana medium of instruction to English medium is taken for granted and is overlooked by key agents of the policy and supervisors and therefore it is not monitored and supervised. The conclusion is that the period of transition is critical and sensitive. As a result, teachers and supervisors; both internal and external should have the necessary delivery skills and support to enable them to go through that critical period with less anxiety.

Index Terms—transition, micro planning, language-in-education policy, implementation

I. INTRODUCTION

Despite the global world's linguistic diversity, language-in-education policies remain limited to using one national language as a language of instruction especially in Africa. Therefore, decisions about language-in-education policies in the classrooms usually attract informal, unstructured and unplanned practices by policy agents. These internal decisions (micro language planning) are often initiated and driven from bottom-up in response to concerns about local indigenous languages; it addresses the language needs of the displaced learners in the classrooms (Jones, 2012). Micro language planning is undertaken by teachers in the classrooms as a vehicle for teaching and it focuses on what is happening on the ground. In most cases, it takes place as teachers make decisions in an attempt to translate policy to practice (Baldauf, 2008). While in some primary schools in Botswana teachers conform to the policy by using the national language others defy the policy and use English only (Jones, 2012). The latter occurs due to tensions that arise between the macro-level policy and the micro situation and thus teachers conform or resist the policy by doing what best suits their learners (Baldauf, 2006). Scholars have observed that language policies especially those from top-down present a number of challenges in the classrooms thus proving that the theory conflicts with the realities of the classrooms. For example, in most African countries planners and politicians claim that national unity are some of the aims of language planning and therefore choose an indigenous language spoken by an elite minority to be used as an official language and medium of instruction (Sukumane, 2000). South Africa has eleven regional languages which have a national and official status, but English has retained its position as the language of education, government and business (Banda, 2009). In Pakistan, the Urdu medium schools are mainly for the public sector catering for the lower income and children study in poor resourced classrooms which have little or no exposure to English (Shanim, 2011). Kenya too uses Kiswali as a medium of instruction during the first four years of education. Other indigenous languages are used alongside, but Kiswali is not a first language to all Kenyans and therefore teachers impose it on the learners (Jones, 2012).

All cited cases above cause constraints in various circumstances because the languages used for instruction are not used as home languages by the other student population – especially ethnic minority groups, leading to inequalities, lack of access to information and communication breakdown in classrooms. Further, the government does not commit itself to produce materials in the national languages or in indigenous languages to enable smooth teaching and learning. Also, the government does not train enough teachers to teach the indigenous languages and they are given a low status in the country states. In some cases teachers and learners do not speak the same languages and teachers end up imposing their languages on learners. Again, the speakers of the languages look down upon their own languages and prefer English even if they do not have enough exposure to it. The critical point here is that the national languages are used under the pretext that all, if not most citizens, speak them as first languages and yet African countries are multilingual. Since transition from one language to another is about change, it involves well trained teachers in language competence and methodological skills, well organized in-service training, well-structured curriculum, suitable and motivating teaching materials and quality assurance measures (Nikolov & Curtain, 2000). The goal of such transitional programmes is to promote transitioning students with support they need to effectively move from instruction in their native language to instruction mostly in English and to adjust to a new culture (August, 2002). Therefore regardless of the nature and timing of the transition, if it is not handled with care, it can be problematic for the learners (Ramirez, 1992). These

circumstances are constructed in the image of Western countries and retain the colonial heritage which associates African languages to tradition and culture rather than socio-economic development and mobility (Banda, 2009). In this regard, the language planning becomes ill conceived and poorly informs policies thus resulting in negative impacts on ethnic minority groups (Centre for Applied Linguistics, 2016).

The issue of transition in this paper is raised as a concern because Botswana government has adopted the assimilation approach in which speakers of languages other than Setswana must assimilate into the culture of Setswana speaking groups (Nyati-Ramahobo, 2000; 2004). Hence, speakers of other languages are prohibited from using their languages in the classrooms while they are assimilated to Setswana for national unity and identity and English. This scenario springs from the view that language diversity is viewed as a problem than a resource in Botswana (Nyati-Ramahobo, 2000; 2004). In Botswana, the language-in-education policy states that, at Standard One, Setswana be used as a medium of instruction while English is taught as a subject. At Standard Two, the two subjects switch positions; English becomes the medium of instruction while Setswana is taught as a subject (Revised National Policy on Education, 1994). In the field of language education, this is transition and transition is about change or shift from one language to another especially at primary schooling. At primary school level in Botswana, children start learning in Setswana at Standard One. At Standard Two, transition takes place from Setswana medium to English medium of instruction. With such changes between languages taking place within a short period of time, such transition could be problematic especially with some learners who learn both languages of instruction for the first time at school as second or third languages. Therefore, their situation may be different from that of learners who speak Setswana as a first language and English as a second language. Such heterogeneous classrooms may need close monitoring and supervision and appropriate learning and teaching strategies that would enable them to go through a smooth transition.

Transition in this paper is problematical because the learners in rural areas do not speak Setswana as a home language and also, some of the teachers are not competent in the language to guide the learners in the sounds, syntax and morphology of the language. Therefore, both the teachers and learners may not have a common language to use for teaching and learning process thus making the process a daunting task. In such a situation learners grapple with the structure of the language as well as the content and this could delay transition if it has to take place only after one year school calendar of learning the language. In urban primary schools where there are foreigners, transition from Setswana to English may not occur because teachers prefer to use English instead of Setswana because of the presence of foreigners, immigrants and learners who have been to preschool. The circumstances described here are in order for teachers to make constant decisions of which language to use to assist learners. Both circumstances in rural and urban primary schools are determined by different reasons to do micro language planning.

II. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Botswana is a multicultural and multilingual state situated in Southern Africa. It shares boarders with Zimbabwe, Zambia, South Africa and Namibia and therefore landlocked. The land area is 582 000 square kilometres. Botswana has a population of 2 024 904 (Population and Housing Census, 2011). The estimated number of languages is twenty eight (Batibo, 2005). With her multilingualism status, Botswana language-in-education policy has always favoured the use of Setswana while English is given a high status over Setswana. English is the official language while Setswana is the national language. Setswana is the most dominant language as it is spoken by about 80% of the population as a lingua franca (Nyati-Ramahobo, 2004).

At independence in 1966, there was no clear policy on the languages of instruction. However, English was used as a medium of instruction even though most of the teachers were not proficient in it. As a result, there was a lot of code switching from Setswana to English and vice versa by the teachers in classrooms. In this regard, more attention was given to English than Setswana. Later, the general view was that Setswana as a national language was neglected and a position was taken to give it a prominent place in the education system. Under the leadership of the first president of Botswana, all ethnic minority languages used in schools were banned and Setswana was elevated to promote national unity and identity. Some ethnic groups such and Bayei and Ikalanga and Batswapong complained that their languages were not recognized as media of instruction and formed associations where they could be represented as one voice (Nyati-Ramahobo, 2004).

The second president also pleaded with the nation not to spoil the peace and unity in the country. He also emphasized the use of Setswana as a national language and as a language that unifies the different ethnic groups in Botswana. In 1977, a National Commission on Education was tasked to review the previous policy. The commission recommended that Setswana be used as a medium of instruction from Standard One to Standard Four while English is taught as a subject. The two subjects changed positions at Standard Five where English became the medium of instruction and Setswana was taught as a subject (National Commission on Education, 1977). Soon there were complaints that learners started using English late despite being the language of the examinations. It was argued that starting learning English late led to poor performance by learners in examinations (Revised National Policy on Education report, 1993).

In 1993, a second commission was appointed to review the policy. The commission recommended that Setswana be used as a medium of instruction in Standard One while English is taught as a subject. In Standard Two, the two subjects switch positions; English becomes the medium of instruction while Setswana is taught as a subject (report of the Revised National Policy on Education, 1993). All these policies are silent about the use of indigenous languages as

media of instruction. In this regard, at primary school level, learners who speak different home languages from Setswana struggle to understand the concepts in Setswana and its structure and another burden is added in Standard Two when English becomes a medium of instruction. It is the switch to English from Setswana that was of interest to this paper to find out how it was done especially with learners who had not yet mastered the national language at Standard One and then change to English in Standard Two.

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This paper uses the transitional bilingual education model as its theoretical framework. The model is committed to addressing the unique circumstances of learners from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds and to help them achieve high content and performance standards expected of all learners. The transitional bilingual education model serves as a bridge for learners, helping them move from their native language to English (Cummins, 2000). The programme helps learners to become proficient in English. The programme teaches concepts and knowledge in the primary language of a learner, while the student also acquires English language skills (Cummins, 2000)

Learners receive special assistance from teachers when they learn how to speak, listen, read and write in English. Teachers provide oral development, literacy and content area instruction based upon learners' assessment and classroom performance (Cummins, 2000). Teachers have to integrate core curriculum with English language instruction. They modify core curriculum and instruction in order to facilitate the development of English language skills and meaningful learners' participation in content subjects. Therefore, it is important for educators to revisit schools and identify guiding principles for such an instruction. In the cases that are used in this paper, some students, especially in rural primary schools, start school speaking different home languages, as thus, they do not start learning in their native languages as it is anticipated. Therefore, the transitional model could be a real challenge to teachers and learners because even teachers may not speak the learners' native languages, thus making communication between learners and teachers a complex and difficult process. Furthermore, the period of transition is pivotal to subsequent levels and achievement. Also, very little literature provides evidence on the effectiveness of curriculum and pedagogy and the transitional period. Therefore, the transitional programmes are inadequate in most cases. In this regard, transitional programmes can work only if there are well articulated practices and procedures for implementation to help learners acquire critical knowledge and skills.

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study was qualitative as it sought to understand how teachers and school management attempted to understand and interpret the language-in-education policy especially transition from Setswana in Standard One to English in Standard Two classes. In this regard, the objectives of the study were to investigate the views of the teachers and school management on the implementation of the language-in-education policy in ethnically and linguistically complex classrooms, explore the implementation strategies used, examine the challenges encountered in the implementation process and establish how the challenges were addressed. The idea was to capture live experiences of teachers as agents of the policy on the transition as articulated by the language-in-education policy.

The study was conducted in six districts out of the possible nine as indicated in the map provided below: Ngamiland, North East, Kweneng, South East, Kgalagadi, and Central. The districts were chosen because of their complex linguistic and ethnic diversity. Therefore, this diversity in the regions will also reflect in the primary schools. The districts are spread across the country and this gave the researcher an idea on how transition from Setswana to English was perceived and practiced in these different districts that are wide apart.
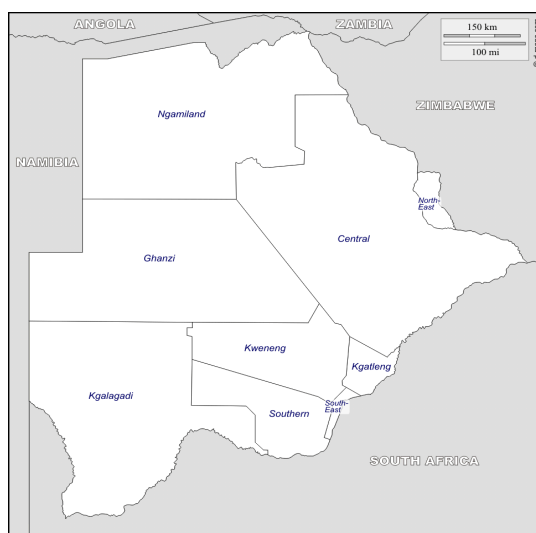
Source: https://www.botswana+districts+and+subdistricts&sa
Figure 1. Botswana main districts

Within the six districts, six primary schools were identified for research which were heterogenous. In the primary school in the Ngamiland district, 40% of the learners spoke Otjiherero, 30% spoke different San languages such as //Ani, Buga and Kaukau (Ju |'hoasi)., 20% spoke different Shekgalagari dialects and 10% spoke Setswana. In North East district primary school, 90% of the learners spoke Ndebele while only 10% spoke Ikalanga. Learners in the Kweneng district primary school, 50% of the learners spoke different San languages such asKua (// Gana); Khute (/ Gui); Cua (Hoan), 40% spoke different dialects of Shekgalagari, and 8% of the learners spoke a pidgin of Setswana and Shekgalagari and 2% spoke Setswana. In Gaborone district, which is the capital city of Botswana, learners came from different countries of the world and different parts of the country. Some were Tanzanian, Zimbabweans, British, Ghanaian, Zambians, Malawians, Malaysians and other different ethnic groups such as Bakalaka, Bakgalagadi, Baherero, Bayei, Bambukushu, Bazezuru whose parents were working in the city. But some of the learners spoke and understood Setswana. Important to note is that learners would speak English as a first language because parents were also elites and educated and therefore exposed their children to preschool education where the medium of instruction was English. Again, parents spoke to their children in English at home.

In the Kgalagadi district, learners spoke Afrikaans, Nama, Shengologa, Otjiherero, Setlharo, Shekgalagari and San languages such as Nama, !X óõ̃ Lastly, in the Central district, learners came from different parts ofAfrica; they were from Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Tanzania, Zambia and different parts of Botswana where Setswana is not spoken as a first language such as Bazezuru and Baherero. Again, it is important to note that the majority of Batswana in the Central district spoke Setswana as a lingua franca. Other Batswana spoke different dialects of Setswana such as Batswapong and Babirwa, Therefore, in all the six primary schools, classes were heterogeneous.

The key participants in the study were teachers because they had first-hand information which they got from the classrooms; they were in a position to state their views on transition, what their challenges were and how they addressed the challenges. Other participants were the school management because they were the immediate supervisors of the teachers and were in a position to share how they monitored and supervised the transitional period as a sensitive period. Further, the school management knew their catchment areas and the languages spoken in the different catchment areas and therefore could account for how transition was handled in a special way looking at the heterogeneity of the classrooms. Lastly, it was also important to see how learners responded to transition from Setswana to English through by examining their exercise books and observing them in classrooms.

Data were collected using various instruments for triangulation. For example, the researcher used classroom observations, interviews, open ended questionnaires and field notes. The triangulation of methods painted a clear picture on how transition was done by teachers in Standard Two classrooms. Open ended questionnaires were used so that teachers could provide as much information as possible on transition. The open ended questionnaires were followed by classroom observations to confirm what teachers said in the open ended questionnaires. Classroom observations were done after issuing open ended questionnaires to observe how transition is handled and confirm the teachers' views about it. Also, the idea was to see how learners responded to transition. Interviews were used to answer the questions 'how' and 'why' that were structured in the interview. The interviews were also used to close the gaps left by open ended questionnaires and classroom observations. School management were issued with open ended questionnaires and interviewed about how they assisted the transitional period.

Classroom observations were done in the mornings before break time and immediately after break up to one o'clock to observe different subjects taught in English. Lessons were allocated a period of thirty minutes or one hour if it is a double lesson. The researcher would observe a Mathematics lesson taught in Setswana with teachers having difficulties to explain some of the mathematical concepts that were difficult to explain in Setswana in Standard One classes. In Standard Two where the medium of instruction is English, teachers would find it difficult to teach in English subjects such as Science and Creative And Performing Arts. Afternoons were used for interviews to avoid interrupting lessons during teaching time. The interviews were also done in the afternoons to follow up on what transpired during lesson time.

Data were coded, interpreted and analyzed according to primary schools and regions. Each primary school was given an alphabetical code. For example, the school and region that were studied first were given code A and the ones that followed were given B, C, D, E and F. The school that was studied first was set as a yardstick for others; the themes identified in other primary schools were plotted under similar themes identified in school A under each key research question. Data were read and reread to search for major and minor themes. Any variations, similarities and differences observed in various primary schools and regions were followed up for clarifications where necessary. The theme of transition from Setswana to English in Standard Two classes emerged as one of the major themes as it was one of the pivotal points in policy implementation. The description given on transition in Standard Two classes was detailed and painted a clear picture of the policy intentions that did not match the realities of the classrooms. All the other levels of primary school such as Standard One, Four and Seven will not be used for this discussion because transition takes place at Standard Two only which is the focus of this paper. After data collection in each primary school, a meeting was held with all staff members to share the results of the research with them. This was a way of validating the data.

V. RESULTS OF THE STUDY

Teachers and Transition

Transition at Standard Two was reported differently in different schools by teachers. Teachers in four rural primary schools reported that they did not change the language of instruction from Setswana to English at Standard Two. The verbatim that followed were derived from their interviews with the researcher. In school A, one teacher at Standard Two said, *"English is an additional problem to what they already have from Standard One and therefore I do not use it. At Standard Two level, learners would not have mastered Setswana and therefore, English becomes another burden. In this respect, learners struggle with the structure of the two languages of instruction and the concepts."* In school B, one teacher said, *"I use Setswana to teach other subjects that are taught in English because at term two learners are beginning to understand some Setswana words and therefore introducing English as a medium of instruction will only drive them away from school. I introduce it slowly because there are a lot of signs that they cannot follow the languages of instruction, so why use a language the learners fail to understand?"* In school C, one teacher said, *"the only learners who can understand English in my class are learners who speak Afrikaans and they are only five in my class. Afrikaans is closer to English. It will take the rest of the learners many years to construct an English sentence."* In school D the teacher said, *"I do not use English in my class, the learners are still struggling with Setswana, talking to them in English is like I am talking to myself. I have to use three languages; I say the concepts in Setswana, Ikalanga and then ask them what it means in Ndebele. Therefore, English alone is not possible to use in this class."* This is what was said by teachers of Standard Two regarding the introduction of English as a medium of instruction. The verbatim indicates that transition was not followed and the reasons were different from one classroom to another.

Also, during classroom observations the researcher observed that in the four rural primary schools, transition was complicated by the fact that teachers lacked appropriate vocabulary in English. Teachers could not clearly express themselves in English and therefore relied too much on code-switching and code mixing Setswana and English. Although teachers code switched between English and Setswana, it was because they spoke Setswana as either a first or a second language, not that learners understood Setswana. In this regard, the use of English was very minimal. It should be noted that the use of Setswana at Standard Two was against what the policy stipulates, the policy states that English should be the language of instruction. Again, teachers who studied English at degree level, could not come down to the level of learners in Standard Two and it was difficult for learners to follow. Consequently, in rural primary schools, learners asked for permission to go out frequently which disturbed the smooth progression of the lesson. This movement could also be an indication of boredom or lack of concentration and interest in the lessons taught because the language of transition was a problem.

In urban primary schools, teachers reported that the change from Setswana to English at Standard Two presented challenges as well. Contrary to what teachers in rural primary schools said, teachers in urban primary schools reported that they used English at Standard One even to teach Breakthrough to Setswana programme and this was also observed during classroom observations. There was an exception only in one Standard One class in school F where teachers followed Setswana language of instruction in her class due to learners who did not have preschool background. In school E, one Standard Two the teacher said, *"I use both English and Setswana because there are learners who do not understand English; these are learners who have been transferred from other schools. But most of the learners speak and understand English. The transfers are from different parts of the country and some of them who attended in rural areas, have no preschool background."* In school F, the Standard Two teacher said, *"some learners have a problem of understanding and comprehending English. These are learners, who have not been to preschool, have been transferred from neighbouring villages and learners who lack parental care. Some of the learners did not breakthrough to either Setswana or English, so I cannot totally use English."* In urban primary schools, during classroom observations, the researcher observed that teachers used English. English was also used in Standard One where the medium of instruction was supposed to be Setswana. In school E, there was no transition at all. Learners were taught in English from Standard One.

Transition and the Standard Two Curriculum

Most of the teachers in all the primary schools studied reported that Standard Two syllabus was too advanced for the age of the learners and therefore made transition difficult for them and the learners. Some of the concepts taught were 'Compounds Words' in English, 'Digestive System' in Science and 'Authority Structure' in CAPA to name a few. A significant number of teachers in rural primary schools claimed that it was difficult to teach learners these concepts in English when it was their first time to use the language as a medium of instruction. Therefore, they used Setswana in most of the lessons and code-switched to English where they could not find appropriate vocabulary to use in Setswana. Most teachers reported that they did not finish the work planned for the day. In essence, the advanced syllabus made transition to English a difficult exercise in rural primary schools. Some of the topics from the Standard Two syllabus are summarized below.

English	Science	CAPA	Mathematics	Cultural
1.Compound words in phrases and longer sentences 2.Phonemes and graphics 3.Storytelling and conversations	1.Parts of a bird 2.Uses of plants 3.Living things and non-living things 4.Digestive system	1.Safety proportions 2.Body persecution	1.Solids as cubes, cuboids and cylinder 2.Capacity weight and mass	1.Child labour 2.Structure of authority in the ward

Figure 2. The Standard Two topics of different subjects

The topics above may be too difficult for Standard Two classes because English had just been introduced as a medium of instruction. When learners were trying to get used to the language, concepts that were advanced were also taught. This means that learners struggled with English and the concepts in all the subjects. They might experience a language shock as well as frustration of not understanding difficult concepts leading to frustration.

School Management and Transition

School management reported basically the same views as teachers that transition had proved to be difficult and in some schools close to impossible. However, this issue was viewed from different perspectives by school management depending on the location of the school and the linguistic background of learners.

In rural primary schools, school management reported that transition at Standard Two was close to impossible because teachers at this level were still struggling with initiating learners into the Breakthrough to Setswana Programme (a programme that initiates learners into learning the national language – Setswana), and when they were not yet grounded, another language was introduced. According to school management, in these schools, it was difficult to switch to English because learners were still grappling with Setswana. Furthermore, the school management in school D reported that the syllabus for Standard Two was too advanced for the learners because learners were taught concepts that were difficult to comprehend at their age. The school management in primary school D said, *"a topic such as the Digestive System may be too advanced for Standard Two learners as well as the teachers. But it is in the Standard Two syllabus."* According to the school management, learners were not only grappling with English at Standard Two but also with advanced concepts.

In urban primary schools the school management reported that since they were teaching learners in English, transition was not a problem because in actual fact there was 'no transition.' This was contrary to what teachers said because of the difficult concepts in Standard Two. However, the researcher's view regarding such contradictory views is that the school management did not take transition seriously and therefore seemed not to give it much attention. Interestingly, none of the school management reported ever going to the Standard Two classrooms to observe how transition to English was done. The school management seemed to have limited knowledge on what was going on in transitional classes at Standard Two because they were regarded just like normal classes. In school F where the researcher shared the findings with members of staff in a meeting, the school management said, *'we are not aware that transition from Setswana to English is a problem. This is our first time to hear that in this meeting, but we will sort the problem out with the teachers concerned."* This comment was an indication that there was limited collaboration between the school management and teachers and that transition was not supervised. In school A, the school management reported that, *"I have not observed the transitional classes because I concentrate on the completing classes. Therefore, I cannot really say much about what happens in these classrooms. All I know is that the learners have difficulty in comprehending English. This is what the teachers told me."*

In school E, the school management said that *"I am surprised that transition from Setswana to English could give such problems when our learners are already conversant in English from preschool."* This is another surprise that the school management was not aware that teachers are struggling with the transitional stage. The school management seemed not to have enough background on what was taking place in the Standard Two classes.

The Learners and Transition

During classroom observation, the researcher observed that the Standard Two classes in rural primary schools were characterized by silence and lack of participation. Some learners refused to write tasks and the suspicion was that they had no language (English) to express themselves in writing. There was also evidence of wrong spellings and serious grammatical errors in their exercise books. Some of the answers provided in their exercise books were wild and did not match the instruction at all. This was an indication that they did not understand English and yet data were collected in the second term of the school calendar. In two rural primary schools, some of the learners cried when they were asked to answer. The crying could be an indication that they had no language to express themselves or they were frustrated.

In urban primary schools, most of the learners had a preschool background where they were taught in English. However, there were still some learners who had difficulties in understanding English. For example, there were few learners from Mozambique and Tanzania who did not speak English but only their home languages. These learners had difficulty in understanding English just like learners in rural primary schools. Other learners who had a problem were those who were transferred from other schools where they had little exposure to English language.

<center>VI. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS</center>

An unresponsive policy in both rural and urban primary schools

It is evident from the findings that teachers were grappling with an unresponsive language-in-education policy in both rural and urban primary schools and hence, it was problematic in both situations. For example, in rural primary schools, it would be logical to believe that teachers were not adhering to the policy; that is, transition was not observed. The transitional model could present itself differently in multiple realities. In cases of this study, the micro language planning decision teachers made not to fully adhere to the policy could be based on various reasons: a) teachers had the interests of the learners at heart and instead of introducing English they used Setswana for better understanding. The reason being that Setswana was the language the learners had learnt for a few months. According to teachers, they could not expect learners to have mastered Setswana in such a short period of time when they only learned it at school; b) the

continuous use of Setswana from Standard One to Standard Two classes contradicted what policy makers planned for initially. This could contribute towards the decline of learners' achievement. However, teachers decided and claimed to use a language that would bring life to their classes and yet some of the learners only heard Setswana for the first time at school and therefore struggled to understand it.

Again, the researcher could not rule out low tolerance for change. It is important to note that even though teachers preferred to use Setswana, it was because it was the language they were comfortable with – their own mother tongue or a second language they were comfortable with, not that learners were proficient in Setswana. Again, it would still be reasonable to point out that teachers at Standard Two were not proficient in English and hid their inadequacy behind learners' lack of understanding English as this was also observed by one of the school heads and also noted during class observations (see also Bamgbose, 1991; Kyeyune, 2003; Sure & Ogechi, 2009). If this practice continued, change or policy outcomes would forever remain partially met or totally neglected.

The negative impact of imposing unfamiliar languages on learners

It was also evident from the findings that some learners experienced anxiety, fear and confusion due to imposing unfamiliar languages of instruction. Such experiences during transition-to-school time can have longer term impacts on children's resilience and a negative image of themselves as learners. For example, learners performed below expected academic standards and this affects subsequent levels. In rural primary schools, Standard Two had high school dropouts of learners. For example, the number of dropouts was between 20 – 25 each academic year. It was probable that transition could have affected them negatively. Transition was not successful and it frustrated the learners. When difficulties were experienced during transition to another language they can persist throughout school life. This could also explain why students' performance was low especially in rural primary schools.

Transition was solely neglected and left to new and inexperienced teachers to use their own devices because it was not well understood. In an attempt to strike a compromise between what the policy specifies and at the same time taking into consideration the needs of learners, some teachers code-switched between English and Setswana. This was a rather confusing and tricky situation. The situation at Standard Two was two-fold; the learners on one hand who were not coping with the language that was introduced earlier – Setswana. Also, English as a language of instruction was introduced in the second year of primary schooling and it was not possible for the learners to have mastered Setswana in one year school calendar. Further, teachers also struggled with English. In school D, one Standard Two teacher admitted that she had been teaching in Setswana for two decades and therefore teaching in English was difficult for her. This diagnosis put teachers in a dilemma by trying to address classroom realities and satisfying the requirements of the policy.

The researcher's view is that the introduction of English at Standard Two was not given a thorough thought by policy makers in situations that were ethnically and linguistically complex. The reasons for such was because of the home languages that were different from the school languages, the teachers who did not speak the same languages as learners and therefore transfer of skills became minimal, appropriate implementation strategies to use in such complex linguistic situations were necessary and the time allocated to learning the target languages under such difficult situations should be more (see also Bamgbose, 1997; Hays, 2002; Lam, 2002; le Roux, 1999; May, 2004; Prah, 2009; Saugestad, 2001). The realities in such linguistically complex classrooms could lead to lowered expectations and as indicated by classroom practices such as lack of participation, communication breakdown and the poor academic results (see Grace, 2007:1). In summation, transition is a crucial period during which many English learners are especially vulnerable to academic underachievement (Saunders & Goldenberg, 1998).

English only policy in urban primary schools

Micro language planning in urban primary schools led to English only policy from Standard One to Two for various reasons. The urban primary schools had clear criteria to prepare learners for subsequent levels and preferred to initiate learners into the primary school programme using English medium. For example, in one urban primary school learners started schooling in English because of the linguistic diversity and the presence of foreign learners and immigrants in the classrooms. Therefore, English was the medium of instruction throughout. However, this did not mean that there were no problems. One would expect that since there was 'no transition' because learners had been taught in English in Standard One due to linguistic diversity that existed in their classes and also had a preschool background, this was not the case. Learners still struggled with English. One Standard Two teacher said, *'learners strongly experience difficulties, when you ask them to read, they struggle to read difficult concepts, even when trying to explain in English, they need clarification in Setswana.'* The other Standard Two teacher in another urban school said, *"I am not satisfied with the outcome of English, learners grasp concepts slowly. It takes time for them to cope with English if it is used as a medium of instruction throughout."*

The question is why did transition pose a problem because learners had background knowledge of English from preschool as teachers stated? Again, learners were taught in English at Standard One as stated by the teachers. Another critical issue was whether teachers at Standard Two were proficient in English to help learners go through transition. Therefore, it was not easy to interpret such a situation. However, the impression the researcher got was that not all learners had been to preschool, these could be the ones struggling with English because they were still lagging behind with basic language skills their counterparts gained at preschool. The mere fact that learners who had not been to preschool had an advantage at Standard One of being taught in English and also interacting with other learners who

spoke English did not necessarily mean they could easily understand the target language. Other factors come into play such as the amount of input in the classroom, the teachers' proficiency in English and enough practice in the target language.

Lack of competence in English by teachers

The lack of positive impact of the language-in-education policy in both situations was that teachers' lack of competence in English contributed to the failure of the policy. Micro language planning activities were devised to address this problem. The researcher observed in all the Standard Two classes in urban primary schools was that teachers had a problem with English, they code-switched to Setswana unnecessarily, therefore, their code-switching to Setswana in their case could be seen as a drawback. After all, most of the learners understood and spoke English already. In one of the classes the researcher observed that in an urban school, an elderly teacher had difficulty in explaining the concepts to learners in English in different subjects taught. This could mean that the teachers themselves were not proficient in English. Consistent with the latter, Nguyen (2011) points out that there has been an urgent need to keep proficiency in English high and this has had a considerable impact on language planning policy in many non-English speaking countries. Kyeyune (2003) acknowledged that in Africa there is a growing concern of poor standards of English among teachers and learners that is brought about by the implementation process of the target language. The transition problem identified in Standard Two classes in rural primary schools could be a result of poor standards of English from the teachers and then the teachers would transfer the poor standards of English to the learners. In this regard, it could be reasonable to conclude that transition in Standard Two classrooms of urban primary schools could be partly due to teachers' lack of proficiency in the target languages.

The researcher's impression about the use of Setswana to teach subjects that are supposed to be taught in English was that, it delayed learners' progress. The researcher's view on the transitional classes could be given to teachers who were proficient in English to address learners' inadequacies in English. According to Brown (2010:299) the situation made teachers to play a conflictual role. Standard Two should be considered a critical stage to the introduction of another language and therefore could be carefully considered and should not be treated as any other class. Teachers who are not proficient in English but teaching transitional classes may destroy the learners' motivation to learn. Since the school management has the teachers' profiles, they could consider teachers who have the highest level of education because of the sensitivity of transitional classes.

Transition and Relevant Pedagogy

Teachers seem to be uncertain about the appropriate teaching pedagogy to use during transition and therefore transition was often a conundrum (Saunders & Goldenberg, 1998). Further, it requires that strategies must be in place to accelerate the shift to the target language. When a language programme is introduced, learners may need special assistance in strengthening their reading and writing skills as well as their grammar. Specialized academic vocabulary instruction and other strategic measures need to be provided. However, in rural primary schools there were common teaching pedagogy observed: parroting, lecturing, repetition of sounds and phrases and the lecture method dominated the teaching and learning process. This means that there was no specialized assistance provided for the learners to go through transition with minimal problems. Transition programmes have categories such as awareness and orientation activities, counseling and referral services, and comprehensive programmes (Alamprese, 2004). Also, materials for independent study with reading and writing assignments are necessary (Lombardo, 2004), however, these were not available during the time of research. A strong cooperation and support for teachers and learners to handle transition were essential.

The non-use of learners' indigenous languages

The bilingual education programme in Botswana education system delays learners' development of English language skills in all schools in various ways. From the classroom observations there were too many challenges observed in rural primary schools and few of them in the urban ones. Firstly, the reason for such disparity could be that in rural primary schools most learners hear the target languages for the first time at school where as in urban primary schools most learners have a preschool background where they are taught in English and also some of the learners use English as a home language. Secondly, the parents of learners in rural primary schools are not educated or have attempted lower levels of education and therefore do not speak the target languages with children at home and they may not be in a position to support the learners to go through transition. Parents of learners in urban primary schools are mostly educated and speak the target languages with their children. The children go to school already speaking English fluently.

Further, non-use of learners' indigenous languages brings about double transition. For example, learners in rural primary schools did not only experience transition in Standard Two from Setswana to English. At Standard One, they went through transition from their home languages to Setswana. When they started school they were spoken to in a language they did not understand, they were told that they would not use their languages in schools, they got confused because all of a sudden they did not have a language to express themselves in at school and this led to shock, confusion and loss of confidence (Spolsky, 2009). This was often overlooked by teachers and school management. There seemed to be no appropriate plans in place to assist in smooth transition from home languages to the first language used in school. Therefore, it was essential for teachers to assist the learners with appropriate strategies to overcome the language shock in Standard One and another language shock in Standard Two.

Based on teachers' narrations, the switch to English as a medium of instruction was difficult to adhere to with learners of different backgrounds against what the policy stipulates. Considering the introduction of English at Standard Two, the researcher's impression was that teachers were required to implement policies or make curricular changes that had already been set by policy makers and deep collaborative and effective communication procedures were often overlooked. Hence, the decisions teachers of Standard Two made in the implementation process to effect the change from Setswana to English could affect learners' performance because they lacked appropriate skills and strategies to implement the changes required (Hu & Alsagoff, 2010; Johnson, 2010; Lin, 2006; Opoku-Amankwa, 2009). The situation is left fluid with minimal accountability on the risks and challenges teachers encounter regarding transition.

Limited knowledge and delivery skills by School Management

School management did not supervise transition because they were either not knowledgeable or unaware of its significance. The researcher's impression was that; a) school management detached themselves from the teachers and focused on administrative activities; b) there were no clearly identified roles regarding the transition that school management were responsible for; c) school management took transition from Setswana to English in Standard Two as any other class and were unaware of any challenges that might arise; d) there appeared to be a gap between implementers as teachers and implementers as supervisors; e) it was likely that the policy was dumped in schools with no sense of ownership by the school management. Strong collaboration between teachers and school management was necessary (Lombardo, 2004).

It was clear in this regard that school management was not aware that they were supposed to assist with transition from Setswana to English and this was left entirely to teachers to deal with it. If teachers are left alone to deal with transition as it seems to be case, there can be reluctance and resistance to change (House, 1981). This means that teachers might change the use of languages of instruction and the expected methodologies to suit them and their students without the school management knowing what exactly is going on in the teachers' transitional classes.

VII. IMPLICATIONS OF THE POLICY

Classroom practices on transition from Setswana to English in Standard Two have implications for teachers. While teachers plan to address the policy problems on their own, they have become victims of an unresponsive policy. The different settings of rural and urban primary schools on transition provide insights into evolving policies and practices. Policy agents are confronted by complex issues that are imposed by the policy. For example, for teachers to transit learners from an unfamiliar language to another unfamiliar becomes a serious challenge as well teaching learners in Setswana in a classroom of foreigners and immigrants. The policy raises a debate on whether ethnic minority groups have the right to education. This needs reflection by policy makers to make an intersection of macro and micro language planning.

For policy makers, the review of the policy is long overdue. With tangible evidence that some learners are not benefitting from the current policy and its transitions in different environments imply that there are problems, challenges and risks that need to be reviewed and reflected upon to accommodate disadvantaged ethnic minority groups. The voices from the classrooms are loud enough to draw the educational authorities, policy makers and other stakeholders' attention that learning is impeded by the very instrument that is supposed to promote learning.

The classroom practices have implications for the theoretical framework - the transitional bilingual education model. In rural primary schools, the policy does not allow the use of learners' indigenous languages and therefore education is started on an unfamiliar language. In urban primary school, the practices lead to monolingualism where teachers use English only policy. These factors serve to illustrate the consequences of the macro language planning as attempts are made to put policy into practice.

VIII. CONCLUSION

While micro language planning occurs in the studied primary schools, it implicates less systematic strategic measures regarding transition especially in rural primary schools. Transition in Standard Two is problematic and not adhered to for different reasons. It was left entirely to teachers to deal with the challenges and gaps that the policy presented in the classrooms. Therefore, teachers did what they thought was best for the learners. There seemed to be no effective communication, collaboration and networking on transition in Standard Two amongst teachers and school management. The challenges identified in rural primary schools were an indication of risks that occurred when the change from Setswana to English medium took place. There seemed to be no appropriate strategies in place to address transition by school management. Again, there was no monitoring and supervision of transition by school management. The transitional matters were not reported to higher educational authorities because they were not regarded as pertinent. The current policy could lead to massive waste where learners are left behind by the policy due to transitional problems.

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Eureka Mokibelo (PhD) is a lecturer in Language Education at the University of Botswana, in the Communication and Study Skills Unit. Through a careful blend of theories, research and practice, Eureka Mokibelo' s publications focus on issues in language education, language-in-education policy, educational and social issues affecting ethnic minorities at both primary and secondary schools of Botswana.

The Position of Game Localization Training within Academic Translation Teaching[*]

Mehmet Cem Odacıoğlu
Department of Translation Studies, University of Sakarya, 054187, Turkey

Chek Kim Loi
PPIB, Universiti Malaysia Sabah, Labuan International Campus, Jalan Sungai Pagar, 8700, Wilayah Persekutuan Labuan, Malaysia

Şaban Köktürk
Department of Translation Studies, University of Sakarya, 054187, Turkey

Nazan Müge Uysal
The School of Foreign Languages, Abant İzzet Baysal University, Turkey

Abstract—**The video game industry which originated in 1960s is now an important entertainment industry mostly thanks to the digital revolution, especially as of 2000s. In parallel, the video game industry gains today million dollars and this will be increasing more as the number of gamers enhances. Therefore, this study emphasizes the position of the game localization training within the academic translation teaching by analysing two universities' translation courses and thus questions the availability and the position of the game localization training among the related courses. The study also touched on other universities in this regard. Before the analysis, the study offers some information about the definition of the game localization, some of its features and its reflections on the related courses. In addition, aspects such as the translation competence which would-be translators must develop and tools used in the process so as to make student translators familiar with this new type of translation and to raise their awareness are also included.**

Index Terms—**game localization, game localisation, video game industry, localization, localisation, game, gamer, playability**

I. INTRODUCTİON

This study seeks to analyse the position of the game localization training within academic translation teaching by analysing two universities' translation courses[1]. In doing so, the study also touches upon the situation in other universities, definition of the game localization, its some features and its reflections on the related courses, the tools that can help translators in the translation process as well as the translation competence which would-be translators must possess. The reason why we write such a paper is that game localization is relatively a growing industry especially as of 2000s, when computer technologies have started hugely developing[2].

Research Questions

Here are some pre-determined research questions to be able to analyse the position of the game localization training within academic translation teaching.

1. Is game localization available as a different course in translation programs? If it is, in which degree is it offered? What are the contents of the course?

2. What is the position of the game localization training within the academic translation teaching?

3. What can be said about the future of the game localization training?

II. GAME LOCALİZATİON

This section of the paper focuses on (i) the definition of the game localization, (ii) its some features, (iii) reflections of them on courses where game localization is offered, (iv) necessary translation competences which student translators should develop, (v) tools used in the process and (vi) the core of the study which is the analysis part focusing on two universities' translation programs to understand the position of the game localization training among the courses and to find out whether there is a specific course or not regarding the game localization.

A. Definition of Game Localization

Video game localization or game localization can be regarded as a mix of audio-visual translation and software localization. Just like software localization, the game localization focuses on the localization of digital games (localization of characters' dialogues with each other, user interface texts and descriptive, help and tutorial texts[3]) from one language into many languages so as to make the release of the original and localized games at the same time all over the world for usually market driven purposes. What makes game localization different from the software localization, however, is that throughout the game localization projects, translators are responsible for doing a creative and original like translation in order to entertain the gamer as the source game does. But in software localization what comes first is keeping the functionality of the source material in the target production (qtd. In Munday, 2008, p.190, see also Munday, 2012).

B. Features of Game Localization and Its Reflections on the Related Courses

In game localization, there is not only a linguistic transfer but also the adaptation of cultural references, humour and irony. Besides, localizers sometimes may have to rename the characters, objects or locations, use neologisms/non-standard dialects or they may need to change the plot of the game (see Mangiron, 2007, p. 309; Munday, 2008). For instance, to make Tomb Raider attractive to Japanese gamers, some of the scary death scenes in the western version have been omitted from the localized version (see Bernal Merino, 2006). In addition to this, games are various in type like strategy, simulation, action, adventure, role playing, sports, and car racing which means that localizers may have to resort to different procedures in game localization projects.

Throughout a game localization project, many factors such as three dimensional technology, mathematics, physics, special effects, voice recognition, subtitling and dubbing which can also call to the mind audio-visual translation must be taken into account so as to create realistic scenes and thus to attract gamers more (see Bernal Merino, 2006). To get over these processes without a financial loss in game localization projects, a collaborative approach is usually followed. The collaborative team of a game localization project usually consists of a project manager, senior, translators in action, graphic designers, computer engineer, localization engineer, desktop publisher, testing member and so sorth. This team may follow an in house model or an outsourcing model. In in house model, the developer is in charge of the localization duty. To this end, a team of translators and related experts are hired. This model requires time and it is also expensive. In the outsourcing model, localizers, however, start the game localization at the development stage (Mangiron, 2007, p. 310). Especially the need for simship of game products requires the outsourcing model and the use of some translation technologies like translation memories, term banks, and electronic dictionaries for a speed translation.

The importance of a collaborative model in game localization projects must be stressed in classroom activities as well because in courses where game localization is offered, the challenges encountered in the game localization process might be simulated interactively with a collaborative approach in order to make student translators familiar with the real time game localization industry. This also means that the challenges may easily be overcome. Besides, the collaborative model in a classroom teaching calls to the mind Kiraly's social constructivist approach rather than the transmission approach. According to Kiraly, people socially construct knowledge and the classroom teaching must be directed in this way. The transmission approach makes the individual student passive and increases the teacher's authority. In the social constructivist approach, however, the teacher only plays the role of a facilitator and students can freely follow their learning processes and take different roles (see Pym, 2011, p.318). In courses that focus on the teaching of game localization, therefore, social constructivist approach must be adopted. Thus, the real time game localization market might be easily observed and students can be used to the real time game localization industry as well.

C. Translation Competences in Game Localization

As repeatedly emphasized, translation is not only linguistic and even the cultural transfer but also it requires the adaptation of graphics, images (see also Mangiron, 2007), the re-design of the source material or production in the target setting and so forth. Therefore, in courses where game localization is offered, student translators must also be taught technical issues related with the computer technology, software engineering or the use of translation tools. To this aim, the related courses must be reinforced with elective courses from other departments which focus on technology (e.g computer engineering, software engineering, computer programming) (Odacıoğlu and Köktürk, 2015, p.1087). The translation profession undergoes radical changes in the digital revolution and it urges practitioners to learn new knowledge and skills or acquire new competences. The industry including game localization has thus begun using sophisticated software or tools in terminology management and translation activity (O'Hagan and Ashworth, 2002, p. 108). Therefore, student translators must be familiar with how to use these tools in simulated game localization projects in the classroom as new components of the translation competence.

In parallel with this, new translation competences taught in simulated game localization projects in classrooms encourage would-be translators to be IT specialists, post-editors, designers, multicultural software designers, localizers, terminology experts, project managers, technology transmitter as well as being a linguistic and cultural transmitter (see Koby and Baer, 2003, p.213) when they graduate. Besides, student translators when localizing games in classroom activities must be used to "screen reading" (see Crespo, 2010) which calls to the mind paradigmatic than a syntagmatic approach (Pym, 2011)[4]. From this point on, digital contents are generally prepared paradigmatically and as a result the narrative style is left. So, the new translation competence must also address such issues.

D. Tools in the Related Courses

During the game localization project, there are many tools that can help translators or localizers to handle the process without any delays of the release of the product or additional financial cost arising from the unexpected translation problems or technical issues. These tools must be offered in translation classrooms, at least at an introductory level to make student translators familiar with them, so that they can work in the game localization industry without any challenges when they graduate. This section briefly presents some of these beneficial tools used in the process.

1. Translation Memory Tools

According to Zerfass, translation memory is based on the logic that translations are memorised made by a human translator (http://www.unige.ch/eti/ptt/docs/general-info.pdf). Translation memory tools were actually conceived in the early 1970s but they have been commercially available since 1990s (see Bowker, 2005, p.14). Bowker claims that translation memory tools store two types of texts, i.e. source and target texts and divide the texts into small units defined as segments which generally correspond to sentences or sentence like units (e.g. items, table cells, titles, headings) (Bowker, 2005, p.14).

These tools are frequently used in the localization market including software and website localization plus game localization. Like the definition above, translation memory tools such as SDL Trados or Alchemy/Catalyst store previous translations (translations of phrases, sentences or words, paragraphs) and these translations are later used in similar projects in order to save time and money (Chandler, 2012, p.188) which means productivity or fast translation. Productivity also implies simultaneous shipment of the localized content or in our case localized version of the game products all over the world, so that the company gains more profit. In order to achieve this, the reuse of translations through translation memory systems is necessary. However, some game publishers think that game localization is based on entertaining the gamer and this kind of localization is as artistic as literature and cinema. Therefore, these companies may not want to use translation memories since these tools are associated with a technical or phrase translation. Still, it is apparent that the simship of localized games along with the original product is mostly possible with the concept of productivity and the productivity is achieved by using such tools in the process, as also stated by O'Hagan and Mangiron (2013, p.143)[5] Therefore, teaching of these tools in the game localization training is a must though all brands are impossible to teach in a course. At least, students can be made familiar with how to use these tools on the real time translation/localization markets through simulated translation activities in the classroom.

2. Game Localization Management Tools

The use of game localization management tools has become necessary because games today have reached a broader global scope and the borders have extended. According to Chandler, there are some game localization managements tools like XLOC which specialise in game asset manipulation and track the development of the localized versions synchronically with the original product (2012, p.192). These tools are effective to eradicate mistakes at the development stage, especially from a localization perspective (Chandler, 2012, p.193). The teaching of these tools to make the translation process fast, productive and easy is necessary to increase the abilities of would-be translators. In addition, these tools alleviate the burden of translators in action or the other actors in a collaboration team of the game localization project by facilitating the process. We, at this point, suggest that instructors must impose on student translators the fact that their duty is not only to translate but also to be specialized in managing the whole process. To achieve this, translation students must be equipped with technical knowledge (know-how) instead of only know-that. Therefore, the instructor must play a role of a technical expert or IT specialist as much as possible than only playing a role of a translation scholar or translator.

3. The Other Tools

In addition to using translation memory and game localization managements tools, there are also some other electronic resources that can help translators/localizers in the localization project like electronic corpora, online dictionaries (tureng.com, merriam-webster.com, thefreedictionary.com), cloud based web applications, search engines (Google, Yahoo), term banks, terminology management tools and terminology databases. All these tools are used to facilitate the process and reduce the burden of the translator or other actors in the localization project.

E. Analysis of Atılım and Roehampton Universities' Translation Programs and the Investigation of the Position of Game Localization Training within Academic Translation Teaching

This section includes Table 1 and Table II showing some of the practical courses[5] of Atılım and Roehampton universities' translation programs at both the undergraduate and graduate levels and questions the position of game localization training among them. The reason to choose these two universities is the scope of the study. The aim here is actually not to compare them but to be able to reach a general conclusion about the position of game localization training within academic translation teaching. In order not to give the impression that the study is only comparison, the situation of other universities is also mentioned by referring to Bernal Merino's analysis.

TABLE 1.
ATILIM UNIVERSITY / FACULTY OF ARTS AND SCIENCES / TRANSLATION & INTERPRETATION DEPARTMENT

Undergraduate courses[6]:		Postgraduate Courses (MA)[7]	
Course Code	Course Name	Course Code	Course Name
	Compulsory Departmental Courses		
ETI 303	Translation of Texts on Social Sciences	ETI 502	Special Topics in Translation I
ETI 308	Translation of Medical Texts	ETI 503	Special Topics in Translation II
ETI 310	Communication and Media Translation	ETI 504	Literary Translation I
ETI 409	Translation of Texts on Law and International Affairs	ETI 505	Literary Translation II
ETI 419	General Translation I	ETI 508	Translation of Texts on International Relations
ETI 420	General Translation II	ETI 511	Translation of Medical Texts
ETI 416	Translation of Texts on Economics and Commerce	ETI 512	Legal Translation
ETI 412	EU Studies and Translation	ETI 514	Translation of Texts on Banking, Finance and Economy
	Departmental Elective Courses		
ETI 314	Use of Computer Technologies in Translation	ETI 515	Scientific and Technical Translation
ETI 407	Literature and Translation I	ETI 518	Translation of Texts of International Organizations
ETI 408	Literature and Translation II	ETI 519	European Union Texts I
ETI 421	Technical writing and Translation	ETI 520	European Union Texts II
ETI 433	Project Management and Localization	ETI 522	European Union Acquis Communautaire Texts

TABLE 2.
ROEHAMPTON UNIVERSITY / DEPARTMENT OF MEDIA, CULTURE AND LANGUAGE / MODERN LANGUAAGES: TRANSLATION

Undergraduate courses[8]:		Audiovisual Translation Postgraduate Courses (MA, PGD)[9]	
Modules	Module Name	Module Code	Module Name
MLT020N280S	Computer-Assisted Translation Tools	#AST040L730S	Translation Theory and Practice
MLF020X425S	Professional Translation (French)	#AST040L731Y	Subtitling and Surtitling
MLF020X426	Specialized Translation (French)	AST020L734A	Translation Tools
MLS020X435S	Professional Translation (Spanish)	AST020L741S	Dubbing and Voice Over
MLS020X460A	Media Translation	AST020L742S	Media Access: Audiodescription, Subtitling for the Deaf and Respeaking
		AST020L747A	The Localisation of Video Games
		#AST020L737A	Technical and Scientific Translation
		AST020L738S	Economic and Legal Translation

1. Analysis
•Atılım University
1.1 Analysis of Undergraduate Level[10]

The translation curriculum (4 years) designed by the Faculty of Arts and Sciences of Atılım University includes a wide range of courses to train student translators. As can be seen in Table 1, compulsory departmental courses focus on the translation of texts on social sciences, translation of medical texts,, translation of texts on law&international affairs, translation of texts on economics&commerce and translation of EU texts. It is apparent that these courses are closely associated with the teaching of the translation of texts on technical&scientific, political and general issues. However, there is not a specific course to refer to the game localization in the compulsory departmental courses.

In departmental elective courses, the "Literature and Translation (I-II)" course intends the teaching of translation of literary texts. However, another course "Use of Computer Technologies in Translation" aims at teaching computerized tools or CAT tools which can facilitate the translation process. Still, the content of the course is too broad and from the explanation on the website, it is not clear that the responsible instructor also teaches game localization in the classroom. Besides, "Technical Writing and Translation" course focuses on scientific and technical texts. Here, it is still not obvious whether the instructor also refers to the game localization training throughout the course. "Project management and Localization" course, on the other hand, deals with the teaching of software and electronic media for localization and project management. This course can be useful for student translators to catch up with the real time localization

market. But, the course is comprehensive and the instructor is possibly devoted to teaching student translators at an introductory level. So, whether game localization is taught or not in the course is uncertain. For further information, the content of the courses can be found online on the related website.

All in all, we do not see a specific name evoking game localization training both in compulsory and departmental elective courses at the translation curriculum of the undergraduate level. It is also outstanding that courses on the project management and localization and besides on the use of computer technologies are offered only in departmental elective courses. In the digital age, we think that these courses are as important as those listed in the compulsory translation curriculum, so they must be made compulsory for real time translation&localization markets.

1.2 Analysis of Post-Graduate Level[11]

MA courses (two years) have similar names and related contents with undergraduate courses. The difference is the presence of different course names such as Special Topics in Translation (I, II). But these courses, as can be seen from the descriptions on the department website focus on the teaching of the translation of legal and diplomatic texts. At the Post-Graduate Level, we do not also find a specific course on the game localization training and even the curriculum does not include any courses regarding the localization teaching.

•Roehampton University
2.1 Analysis of Undergraduate Level[12]

Modern languages-translation program of Roehampton University is offered at Roehampton Lane campus most of the time. The program targets teaching the ability to use a foreign language. Students can learn one main foreign language either English, French or Spanish. They can also choose a second language and even the third language including European, Eastern or Middle Eastern languages. For the Modern Languages-Translation, the goals intend to be able to improve students' understanding on theoretical and practical issues in translation and interpretation as well as introducing them professional translation settings/requirements and gaining them professional skills for various purposes. The other information about the program can be found on the related website (http://studentzone.roehampton.ac.uk/programmedetails/ug/modernlanguagestranslationsh/index.asp). The program is offered under the department of Media, Culture and Language. From the chosen practical courses shown in Table 2, it can be said that "Computer-Assisted Translation Tools" module intends to teach students the use of CAT tools and IT technologies. In "Professional Translation (French)" and "Professional Translation (Spanish)" and "Specialised Translation (French)" modules, students are required to "complete a timed translation into their native language, submitted in electronic format and hard copy and accompanied by an invoice" and "coursework dossier, containing a minimum of two translation, one of which must be into the student's second language" (http://studentzone.roehampton.ac.uk/programmedetails/module.asp?module=MLS020X435). On the website summarizing the program details of these modules, it is also stated that the aim is "to meet the need at national and international level for foreign language specialists with the linguistic competence and expertise necessary for operating successfully in international contexts and organisations" http://studentzone.roehampton.ac.uk/programmedetails/module.asp?module=MLS020X435). "Media Translation" offered by Miguel Bernal Merino, on the other hand teaches students audiovisual translation, film translation, media translation and game localization. However, the game localization is taught under "Media Translation" module. Therefore, it can be said that there is not a specific module for this special field at an undergraduate level.

2.2 Analysis of Post-Graduate Level[13]

The postgraduate program of the university varies from subtitling, surtitling, translation tools, dubbing and voice over, audio description, subtitling for the deaf and respeaking, the localization of video games to the technical and scientific, economical and legal translation. All these chosen courses for the study evoke the translation practice and the post-graduate level seems various in form requiring specialisation when compared to the undergraduate level. All these courses except technical and scientific, economical and legal translation bring to the mind audio-visual translation. Technical and scientific, economical and legal translation are however other special fields in translation. In Roehampton University's MA Audio-visual translation program, there is a specific course for the game localization, which is "the Localisation of Video Games" offered by Miguel Bernal Merino. According to the program details of the module, students are offered main concepts about game localization and they are encouraged to acquire "practical experience of working with the various types of material that make up the process, including in-game, user interface, interactive subtitles, online-help, voice-over, manuals, packacing, graphic files and official website" and students are also introduced "different genres of video game" (http://ws1.roehampton.ac.uk/ektron/programme/module.asp?module=AST020L747) throughout the module. This shows that there is a specific module/course in the game localization at the post graduate level.

3. The Availability of Game Localization Training within Other Universities

In our paper, we only analysed two universities due to the limitation of study. But we think that Bernal Merino's research also touches on the same problem we defined. That is to say, in his book entitled *Translation and Localisation in Video Games* (2015), Miguel Bernal Merino has also analysed universities which offer post graduate courses on media studies, audiovisual translation, screen translation, localization of utility software, websites and video games, terminology management, dubbing, subtitling, public speaking, localization project management and so forth. The detailed information can be found on the chapter six of the book (see Bernal Merino, 2015, p.231-233). In the analysis

performed by Bernal Merino, it is seen that some translation//audiovisual and translation/localization programs of universities have game localization training besides the localization of utility software and websites. To show the availability of the game localization training in analysed universities, such examples can be offered: the master program entitled Máster en Tradumática Localización y Traducción Audiovidual designed by Universidad Alfonso X El Sabio (Spain) offers courses including localization of video games. Another example is Universitá di Bologna's (Italy) master degree in Screen Translation which offers modules focusing on dubbing and subtitling for television, cinema and business, audiovisual translation modules as well as the **translation of video games** (see Bernal merino, 2015). It is seen from these statements that localization of video games is offered in related courses but one can also ask here whether there is a specific course only focusing on the localization of video games or not in these analysed universities. Indeed, Bernal Merino has conducted research on sixteen univerties' post-graduate programs but as far as we observe from the data he collected, it can be said that none of the universities being analysed have a specific course on the game localization but they offer it under different courses on localization. We think this may be problematic because the game localization industry accounts for 50 percent of the global revenue of the video game industry and that would be better to define a specific name for game localization training like medical, legal, economic, literary translation not only at an undergraduate but also at a post-graduate level due to its high potentiality on the localization markets.

III. CONCLUSİONS

This study has analysed the position of the game localization training within academic translation teaching. In doing so, the study also offered some information about game localization in general and other factors that can affect a game localization project. The study analysed Atılım and Roehampton universities' practical translation courses at the undergraduate and post-graduate levels and found out that it is unclear whether "Project Management and Localization" and "Use of Computer Technologies in Translation" (undergraduate) courses provided by Atılım University include game localization training or not. Besides, Atılım University's undergraduate translation program does not have a specific name for the game localization. Besides, in post-graduate courses, Atılım University does not have a game localization teaching and even localization teaching.

Roehampton University's Modern Languages translation program has a module entitled "Media Translation" (undergraduate) which includes the teaching of audio-visual translation, film translation, media translation and game localization. Game localization is taught in this module as one field of the media translation. Therefore, it is not comprehensive, either. On the other hand, Roehampton University has a specific module entitled "The Localisation of Video Games" at a post-graduate level. This module teaches student translators main concepts about game localization and students are motivated for practical experiences. They are encouraged to deal with subtitles, user interface, online-help documents, graphic files and so forth. However, the fact that "The Localisation of Video Games" is only offered at MA level limits the game localization training for undergraduate courses while it can be useful for post-graduate students. The situation seems similar in other translation/audio-visual translation and localization programs of universities. There are usually not any single courses/modules only focusing on game localization training or there are not courses/modules under the name of game localization. This is also obvious from the data and analysis provided by Bernal Merino in his latest book. According to his research, it can be said that game localization as a different course is not offered in most of the translation programs, especially at an undergraduate level even though it is offered in some localization courses at a MA level in a limited way. Last but not least, the future of the game localization training is now under-development. What instructors must do at this point is to raise awareness of other scholars and student translators in order to show that game localization training is worth considering just like other translation types such as medical, legal, economic and literary translation mostly due to its market/industrial potentiality.

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Mehmet Cem Odacıoğlu was born on July 6, 1985 in Konya in Turkey. He earned his B.A..from English translation and interpretation department at Atılım University and M.A. in translation studies from Hacettepe University. He is now working as a research assistant at Sakarya University in the department of translation studies and writing a phd thesis regarding translation technologies on a theoretical perspective. His area of research includes translation theories, translation technologies, localization industry, linguistics, pragmatics, discourse analysis, applied translation studies, etc. He has presented a paper in the 7th World Conference on Educational Sciences in Greece in 2015 about the effects of technology on translation students in the context of academic translation teaching in cooperation with Şaban Köktürk. The author's other articles can be found online on http://www.codacioglu.sakarya.edu.tr/.

Chek Kim Loi holds a PhD in linguistics from the University of Otago, New Zealand. She is a senior lecturer at the Malaysian University of Sabah. She has published in the *Journal of Pragmatics*, *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, *Discourse Studies* and *Ibérica*.

Şaban Köktürk was born on October 10, 1971. He earned his B.A. from German linguistics and English language and literature at Eberhard-Karls Tübingen, German. He pursued his M.A. at the same university in the same department and later PHD in the department of applied linguistics. He works as an assistant professor at Sakarya University in the department of translation studies and his research area includes linguistics, pragmatics, semantics, applied linguistics, applied translation studies, etc. He has so far published many articles on translation studies which can be seen on his personal webpage, http://www.skokturk.sakarya.edu.tr/tr.

Nazan Müge Uysal is an English Instructor at Abant İzzet Baysal University, the School of Foreign Languages. She holds a Bachelor of Foreign Language Teaching degree from Middle East Technical University. She received her master's degree in Foreign Language Teaching from Abant İzzet Baysal University and is currently pursuing a PH.D in Translation Studies at Sakarya University. Her research interests include foreign language learning, learning strategies and styles, sociology of translation, theories of translation, professionalismin translatorship and translator education.

Rise of Islamic Literature between Fact and Fiction

Rashad Mohammed Moqbel Al Areqi
Sana'a Community College, Yemen;
English Department, Faculty of Sciences and Arts, Al Baha University, Al Mandaq, Saudi Arabia

Abstract—The Islamic literature does not take its proper place among the world arts as one of the significant areas of research. Islamism does not spring up as a tool of literary criticism worthy of studying and writing about. Many studies need to be done on the Islamic literature to highlight this sort of literature and culture. Critics may not give sufficient concern for the Islamic literature and they have not been encouraged to go deeply into the literary works of the writers who classify themselves Islamic writers. This article attempts to set a place for the Islamic literature and traces the first attempts and origins of this sort of literature. It introduces a number of Islamic critics who are interested in this area of the Islamic literature. The main argument is how the Islamic critics define and present what they claim to be Islamic literature and Islamic theory in their writings in general and literary writings in particular. The results indicated that the Islamic critics attempt to put the foundations of this new literature but their efforts do not show sufficient concern with the Islamic literature and the literary works of the Islamic literature do not get sufficient study and research.

Index Terms—Islamic literature, theory, Islamism, Islamic Scholars, Islamic theater, criticism

I. INTRODUCTION

The Islamic writers, critics and researchers do not seem to pay enough attention to the Islamic issues in literary writings. Alternatively, they may not be interested in practicing Islamism as a critical theory in their literary criticism because it is not known globally or practiced by world critics. Is it a phobia of anything involved with Islam? Or is this fear connected with the absence of enough Islamic critics and researchers in this area of interest? The Islamic culture and values have been represented inappropriately, particularly after 9/11 era. Many writers may not address the Islamic issues in their literary works because Muslims are stereotyped as backward, uncivilized and terrorists as a result of what they claimed to be Muslims' involvement with global terrorism. When writers address Islamic issues, they discuss them from a dark perspective. The Islamic discourse is marginalized and is not appreciated enough in world literature. The focus is on such a significant area of writing that requires Islamic critics to expose the reality of Islamic culture and literature. This study argues that the Islamic literature deserves to be among the world literary writings in terms of study and criticism. Why are Islamic literary writings and criticism neglected? The world criticism does not show a concern with Islamic literature. What is Islamic literature? How do Islamic writers highlight the Islamic issues and values in their literary works? Are there any genuine efforts or attempts to establish a solid area of Islamic literature? How do Islamic critics define Islamic literature? What are the characteristics of the Islamic literature? The Islamic literature is not a cutting edge area but it has its roots in the history of Islam. The Prophet Mohammad, peace be upon him (henceforth PBUH), asked Hassan Bin Thabet, an early Arab poet, to reply to the Quraish's poet who had offended the Prophet (PBUH) in particular and Muslims in general. (Quraish was the tribe of the Prophet PBUH). Hassan was considered the Prophet's poet who defended Muslims and their values. During that period of early stage of Islam, the people would not find that big gap between the Islamic literature and the Arabic one because the language was the same: i.e. the Arabic language. The critics categorized the Islamic literary writings as Arabic literature with paying no great attention to the specialty of the rubric "Islamic literature" and its values and culture. At an early stage of Islam, the huge concern was given to poetry with which the Arabs at that time were much known for. Their contests in the area of poetry and their unique poems were praiseworthy.

The Companions of Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) were very concerned with the Islamic concepts in their writings, their acts and actions. For this reason, when Abdullah Bin Rawaha, another early Arab poet, heard a Quranic ayah (plural: Ayat; meaning a verse of Quran) warning poets against drifting with the Arabs poets who go against the Word of God (i.e. the Quran), he felt very upset. However, the Quranic Ayat do not address the Muslim who defends Islam and the Prophet (PBUH) and who do not exceed the limit of the boundaries of the Islamic values. However, the Quranic Ayat warns people who do not pay attention to the values and ethics of Islam in their poetry. The Holy Quran does not include the people who are committed to their Islamic values and faith, that is Muslim who make use of poetry to defend the values of Muslims and are simultaneously stuck to such values themselves. They should not go against their words that are supposed to call for good deeds and Islam in general.

In this regard, Allah Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala; meaning glory be to Him; henceforth SWT (SWT) says:

والشعراء يتبعهم الغاوون * ألم تر أنهم في كل واد يهيمون * وأنهم يقولون ما لا يفعلون * إلا الذين آمنوا وعملوا الصالحات وذكروا الله كثيرا وانتصروا من بعد ما ظلموا وسيعلم الذين ظلموا أي منقلب ينقلبون; As for the poets, the erring ones follow them (26: 224) See you not that they speak about every subject (praising people—right or wrong) in their poetry? (26: 225) And that they say what they do not do (26: 226). Except those who believe (in the Oneness of Allah—Islamic Monotheism) and do righteous deeds, and remember Allah much, and vindicate themselves after they have been wronged [by replying back in poetry to the unjust poetry (which the pagan poets utter against the Muslims)]. And those who do wrong will come to know by what overturning they will be overturned (26: 227).

Here, Abdullah Bin Rawaha felt relieved when he found the real meaning of the Quranic Ayat which put conditions of the Islamic literature. Muslim poets should adhere to what they call people for. A poet has to set a good example of a real Muslim who believes in Allah (SWT) and the teachings of the Prophet (PBUH). Third, the exception in the Quranic Ayat addresses Muslims who believe in Allah (SWT) and their faith is translated into good deeds. They always intend to meet with the orders of Allah (SWT) and His Messenger (BPUH) in their acts and actions. They follow the words recommended by the Prophet, Mohammed (PBUH), to keep them in the right track of Islam.

Poetry was one of the most significant areas in literature in the beginning of Islam because it occupied a very significant position in the Arabic and Islamic literature and it reflected the literary works of the eloquent Arabs in the Arabic language who were known for the unique rhetoric used in their poems. Arabs in the past ages held many poetry contests to give people an opportunity to compete in creating poems. Suq Okaz, an occasion named after a famous market place then, was one of their occasions to compete in creating the best poems. Every tribe would be very proud of their winning poets. The best poems were hung in the wall of the Holy House, i.e. Ka'ba in Mecca, as a glorification of those unique poets and poems. The contest ended by hanging seven winning poems on the wall of the Holy House. It was an honor for the tribe which the poet belongs to. Here the readers may realize the position of poetry in the Arab early stages and how Islam came to surpass their eloquence and rhetoric despite the big gap between what Arabs addressed in their poems and what Islam does. This article focuses on the Islamic literature and how it started on the very early stage of Islam particularly in the area of poetry which was known among the tribesmen in the pre-Islamic and post-Islamic ages. The second important area of literature which is revealed in the Holy Quran is the narratives of the Prophets and past nations. The Holy Quran portrays their lives, in brief as well as in details. For instance, Yusuf Surah, i.e. a chapter in the Quran, tells about Yusuf story, which narrates the Pharaoh wife's attempt to seduce Yusuf, in detail without arousing the human sexual instincts. Many Suwar (singular Surah; meaning a chapter in the Quran) of the Holy Quran address a lot of Prophets' stories in a very unique style that have defied the eloquence of the Arabs in the Jahili age, that is, the age before Islam.

II. LITERARY THEORIES AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE IN LITERATURE

What is literary criticism? Matthew Arnold defines literary criticism as "a disinterested endeavor to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world." (qtd. in Bressler 1994). Bressler (1994) explains Arnold's definition as "a disciplined activity that attempts to study, analyze, interpret, and evaluate a work of art" (p. 3). Literary theory becomes the tool and the framework which assists critics in their analysis and discussion of literary texts. Every literary theory has its own concepts and standards used to expose literary texts from the perspective of such theory. The literary theories may be found overlapped and each one has been developed upon the other theories' concepts. For instance, postcolonialism shares the same concepts with some other literary theories such as Marxism and psychoanalytic theory. However, it still retains its vision.

The worlds of literary theories compete in occupying larger spaces in the area of literary criticism because the one who controls literary theories is the one who directs and leads the academic world. If critical criticism is a ship, the sea waves would be the theories that move the ship. Literary theory is a tool which is used by critics. For this reason, the world competes to create new theories and trends. It propagates such theories to convince critics about those theories' effectiveness in the area of literary criticism. To create a theory means to lead people to one's beliefs and ideologies, that is to one's cultures and concepts. If one's theory becomes unquestionably dominating, they would undoubtedly be the dominator and the controller of the world's vision and thought. Theories are the ideologies that rule the fate of the world and make people closer to the thought of the theories' makers, whether in the area of education or politics. They reshape the thought and identity of the people who use such theories in their social, intellectual, political lives. People find themselves believe and defend the concepts of those theories which are unquestionably a sort of defense of the ideology and identity of the theories' makers while the indigenous identity gets assimilated with those waves of literary theories.

As such, literary theories gain a very significant position in literary criticism. Every literary theory has its own concepts and concentrations which highlight the area of its interest. Consider, for instance, such theories as Marxism, Feminism, Postcolonialism, and Psychoanalytic, etc. As theorists are concerned with their own theories and their developments, the writers are concerned with exposing their culture, literature, and values through their literary works. The Islamic critics read literary works, such as Najuib Al Kailani's literary works particularly in the area of novel, from an Islamic framework. Also, Ali Ahmad Bakathir's plays would not find the global interest they deserve. The Islamic literary works that address Islamic issues and values may not meet with the concepts of other theories. The Islamic

writers and critics begin to talk about the specialty of their Islamic writings which should be read from an Islamic perspective which gives a top priority to the Islamic culture and values.

Writers who are concerned with their Islamic values and Islamic thought exert their efforts to make their Islamic voice heard in the world of theories, literary criticism and literature in general. There are some writers who write in Arabic about the Islamic literature, whether in form of articles, books or literary works as novels and plays or short stories, but sometimes their works could not reach an international level. Further, there are some other pioneers of the Islamic novel, Najuib Al Kailani, Ali Ahmad Bakathir in the Islamic theater and many new writers who start to pay more attention to the Islamic issues and Islamic history in the area of writing literature and culture However, their literary works do not receive proper interest of critics in terms of translation into global languages.

Each literary theory has its literary dimensions and its political ideologies. Let us take Marxism theory as an example. How have such theories managed to gather many countries under the tenet of Marxism by their political ideologies which attract large segments of people to follow? It is because such a theory touched the vulnerable feelings of those nations. By the theory concepts and claims, such theories managed to unite many countries of the world under the Marxist ideology which was not only a tool of literary criticism but also an ideology. The Marxist ideology is one that influenced many countries of the world during the defunct Soviet Union. So far, some of the people of such countries have adhered to the Marxist concepts all over the world. The faster the ideologies and the literary theories spread, the faster they dominate the cultural, social, and political aspects of life. Theorists are aware that the more space for the Islamic literature in the world, the faster Islam spreads. The Islamic writers may not succeed, by the international standards, in their Islamic writings and they may not find an opportunity to publish their literary writings in different international languages. However, they attempt to secure a place for their Islamic writings and theories that may not contradict the Islamic values and culture. You may not find any mention for the Islamic literature or Islamic theory in books of literature, literary criticism and literary theories. Most Arab writers in the area of literature may not present Islamic writings well. Many attempts of some Islamic writers step over the boundaries of their nations or in the best state the Arab world, but such attempts may not find an international or even regional concern.

The problem is that when the Muslim researchers attempt to think about writing on the Islamic literature using the English language as a medium, they get shocked due to the shortage of references in the English language. Such researchers are in need of providing their supervisors with references so that the latter understand the area of research, particularly an English version of such literary works under their study. When references in English are lacking, supervisors apologize for not being able to supervise such Islamic research. Another reason is that they may not find a supervisor who would accept to see the Islamic ideas expressed in academic research. Most postgraduate students prefer not to take the trouble and spend their valuable time searching for references. So, they prefer any easy way to finish their studies as soon as possible. Some Islamic researchers at the level of postgraduate studies think only of how to finish their research to find a satisfactory job, ignoring the responsibility of their nation and religion to explicate the Islamic literary works and manifest their values so as to guide the Muslim youth in reading literary history and history itself from an Islamic perspective. The history of the Companions of the Prophet, Mohammed (PBUH), needs to be exposed for the new generations to read about those brilliant people and wonderful history of Islam. The literary theory is the framework that keeps the researcher on track on research. Tyson (2006) stated that the competition among theories takes a strong political dimension "Thus, competition among theories has always had a strong political dimension in at least two senses of the word political: (1) different theories offer very different interpretations of history and of current events, including interpretations of government policies, and (2) advocates of the most popular theories of the day usually receive the best jobs and the most funding for their projects" (P. 8).

Tyson (2006) also pointed out the significance of literary theories which may take a political dimension in domination. This article is an investigation of the reality of the Islamic literature and the decent efforts of the Islamic critics in the area of Islamic literature. Islamism as a critical theory presents the Islamic literature that meets the needs of the Islamic community and the global human community alike. The theories which are presented by western theorists are suitable for the western discourses and reflect the identity of the western community. Therefore, those critical theories pay no attention to the particularities of the Islamic community which adheres to the Islamic faith and values. The existing theories serve the culture and the identity of the nations that created them. They do not give a sufficient space for Islamic and Arabic discourses. In other words, those theoretical frameworks do not fit with the demands of the Islamic and Arabic literature. The argument here concentrates on positioning the Islamic literature in its appropriate place among the world literature. It is to show the lasting efforts of Islamic writers who try to show the Islamic literature as an indispensable part of the world literature. The Islamic critics endeavor to see the Islamic culture and values appreciated through the Islamic literature.

Most theories, if not all, focus on one side of literary works more than the others. For instance, feminist theory glorifies the female body and behavior without paying sufficient attention to the other important aspects of works as if literary works have no concern but only the woman's life. That is to say, theories eliminate many aspects of literary works. Tyson (2006) stated that "Even within the ranks of any given critical theory there are countless disagreements among practitioners that result in the emergence of different schools of thought within a single theory" (p. 3). Another example is Marxism. This theory comes to touch the poor's feelings and shows the honor of those poor without taking any concern with their souls and their need for a faith. In fact, this theory looks at religion as opium that deceives

people and impedes their progress in life. Tyson (2006) pointed out that "Think of each theory as a new pair of eyeglasses through which certain elements [my emphasis] of our world are brought into focus while others, of course, fade into the background" (P. 7). George Orwell in one of his novels, Animal Farm (1945), mocks communism and Marxism that they express powerful words to attract people to Marxism's promising principles of prosperity. But when they come to power, they do not pay attention to their promises of equity and equality: "all animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others" (Orwell 1945)

Therefore, the Islamic literature and Islamic theory are inevitably necessary to take back Muslims to the right track of Islam, that is, the track of their cultural identity and values. A host of Islamic writers feel this huge responsibility towards the Islamic values; hence their responsibility to call their nations to return to their cultural and Islamic origins. Islamic writers and critics attempt to find a place for the Islamic literature and criticism. First, the article is going through the varied definitions of the Islamic literature and how the writers and critics define the Islamic literature or expect the message of such literature. It also tackles the way Islamism as a critical theory may serve literary criticism in this area of interest.

III. ISLAMIC LITERATURE, WRITERS AND CRITICS

There are many definitions of literature. The word 'literature' is derived from the Latin word 'littera' which means 'letter', and from this origin the word of literature is defined as "a written word". By this definition, the word of literature has taken a larger space to include any sort of writing as scientific writings, guiding books and the instructions of any machine or apparatus. However, there is no comparison between a literary work as Forster's A Passage to India and a scientific text that is free of imaginative art. Many critics link the definitions of literature with schools of criticism. For instance, the formalists would consider the text only as a reflection of the characteristics of literature. The psychoanalysts would focus on the psychological relationships among the characters, etc.

Whatever the definition of literature may be, literature includes special features that may not be found in any other types of writings such as scientific texts or guiding books. Literature requires imagination and creativity. It has an aesthetic quality that is lacking in scientific texts or guiding books. The raw material of literature is the community itself. It goes through describing and analyzing human experiences and attitudes towards human being in particular and life in general. It shows a special concern with human sentiments and passions. It presents human values, emotions and beliefs in an imaginative way. In literature, honesty is an abstract quality in the literary works but it is concretized with actions. 'Courage' is another quality that is proved by brave actions in the narrative. Such characteristics are exposed through actions and daring deeds. The literary works tell stories of human beings. The story material is the human beings' experiences with their spiritual and physical potentials.

The Islamic literature has to include the same qualities as those just mentioned, but it requires being stamped with the Islamic culture, values, and philosophy. The Islamic literature reflects the Islamic codes existing in the Holy Quran and the teachings of the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH). The values and history of the Prophet's Companions and their stories would be a material of such Islamic narrative. The Islamic literature in its definitions needs to be the same worldwide. The critics may categorize the Islamic literature based on countries with such terms as the Turkish Islamic literature, the Malaysian Islamic literature, etc. However, the content of the Islamic literature may be the same in all the Islamic countries in terms of values and codes. The Islamic literature springs up from the same origins: the Holy Quran and the teachings of the Prophet PBUH. The Islamic literature is an art that includes the elements and qualities of world literatures with a special emphasis on the Islamic values and culture.

The Islamic literature is not restricted to the Arab countries but includes the Islamic countries even if the latter's literature is written in their own languages, such as Turkish, Pakistani, etc. There are many Islamic writers as well as critics who attempt to provide their vision and projection about the Islamic literature. One of the pioneers in the area of the Islamic literature is Najuib Al kailani. He was born in Egypt in 1931 and wrote many Islamic novels, short stories, plays and poems. However, his creativity manifests itself in writing Islamic novels which carve out a name for Al Kailani in the world of the Islamic novel. In addition, he was a medical doctor. He won a number of awards and prizes, including the Supreme Council Prize For Arts that introduced him to the regional community as a pioneer of the Islamic novel. He wrote more than forty novels, seven collections of short stories, four plays, and seven collections of poetry, twelve critical books and sixteen different books in the different areas of knowledge. He died in 1995 and left behind a large number of literary works that require discussion and analysis from an Islamic perspective.

Many Islamic critics expressed their concern about establishing the Islamic literature and criticism during the second half of 20th century. One of those Islamic writers and critics is Abu Al Hassan Al Nadawi in one of his early papers presented in Damascus Scientific Complex where he was selected as a member in this complex. In 1988, a conference was held in India entitled 'World Symposium about Islamic Literature' to culminate Abu Al Hassan A Nadawi's efforts to establish this sort of the Islamic literature and call the Islamic writers and critics to introduce this sort of literature to the world. One of the most significant recommendations in this conference is to establish the International League of Islamic Literature and call the scholars to manifest the concepts and values of Islam in their literary works. In 1952, Sayed Qutb with his rubric "Islamic literature" in one of his articles 'Literature Methodology' in Muslim Brothers Journal pointed out the urgent need for the notion of the "Islamic literature". His book 'In History a Thought and a Method' explained the sense of the Islamic literature as "the expression that aroused from the fullness of human psyche

with human feelings". In 1961, Sayed Qutb's brother, Mohammed Qutb, wrote "Islamic Art Approach" to trace his brother's Islamic approach in Islamic writings. In 1963, Najuib Al Kailani wrote a new book about the Islamic literature entitled 'Islamism and Islamic Approaches'. Then, in 1974, Emad Al Din Khalil wrote his book entitled: 'In contemporary Islamic Criticism'. By the efforts of those Islamic writers and critics, the first foundation of what is called the "Islamic literature" is established. They have left the door open for the concerned writers and critics to enrich the Islamic literature. The history of the Arabic and Islamic literature is classified into chronological stages, namely Jahili, Islamic, Amawi, Abbasi, Uthmani, without paying attention to the Islamic faith, values and special qualities of such Islamic literature. The Arabic literature need be included under the tent of the Islamic literature, without neglecting the rubric "Arabic literature" which was one of the tools of introducing the Islamic literature.

Mohammed Qutb (1960) stated that "the Islamic literature is the beautiful expression of universe, life, and mankind. It is the art which prepares the perfect meeting between beauty and righteousness. Beauty is a fact in this universe and righteousness is a peak of that beauty. As such, they have met in the story whereby all the facts of universe are gathered" (P. 6). A host of Islamic writers and critics represent the second generation of Islamic scholars who present their projection of the Islamic literature. They show their concern with the Islamic literature by writing books and articles that discuss contemporary Islamic issues. Some of such writers and critics are Mohammed Al Rab'e Al Nadawi who wrote his book Islamic Literature: An Issue and Construction and Mustafa Aliyan wrote Introduction to Islamic Literature. Another book in the Islamic literature was written by Sami Makki Al Ani entitled Studies in Islamic Literature. Abdelbaset Badr wrote Introduction to Islamic literature Theory. All these just mentioned books and articles are written in Arabic. By such books, the idea of the Islamic literature and culture has begun to spread and the road map of the Islamic literature and culture has been designed.

Al Kailani is one of those who established solid foundations of the Islamic literature, whether in writing Islamic novels or other books that address the Islamic literature such as Madkhel ela Aladab Al Islami (An Approach to Islamic literature), Afaq Aladab Al Islami (Horizons of Islamic Literature), Tagribati Al Thatiyah fi Al Qissah Al Qasseerah (Self –Experience in Short Story) Rihlati Ma'a Al Adab Al Islami (My journey with Islamic Literature), and Hawl Al Masrah Al Islami (Around Islamic Theater). Al Kailani enriched the Islamic library with many literary writings, particularly in the area of narrative such as novels and short stories. He began writing about this area of research to draw attention of other writers and critics to analyze and discuss Islamic issues in their literary works. Al Kailani (1987) expressed the meaning of the Islamic literature as follows:

The Islamic literature is not inflexible rules, or isolated pieces of writing detached from reality. It is not a discourse or a sermon overwhelmed by rules and texts, but it is valuable images decorated with what increases their beauty and greatness and make them more effective. Islamic literature is beautiful, artistic, effective expressions that spring up of real Muslims. Such expressions become genuine images of life, humanity and universe. These images match with Muslims' beliefs and principles. They are a source of benefit and enjoyment. They mobilize the sentiment and thought, and they are an incentive to take a situation or do an action.' (P. 27)

The Islamic writer and critic Emad Aldin Khalil (1981) pointed out that the Islamic literature is the "aesthetic expression that influences by word. It is about an Islamic projection of the universe". The Islamic critics need to fully realize what the Islamic literature means and not to be taken by enthusiasm with regard to the basics of the Islamic knowledge. Shallow knowledge of the Islamic literature would not serve the Islamic literature as it may damage its accuracy and credibility and make it vulnerable for attack on the part of the secularists who have no accurate knowledge about the Islamic literature in particular and Islam in general. Simultaneously, some Islamic writers could not offer a clear and accurate Islamic literature and their efforts are still very limited. For these reasons, the Islamic writers and critics alike need to do much reading before beginning to address any Islamic issues in literature or in their other Islamic writings.

Al Kailani wrote a host of Islamic novels and other critical books all of which would lead the Islamic writers and critics to the right track. He wrote more than forty novels that have left much influence in the area of the Islamic novel in particular and the Islamic literature in general. Some of such novels are Hamza's Killer, Allah's Light, Night and Bars, Men and Wolves, Jad Allah's Story, Omer Appears in Jerusalem, North Giants, and Turkestan Nights, etc.

Another Islamic writer who exerted his efforts to reflect the Islamic values and culture in literature, particularly in the area of drama, is Ali Ahmad Bakatheer. He wrote Red Retaliation, Brave Biography, Wa Islamah, Smart Knight. Emad Al din khalil wrote Sword and Word, and Jihad Al Rahabi I'll not Die for Nothing. Salam Ahmad Adriso wrote The Returner. Ahmad Al Qari wrote No One Knows What I Want. Those are examples of Islamic writers and critics who enriched the Islamic literature with masterpieces that do not go beyond the Islamic framework. The Islamic literature does not receive encouragement from the Islamic countries in terms of providing writers and critics with books and references they require in their research.

In the area of short story, there are many writers such as Al Kailani who wrote Nightmare, Allah's Men, Doctor's Stories, and Emad Khlil who wrote Allah's Word, Streams of Love and Certainty. Many other Islamic writers show their concern for the Islamic literature such as Awdet Allah Al Qaisi, Yusuf Al Burqadi, and Ahmad Zuraiq, etc. In the Islamic Theater, Khalil wrote Contemporary Islamic Criticism, World Anarchism in Contemporary Western Theater, Mohammed Aziza wrote Islam and Theater, Omar Mohammed wrote Hints of Arabic Islamic Plays, and Ali Ahmad

Bakatheer wrote a host of plays that introduce the Islamic theater to readers such as Chain and Forgiveness, Politics Theater, Paradise Back, Zainab's Misery, Harout and Marout, Cats and Mice, Juha's Nail, and others.

IV. Characteristics of Islamic Literature

Al Kailani (1987) discussed many characteristics in his definition of the Islamic literature such as expressing the Muslims' belief and principles and introducing artistic and effective expressions. To him, the Islamic literature translates the universe, humanity and life. It is a sort of enjoyment and benefit alike. The Islamic literature arouses thought and sentiment of readers and motivates them to take action. It is an expression of life, humanity, and universe under the tenet of Islam with expressing aesthetic value. It is clear and independent in the sense that it does not eliminate the concepts of other world theories that might match with Islamic values and culture.

The Islamic literature shows stability and accuracy. It is a comprehensive term that includes convincing analysis of human actions and universal manifestations while the western theories may appear overlapped in a way that makes distinction between the concepts of theories confusing regarding the origins of the concepts and how the same concepts in one of the western theories may serve another concept in another one. For instance, in the Psychoanalytical theory, Feminism and Marxism, a reader would be confused about how those theories' concepts work in those theories. The concept of hegemony in Marxism appears in the area of economics and in postcolonialism. The focus would be in the area of language and culture.

The Islamic literature presents the Islamic culture and values that take the concepts from the principles and teachings of Islam without ignoring or devaluing the artistic value of a work. It is a combination of art and literature; it redresses the balance between sentiment and thought. It works on harmonizing the relationship between Muslims' values and their faith.This sort of literature might not offer concessions or show confusion about the basics of Muslims' faith.

V. Islamism as a Critical Theory

Najuib Al Kailani is the first writer and critic who used the term of Islamism in his book 'Islamism and Literary Approach'. Then, the Islamic critics have initiated to use this term in their Islamic writings such as Anwer Al Jindi's Islamism, and Hassan Al Amarani's book 'Islamism in Contemporary Poetry in Morocco'. Khalil uses this term to address the Islamic writers and critics to pay attention to Islamism in literature. The Islamic literature comes as a reaction of the international critical theories that have taken human beings far away of the Islamic faith, value, and position. Most of the used theories may not satisfy all aspects of human beings in life, connection with God, faith, and values. Writers and critics may get lost with the variety of theories available: existentialism, Marxism, psychoanalytic, feminism, new criticism, schools of romanticism, classicism, naturalism and other critical theories which may not provide a satisfactory answer to human inquiries about self and life.

The Islamic literature and Islamic theory have commenced to take a space in the Arabic literature and other Islamic countries literature in the last two decades of the twenties century. Some Islamic countries show some concern for the Islamic literature. They begin to theorize for this Islamic literature using their own languages as Turkish Islamic literature, Urdu Islamic literature and other Islamic countries However, Islamic writers and critics endeavor to create their own theories and literature which present their cultures and codes in daily life. The Islamic literature may not find that concern or use in the world of literary criticism and analysis because some people who claim their concern for the Islamic literature do not properly present this sort of literature to the world. Researchers find themselves short of references that assist them to analyze the Islamic literature written in Arabic. They may not find the solid foundations that may help them to build their argument and criticism upon. Another point is that the Islamic literature written in Arabic would not find the suitable audience who are interested in translating this sort of literary works into English or other international languages.

The Islamic theory is a tool of criticism and evaluation of the Islamic literary works manifested in the Islamic culture and values. The Islamic literature as other international arts gets developed and is categorized into four stages: early, medieval, modern and contemporary.

The Islamic theory is the first attempt of the Islamic writers and critics to bring satisfactory answers to many issues involved with the Islamic literature. It is also a result of not finding appropriate concepts in other theories to fit the Islamic issues. This theory takes its balance from Islam itself as a global religion of moderate look and faith of millions of Muslims all over the world. The Islamic critical theory is a broad perspective whose references are the Holy Quran and the teachings of the Prophet Mohammed PBUH. This area of literature still requires more efforts to establish its solid ground in world literature. Many Islamic literary works are still in their mother tongue, something that does not help researchers to know more about the Islamic theory and literature. The burden on Muslims' shoulder is huge so as to let the world recognize Islamism and Islamic literature.

The question now is "what is the position of the Islamic literature and theory in the Arab curricula and academic institutions in particular and in Muslim academic institutions in general" Researchers might not find the Islamic literature welcomed in the English departments of the Islamic countries. This sort of literature may not take a significant position in our academic institutions. As a result of negative propaganda about Islam and the campaign of attack on the Prophet, Mohammed (PBUH), many people in the world may view Islam as essentially hostile to humanity and to

human rights as well. Muslims are in some of world eyes terrorists and makers of troubles. Any word connected with Islam is a source of fear and mistrust. The stereotype of Muslims does not encourage researchers to study and analyze the Islamic literary works. The word of Islam is involved with politics that portray Islam as a taboo. Many researchers prefer to cope up with the secular literary movements which are represented with well known theories and writing about world literature. This makes researchers view the Islamic literature as an unworthy religious discourse. In the eyes of some people, such works express the ideology of Islam which is better to be restricted in mosques and religious schools. The Islamic literature is the guide of the world to recognize more about this life. However, Islamic writers and critics believe that the Islamic literature is a combination of art and values. This Islamic literature has a message in life as it leads to its betterment. It is the literature that harmonizes human actions with values. It redresses the balance of humanity on this earth.

VI. Conclusion

There are many Arabic literary works and many critical books that address the Islamic literature and Islamic issues. Islamic writers and critics work hard to position the Islamic literature in its proper place among international literatures. The Islamic literature may not find proper attention from critics because it is not presented well enough. The foundations and concepts are not clear for many researchers who do not like to bother themselves to search and establish foundations of such a literature. The Arab Islamic writers and critics attempt to establish this literature but the area is still wide open for more research.

The masterpieces of the Islamic novelists and writers would not find proper attention to be translated into the English language or other international languages. Arab researchers, in particular, and Islamic critics in general, have not given enough attention and interest for the Islamic literature in the English language departments in their academic institutions. Therefore, they become tied with research using established theories that are not suitable for the area of Islamic studies. In other words, they do not take the responsibility to promote their culture and religion to the international community. Islamic critics need to pay more attention to the Islamic literature. They also need to read it Islamically by presenting the theory of Islamism to world.

There are a big number of Islamic literary works that need to be translated into world languages especially into English. Many Islamic issues in these works need critical investigation from an Islamic perspective. Islamic critics in academic institutions need to direct research to the Islamic literature so as it goes beyond the regional boundaries. However, as a result of scarcity of Islamic critics interested in the Islamic literature, the English departments in Islamic academic institutions may not make it an easy mission for the Islamic critics and researchers to do research on the Islamic literature.

Many Islamic literary works written in Arabic would not be welcomed from translators, particularly if they bear an Islamic imprint. Islamic literary works of Najuib Al-Kailani might not find interest to be translated into global languages. Islamic critics are in need of further efforts to introduce the Islamic literature to the world. This article found the attempts and efforts of Muslim critics in introducing their own literature and literary theory to the world are still weak. Muslim writings still require discussion and analysis by the more critics. The article found the Islamic critics' efforts still very limited to reach an international level. The article also found that the efforts of Islamic critics in translating the masterpieces of the Islamic Arabic literary works into the world languages are not sufficient for the Islamic literature or Islamism as a critical theory to reach universality. The working attempts on some Islamic issues are still confined to the Arabic language and to the regional level.

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Rashad Mohammed Moqbel Al Areqi, was born in 1970, Taiz, Yemen. He got his PhD. Degree in English Literature in 2008, Putra University, Malaysia. He studied an intensive course in Contemporary American Literature, University of Louisville, Kentucky, USA, from June 17 to July 30, 2011. He got promoted to Associate Professor in English Literature in 2015, Al Baha University, Saudi Arabia. The author works for Sana'a Community College. However, as part of his sabbatical leave, he is now the Head of English Department, Faculty of Sciences and Arts, Al Mandaq, Al Baha University. He is also a member of editorial board of different international journals as well as a reviewer for many international journals. He has published many articles in varied international journals. His research interest areas are: English Lit., American Lit., Postcolonial Lit., Comparative Lit. Literary Criticism and Theories, Identity and Gender, Race and Racism, etc.

Investigating the Construct Validity of Communicative Proficiency in TEP (Oral) at Level B

Weijie Zhou

Department of English Education, Beijing International Studies University, China

Abstracts—TEP (oral), a shortened name of Test of English Proficiency on Speaking, is a three-level English oral test that aims to assess the oral English proficiency of university students in those universities administered and supervised by Beijing Municipal Commission of Education. The development of TEP (Oral) has undergone several years and is still being improved. Based on the test scores from senior students of non-English majors in Beijing International Studies University, the study in this paper attempts to investigate the construct validity of the test on students' communicative proficiency. It is hoped that the investigation can shed insights on the improvement of the test and provide empirical insights for language teaching in the future. In this study, the investigation is done using both Classical Test Theory and Multi-facet Rasch Model.

Index Terms—speaking tests, language proficiency, construct validity, Classical Test Theory, Multi-facet Rasch Model

I. INTRODUCTION

The language teaching in China in the past several decades has witnessed the drastic shift from previously the Grammar Translation Method only to the current presence of different teaching approaches and methods where, instead of the focus on reading and linguistic structure, the teaching and learning in listening, speaking, and writing have been given adequate attention. In addition, more teaching activities have been conducted in language teaching and learning to cover sociolinguistic and social cultural elements.

The development of tests to promote educational reforms has gained increasing popularity in the past decades (James, 2000; Chapman & Sydney, 2000) nationwide and worldwide. Moreover, McNamara (1996) observed that since the early 1990s, in language assessment more traditional paper-and pencil tests involving multiple choice questions has been supplemented or even replaced with performance assessments where language learners have to demonstrate practical command of skills acquired. However, studies have shown that performance assessments can also bring about some unexpected effects on test scores due to some factors in performance assessments, such as raters and tasks. (Bachman & Palmer, 1996; Brown, Hudson, Norris, & Bonk, 2002). Therefore, a test, a big-scale test in particular, should undergo a long process of development.

TEP (oral) is a shortened name of Test of English Proficiency on Speaking. It is a three-level English oral test that aims to assess the oral English proficiency of university students in those universities administered and supervised by Beijing Municipal Commission of Education. A performance assessment to understand to what degree the students' communicative proficiency has met the requirements and criteria of university English teaching and learning issued by Chinese National Ministry of Education, TEP (Oral) is expected, by having a closer look at the university students' proficiency in speaking, to help English teachers with the understanding of students' language proficiency and provide them with empirical guidance in making practical changes in language teaching.

TEP (Oral) sets three levels as Level A, B and C, with Level A as the highest level of proficiency and Level C the lowest. The tests are paired in that there are two examiners (one as the interlocutor and the other as assessor) and two test-takers to accomplish interactive tasks. Different from TOEFL and IELTS, the test items in each level, except for the first part, warming-up questions that are not included in the scoring, consist of two speaking tasks and are designed in varied forms. Though the items in the scoring scales are the same, the items are given different weightings at different levels. In this paper, the study focuses on TEP (Oral) at Level B. The purpose of this paper is to investigate the Construct Validity of communicative competence in TEP (Oral) at Level B through quantitative study.

Construct validity refers to the degree to which a test measures what it claims to be measuring, specifically whether a test measures the intended construct. (Brown, J. D. 1996; Cronbach, L. J. & Meehl, P.E., 1955) To understand the construct validity of TEP (Oral) at Level B, 5 research questions are included. 1) To what extent has the internal consistency reliability of the test reached? 2) To what extent can the inter-rater consistency reliability of the test achieve? 3) To what extent can the scores reflect construct validity? 4) How has the weighting of different items of communicative proficiency been appropriately set? 5) What is the relative contribution of multiple sources of variation (e.g. test-takers' language ability, task difficulty, and the raters' rating scores) to the total score variability in TEP (Oral)? To answer these questions, the study in this paper has used SPSS 22.0 and MINISTEPS 3.74.0.

There are three main parts in this paper: understanding the nature of Communicative Proficiency; the test items and scoring scales of TEP (Oral) at Level B; and the quantitative study of the construct validity of communicative proficiency in TEP (Oral) at Level B.

II. UNDERSTANDING THE NATURE OF COMMUNICATIVE PROFICIENCY

According to Yalden (1997), in traditional approaches to language teaching, proficiency of a language learner is viewed as unitary and described in the degree of the language learners' mastery of "structures" – that is, of the phonology, morphosyntax, and lexicon of the target language.

In 1960s Chomsky's (1965) distinction between linguistic competence and linguistic performance has brought about a revolution in understanding language and language learning. It has stimulated new developments in linguistic study and classroom language learning. However, it was generally believed in 1970s that linguistic performance proposed from Chomsky had only psychological constraints on performance and Chomsky ignored all aspects of social interaction (Hymes, 1972). Therefore, Hymes (1972), for example, claimed that a different theory of language was needed by individuals involved in language development. In such a theory, competence would be called 'communicative competence' because of the inclusion of interactional competence. Hymes' theory (1972) of communicative competence has linked linguistic theory to a more general theory of communication and culture, and he involved judgments of four kinds: possibility, feasibility, appropriateness and actual performance. Hymes' theory has thus suggested that grammaticality is only one of four sectors of communicative competence, far different from Chomsky's belief that grammaticality was competence.

Halliday and Hasan (1976, 1989) and Halliday (1994), from a socially-oriented perspective of language, have advocated the notion that language is communication-based, and not primarily form-based. According to Halliday (1994), language is made up of a small set of universal communicative functions that includes experiential (relating to experiences), interpersonal (relating to social relationships) and textual (relating to structure) functions.

Hymes' and Halliday's work on communicative competence have had a great impact on the formation of communicative proficiency in that models with communicative language ability(CLA) have emerged.

Canale and Swain (1980), and later Canale(1983), put forth a model that lists a total of four areas of knowledge and skill in communicative competence, including "grammatical competence (mastery of the language code); sociolinguistic competence (appropriateness of utterances with respect both to meaning and form); discourse competence (mastery of how to combine grammatical forms and meanings to achieve unity of a spoken or written text); and strategic competence (mastery of verbal and non-verbal communication strategies used to compensate for breakdowns in communication, and to make communication more effective)" (Canale, 1983, p. 9-10).

Based on Canale and Swain's (1980) and Canale's(1983) scheme of linguistic, sociolinguistic, and strategic components, Lyle Bachman (1990) introduced a model of communicative language ability (CLA) that includes three main components: language competence, strategic competence and psychophysiological mechanism. Language competence is further divided into organizational competence and pragmatic competence, and strategic competence is defined in terms of metacognitive strategies, such as goal setting, assessment and planning. Bachman's Model of CLA has been very influential in language learning and testing. Taking Bachman's Model as the theoretical basis for the construction of its speaking tests, TEP (Oral) attempts to measure students' communicative proficiency in terms of their grammatical competence, pragmatic competence and strategic competence.

III. THE TEST ITEMS AND SCORING SCALES OF TEP (ORAL) AT LEVEL B

The goal of TEP (Oral) is set to see whether the learners' proficiency has met the requirements at 'the relatively higher level' issued by documents from the Commission of English Teaching in Higher Education, the Ministry of Education(2012). In other words, for test-takers at TEP (Oral) Level B, they should demonstrate their competence in accomplishing with adequate fluency on common topics (e.g. campus life, environmental protection, etc.), stating factual information, describing events, reasoning and expressing their personal views.

TEP (Oral) at Level B comprises of three parts that are expected to be finished in around 12 minutes. In the first part, which lasts for 1 minute, each test-taker is given one question so as to gain some familiarity with the interlocutor's voice, volume, pace, pitch, pronunciation and intonation, etc. In return, the assessor and the interlocutor get the first impression of the two test-takers' performance from their answers to the questions.

The second part, retelling of a passage, is segmented into three subparts, with each part about 2 minutes. First the interlocutor hands out each test-taker a piece of paper with a different passage of about 150 words. Each test-taker is required to read his/her passage and take some notes on the paper prepared on the desk within 2 minutes. In the second subpart, one test-taker starts his/her retelling of the passage with the only help from the written notes, and the retelling is finished in 1 minute. After the retelling, the other test-taker, based on what he/she has listened to his partner, asks a related question and waits for the answer. The same procedure is repeated by the next test-taker in the third subpart.

In the final part of TEP (Oral) at Level B, the two test-takers work together on a task on reciprocal basis. Each test-taker prepares on his/her own for two minutes with a clip of paper on which the same detailed instructions are given. When the required time is up, the two test-takers are assessed with their 3-minute co-performance through oral

discussion.

The test items are designed to assess the learners' ability in achieving life-related tasks with English in speaking context. The questions posed at the first part are related to test-takers personal life experiences. The tasks in the second and third part are either real-world related or pedagogically related, covering such areas as education, employment, law, trade and economy, sports, travelling, food and health, famous people, natural environment and habitat, and Internet-related experiences.

In TEP (Oral) at Level B, each test-taker's score comes from the holistic evaluation from the interlocutor (accounting for 40% of the total score) and the analytic evaluation from the assessor (accounting for the remaining 60% of the total score). The analytic evaluation, in reference to Bachman model of CLA (1990), is described in four items, representing major dimensions of communicative proficiency: Communicative Effect, Content and Organization, Pronunciation and Intonation, Syntax and Vocabulary. Each item is rated on a 5-point-scale, ranging from 1 as the lowest to 5 as the highest, with descriptors at each point of the scale.

Communicative Effect in the analytic evaluation of TEP (Oral) at Level B is considered relevant to the perspective of strategic competence from Bachman (1990). A test-taker's communicative effect is measured in terms of fluency, appropriateness, interactivity and the use of communicative strategies, such as physiological mechanisms. In Pronunciation and Intonation, a test-taker is assessed at the criterion of whether his/her speaking is comprehensible or not. In Syntax and Vocabulary, the range of 1 to 5 is given based on the variety of sentential structures and appropriate use of words.

Unlike Bachman's CLA model, the analytic evaluation of TEP (Oral) has used Content and Organization as the combination of textual competence from grammatical competence and illocutionary and sociolinguistic competence from pragmatic competence. A successful demonstration of Content and Organization in retelling of a passage is seen from not only the coherence of the retelling, but also the range of the content a test-taker is required to cover, besides the use of cohesion. In the third part of TEP oral test at Level B, the test takers' performance in the topic discussion is evaluated in terms of the degree of appropriate conveyance and interpretation of implied sociolinguistic, sociocultural, and psychological meanings encoded in high-context language use.

TEP (Oral) at Level B, studied in this paper, was conducted on the weekend of Nov. 1st, 2014. Even though TEP (Oral) at Level B has been administered several times before, a training session has still been required as prerequisites for 36 raters, who were English teachers coming from Department of English Education in Beijing International Studies University. The session was to make sure that the raters were aware of the procedure and instructions involved in the test and would follow the scoring criteria. The senior undergraduate students were encouraged to take the test voluntarily. On the day of the speaking test, 36 trained raters were divided into 18 pairs. There were 254 senior undergraduate students who volunteered to take part in the test at Level B. In the test, every 4 pairs of test-takers in each testing room was given a set of test package, including the instructions and the timer for the raters; two sheets of blank paper, two pens and the instructions with the speaking tasks for the test-takers. After 4 pairs were done, a new set of test package with different tasks was given to the raters.

IV. THE QUANTITATIVE STUDY OF CONSTRUCT VALIDITY OF COMMUNICATIVE PROFICIENCY IN TEP (ORAL) AT LEVEL B

The study of construct validity in this paper has attempted to examine whether the test has reflected what the test designers have intended to achieve through the test. The questions are: 1) To what extent has the internal consistency reliability of the test reached?   2) To what extent can the inter-rater consistency reliability of the test achieve? 3) To what extent can the scores reflect construct validity? 4) How has the weighting of different items of communicative proficiency been appropriately set? 5) What is the relative contribution of multiple sources of variation (e.g. test-takers' language ability, task difficulty, and the raters' rating scores) to the total score variability in TEP (Oral)?

According to Classical Test Theory (CTT), the internal consistency reliability of the test is calculated through Cronbach's alpha. From Table1, the high internal consistency reliability of TEP (Oral) at Level B can be seen from high corrected Item-Total Correlation and Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted, which can thus prove the reliability of the test.

TABLE 1
ITEM-TOTAL STATISTICS

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
communicative effect	17.4406	5.857	.870	.93
text retelling	17.5075	6.275	.802	.945
topic discussion	17.4878	5.996	.815	.945
pron. & into.	17.4465	6.429	.764	.949
vocab & gram	17.5154	6.221	.860	.939
analytic total	17.4626	6.144	.995	.926

In TEP (Oral) at Level B, each test-taker's total score comes from the holistic evaluation from the interlocutor (accounting for 40% of the total score) and the analytic evaluation from the assessor (accounting for the remaining 60% of the total score). To understand whether the score from holistic evaluation is correlated to the one from the assessor, a Spearman rank-order correlation is used to calculate the inter-rater reliability in each pair. (See Table 2)

The inter-rater reliability for each pair of judges is listed in Table 2 in the order from the highest one to the lowest. In this table, high correlation coefficients can indicate that both raters have followed the criterion simultaneously while those low correlation coefficients, especially the last 5 ones in Table 2, have displayed the vast disagreement between the raters within the pairs. Therefore, 40 percent of the holistic evaluation and 60 percent of the analytic assessment seem to be a remedial treatment to ensure the fairness of a test-taker's score in the test. In fact, the Spearman's rank correlation coefficient between the holistic evaluation from all the interlocutors and the analytic evaluation from all the assessor still remained at 0.629, thus the inter-rater reliability of the test can still be considered with fairly high correlation. Moreover, on the premise that all the raters have taken the training session before the test, the variance of the inter-rating has confirmed the importance of the training sessions to the raters.

TABLE 2
INTER-RATER RELIABILITY AMONG EACH PAIR OF JUDGES

Pair numbers	Correlation coefficient of different pairs (Spearman's rho)
7	0.973
2	0.971
5	0.946
13	0.858
10	0.839
16	0.836
1	0.828
12	0.719
11	0.692
18	0.688
14	0.676
4	0.645
8	0.586
15	0.466
6	0.445
17	0.253
3	0.226
9	0.036

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

After calculating the inter-rater reliability and Cronbach's alpha, Factor Analysis is used to examine the construct validity (Qin 2003). To get the construct validity, an exploratory factor analysis is done through SPSS 22. The results are presented in Table 3, 4 and 5 and Graph 1. Through KMO and Bartlett's Test, we can see the significant level is .000, which is lower than 0.05 and therefore, KMO and Bartlett's Test can serve as the evidence to support the existence of common factors and the feasibility of exploratory factor analysis.

TABLE 3
KMO AND BARTLETT'S TEST ($P<0.05$)

| Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.886
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	973.681
	df	10
	Sig.	.000

Through communalities in Table 4, we can see high correlations between the five items of the rating scales. From Total Variance Explained in Table 5 and the Scree Plot in Graph 1 it can be seen that the five items are functioning together to contribute to the test-takers' communicative proficiency.

TABLE 4
COMMUNALITIES   EXTRACTION METHOD: PRINCIPAL COMPONENT ANALYSIS

	Initial	Extraction
communicative effect	1.000	.837
text retelling	1.000	.750
topic discussion	1.000	.771
vocab & gram	1.000	.822
pron. & into.	1.000	.684

TABLE 5
TOTAL VARIANCE EXPLAINED (EXTRACTION METHOD: PRINCIPAL COMPONENT ANALYSIS)

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings	
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance
1	3.864	77.270	77.270	3.864	77.270
2	.414	8.287	85.557		
3	.322	6.433	91.990		
4	.217	4.333	96.323		
5	.184	3.677	100.000		
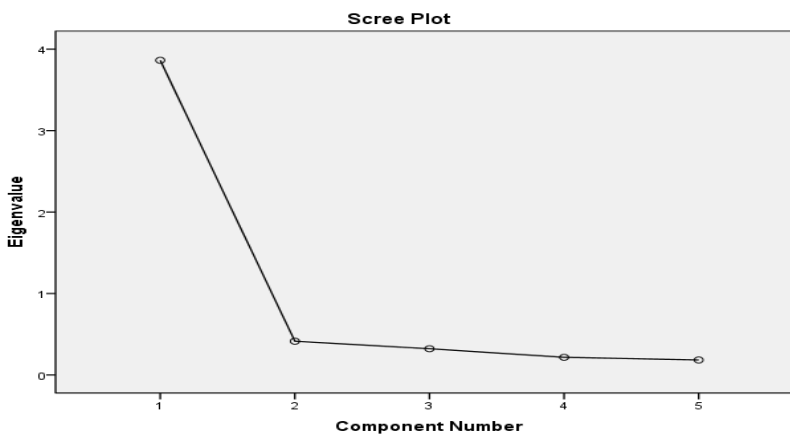
Graph 1 Scree Plot

To examine to what extent the weighting of different items of the scoring scales has been appropriately set, the regression analysis is done through SPSS 22(Xu Hongchen, 2013).

After the regression linear analysis in stepwise method (Table 5), the communicative proficiency can be written as: communicative proficiency= 0.195communicative effect + 0.150text retelling + 0.139 topic discussion+ 0.302 pronunciation &intonation+ 0. 202 vocabulary & Grammar. Therefore, if we convert the equation of the communicative proficiency in the regression linear analysis to the weighting, the weighting would be counted roughly as: 0.2, 0.15, 0.15, 0.3, 0.2. If we compare the calculated weighting with the constructed weighting of the five different items in scoring scales: 0.2communicative effect; 0.15 text retelling; 0.15 topic discussion; 0.3 pronunciation & intonation; and 0.2 vocabulary &grammar, we can discover a fairly good match between the two.

To answer Question 5 in this study, Multi-facet Rasch Models (MFRM) – MINISTEPS 3.74.0 is used. The reason to use MEFM is that a performance assessment, in reality, can be affected by multiple sources of variance, such as raters and task difficulties. Therefore, CTT fails to take into account of the possibility of the interaction of different sources of error from raters and tasks, and may cause the construction of irrelevant variance. In contrast, MFRM can provide more detailed information about interactions between the interaction of a specific rater with a certain test-taker or a task and improve the precision of the investigation of construct validity. (Lynch & McNamara, 1998; McNamara & Roever, 2006; Grabowski, K. C., 2009; Rasch G. 1960; Fan Jingsong & Ji Peiying, 2015; Wang Jimingy, 2002; Lincare, J. M. 2012)

In addition, as the result from the factor analysis in answering the construct validity of TEP (Oral) at Level B has announced that there is only one principal common factor among the 5 items of the rating scale, the result supports MFRM positively in that the result has met the requirement that the 5 items are one dimension in nature and MFRM can be used.

TABLE 8
MULTIPLE LINEAR REGRESS: IMPORTANT STATISTICS (COEFFICIENTS')

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	.942	.076		12.347	.000
	communicative effect	.727	.021	.907	34.132	.000
2	(Constant)	.338	.052		6.493	.000
	communicative effect	.471	.017	.587	27.777	.000
	pron. & into.	.428	.019	.469	22.211	.000
3	(Constant)	.215	.036		6.008	.000
	communicative effect	.313	.015	.391	21.519	.000
	pron. & into.	.391	.013	.428	29.649	.000
	topic discussion	.233	.013	.290	17.402	.000
4	(Constant)	.128	.025		5.033	.000
	communicative effect	.244	.011	.304	22.320	.000
	pron. & into.	.340	.010	.372	35.263	.000
	topic discussion	.170	.010	.212	16.939	.000
	vocab & gram	.211	.013	.230	16.452	.000
5	(Constant)	.052	.011		4.575	.000
	communicative effect	.195	.005	.243	38.933	.000
	pron. & into.	.302	.004	.331	69.080	.000
	topic discussion	.139	.004	.173	31.085	.000
	vocab & gram	.202	.006	.221	36.152	.000
	text retelling	.150	.005	.169	32.545	.000

Multiple Linear Regress: Important Statistics (n=254), P<0.05

WINSTEPS 3.74.0 is employed here to understand what relative contribution of multiple sources of variation (e.g. test-takers' language ability, task difficulty, and the raters' rating scores) is to the total score variability in TEP (Oral) at Level B.

```
MEASURE    PERSON - MAP - ITEM                      MEASURE    PERSON - MAP - ITEM
              <more>|<rare>                                       <more>|<rare>
  12              +                                   12              +
              .   |                                                .  |
  11              +                                   11              +
              T|                                                   T|
  10              +                                   10              +
                  |                                                   |
   9              +                                    9              +
                  |                                                   |
   8              +                                    8              +
                  |                                                   |
   7              +                                    7              +
                  |                                                   |
   6              +                                    6              +
              S|                                                   S|
   5              +                                    5              +
                  |                                                   |
   4  .#########  +                                    4  ##########  +
                  |                                                   |
   3              +                                    3              +
                  |                                                   |
   2              +                                    2              +
                  |                                                   |
   1              +T                                   1              +T
              M|S topic discussion1A                             M|S topic discussion2B
   0              +M                                   0              +M
              |S retelling1A                                      |S retelling 2A
  -1              +T                                  -1              +T
                  |                                                   |
  -2              +                                  -2              +
                  |                                                   |
  -3         ##   +                                  -3        ##   +
                  |                                                   |
  -4              +                                  -4              +
              S|                                                   S|
  -5              +                                  -5              +
              .###  |                                             .###  |
  -6              +                                  -6              +
                  |                                                   |
  -7              +                                  -7              +
                  |                                                   |
  -8         .#   +                                  -8              +
                  |                                                 .#  |
  -9         .    +                                  -9         .    +
              <less>|<frequent>                                  <less>|<frequent>
EACH "#" IS 4. EACH "." IS 1 TO 3         EACH "#" IS 4. EACH "." IS 1 TO 3

         Chart 1 Set 1                              Chart 2 Set 2
```

Chart 3 Set 3   Chart 4 Set 4
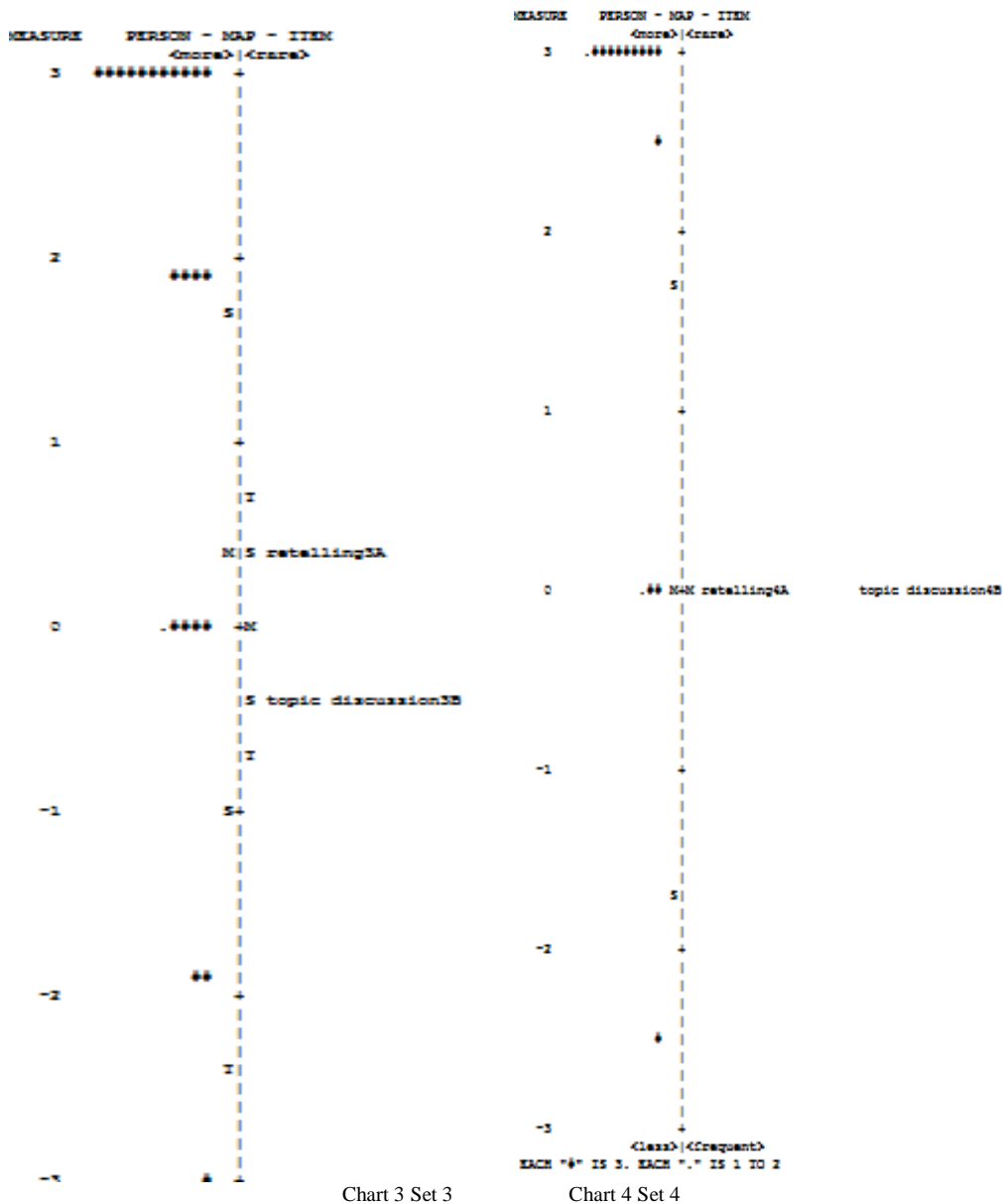
TABLE 10
SUMMARY OF CATEGORY STRUCTURE.   MODEL="R"

CATEGORY LABEL	SCORE	OBSERVED COUNT	OBSVD %	SAMPLE AVRGE	EXPECT	INFIT MNSQ	OUTFIT MNSQ	ANDRICH THRESHOLD	CATEGORY MEASURE
2	2	110	7	-1.75	-1.72	.99	.95	NONE	(-4.15) 2
3	3	434	28	-1.30	-1.26	.96	.83	-2.88	-2.26 3
4	4	964	63	-.24	-.28	1.00	.99	-1.64	1.45 4
5	5	16	1	-.27*	1.05	1.41	.69	4.52	(5.62) 5
MISSING		204	12	-.84					

TABLE 11
CATEGORY PROBABILITIES: MODES - STRUCTURE MEASURES AT INTERSECTIONS

```
       CATEGORY PROBABILITIES: MODES - Structure measures at intersections
P  -+---------+---------+---------+---------+---------+---------+-
R 1.0 +                                                          +
O     |                                                          |
B     |2                      4444444444              5551       |
A     | 22                  44          44          55           |
B  .8 +  22               44              44       55            +
I     |    2             4                  4      5             |
L     |     2           4                    4    5              |
I     |      2         4                      44 5              |
T  .6 +       2       4                        4 5               +
Y     |        2     4                          4 5             |
   .5 +         2   33         *                5 4              +
O     |          233  33*                      5 4              |
F  .4 +          332    4 3                    5   4            +
      |           3   2  4   33              55    4            +
R     |          33     24     3            5       4           |
E     |         3       42       3         5         4          |
S  .2 +        33      44 2       33       55         44        +
P     | 33          4      2       33     55           44       |
O     |3       44         22        333  55            444|
N     |   444           2222        *****5                     |
S  .0 +******555555555555555555*******22222*******************+
```
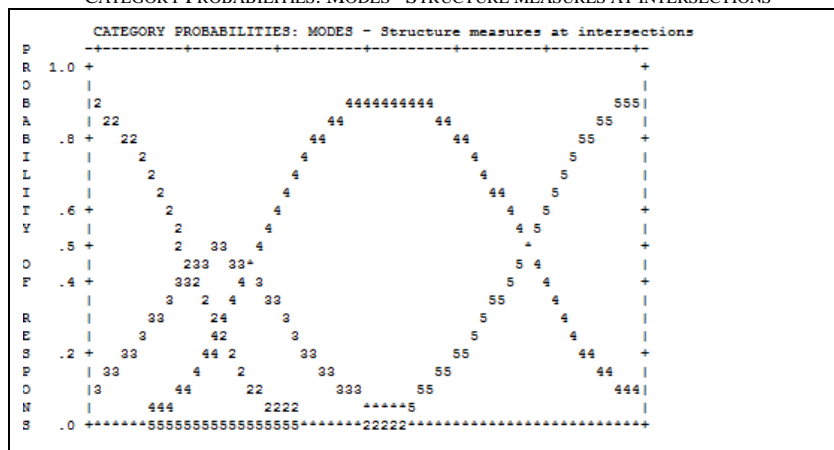
Four charts, which are Chart 1,2, 3and 4, have displayed the distributions of test-takers' abilities and the task difficulty. In each chart, there are three main parts. First, the measures, calculated in logits, measures like a meter rule the test-takers' abilities and the task difficulty. Next to the measures, on the left-handed column list the abilities of test takers, and 'less' refers to the lower abilities of the test-takers, while 'more' the higher abilities; meanwhile, the right-handed column on the chart goes from 'frequent' to 'rare', indicating the increasing difficulty from the bottom to the top.

In Chart 1 and 2, the test-takers' abilities are set from -9 to +5 logits, showing a vast disparity of test-takers' language abilities; meanwhile, the measures of task difficulty have shown that text retelling is more difficult than topic discussion, yet both tasks, text retelling and topic discussion, are rather easy for most test-takers. In Chart 3 and 4, the test-takers' language abilities range from -3 to +3 logits, showing a fairly narrow convergence than the previous 2 charts. Still it can be seen from the last two charts that tasks are easy to the test takers. As for the task difficulty, text retelling in Chart 3 is even more difficult than topic discussion, with a range of nearly 1 logit; however, in Chart 4, text retelling is as difficult as topic discussion. The results from the four charts have thus shown that the tasks in four sets of test package are not quite equivalent in difficulty, and thus calling for more considerations and improvement in constructing the speaking tasks so as to obtain a true picture of test takers' language abilities.

Table 10, together with Table 11, has presented the frequency of score scales the raters have given to the test-takers. The results have shown that among the five scales in each category, four scales are used, and the most frequent ones is 4. The raters' rating scores are relevant to Chart 1,2,3 and 4 in that the test takers outperformed the intended consequences of the speaking tasks. However, it can be inferred from Table 10 and 11 that the raters have used the rating scales appropriately and the scales can differentiate the test-takers in terms of their language proficiency.

V. CONCLUSION

TEP (Oral) is constructed to assess the university students' proficiency in speaking so as to inform English teachers of student performance achievements in language learning and to provide empirical guidance to teachers in making changes in the classrooms.

Using SPSS 22 and MINISTEPS 3.74.0, the study in this paper has examined the construct validity of TEP (Oral) at Level B, which means what the test designers intended to examine has been achieved. The high internal consistency of reliability, the high inter-rater consistency, as well as the results from Factor analysis, have proved the construct validity of TEP (Oral) at Level B in that the five categories and 1-5 points in the rating scales are homogeneous in contributing to the assessment of communicative proficiency. However, the study through MFRM has also indicated that improvements should be done to TEP (Oral) at Level B. As the tasks at Level B are fairly easy for most test-takers' abilities, the tasks of text retellings and topic discussions should be reconstructed so that the tasks can truly reflect the test takers' language abilities. Also, if a qualitative analysis on the test takers' performance is done, the understanding of the test takers' language proficiency can help the test designers with working out more effective speaking tasks.

Furthermore, TEP(Oral) is a three-level speaking test. Therefore, the study of construct validity has even more to do. To gain a fuller picture of the construct validity of TEP (Oral) at three levels, the author of the paper will continue the further investigation of the construct validity of TEP (Oral) at Level A and C quantitatively and qualitatively.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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Weijie Zhou is currently Associate Professor in Beijing International Studies University. She earned a Master's degree in TESOL in Beijing International Studies University and a Master's degree in Applied Linguistics in Southern Queensland University, Australia.

She has co-authored 6 books and textbooks in Translation and Language teaching. Also she has published more than 10 research papers on language teaching and translation. Her main research interests are Applied Translation and Applied linguistics.

Parenting and English Language Learning at Iranian Grade One Senior High Schools: A Theoretical and Empirical Approach

Ebrahim Khodadady
Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Iran

Bahareh Hadizadeh
Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, International Branch, Mashhad, Iran

Abstract—**This study aimed to explore whether the Parenting Authority Questionnaire (PAQ) relates significantly to the English language achievement of grade one senior high school (G1SHS) students in Mashhad, Iran. To this end, the PAQ designed by Buri (1991) was translated into Persian and administered to three hundred and nineteen students in two versions dealing with their fathers and mothers' parenting separately. Inspired by the microstructural approach of schema theory, the PAQ was treated as a measure of parenting domain while its three sections were adopted as its authoritarian, authoritative and permissive genera. The students' performance on the PAQ and its three sections were correlated with their scores obtained on the final English examination (FEE) held nationally at the end of grade three junior high schools. The results showed that not only the parenting domain but also its authoritarian, authoritative and permissive genera correlate significantly with English achievement at different degrees and in opposite directions. The findings are discussed and suggestions are made for future research.**

Index Terms—**parenting authority questionnaire, schema theory, English language achievement**

I. INTRODUCTION

By referring to Darling and Steinberg (1993) and Darling (1999), Bibi et al. (2013) proved to be among those who approach parenting as "a complex activity" (p. 91). Surprisingly, few researchers, if any, have attempted to define parenting from either theoretical or empirical perspective. Most scholars have, however, followed Baumrind (1991) and focused on "parenting style" as a construct to capture normal variations in parents' attempts to control and socialize their children (e.g., Chan & Koo, 2011; Cramer, 2002; Ellis, 2007). Similarly, no researcher has endeavored to explain how the so-called complex activity of parenting treated as a superordinate concept by the majority can be subsumed under various styles assumed to be its subordinates!

Parenting styles have also been defined as characteristics of the parent that are stable over time and context (Holden & Miller, 1999; Smetana, 1994) and constitute the emotional context for specific parenting practices (Darling & Steinberg, 1993). Furthermore the styles have been discussed as typologies characterized by the parent's level of sensitivity to and expectations for their child's behavior (Baumrind, 1971) as well as "trait variables, as opposed to state variables" (Grusec & Goodnow, 1994 cited in Coplan, et al., 2002, p. 3).

The concept of parenting assumed a more nebulous status when Coplan, et al. (2002) differentiated parenting styles from "parental belief systems (e.g., Dix, 1993; Hastings & Coplan, 1999; Mills & Rubin, 1990; Sigel, McGillicuddy-DeLisi, & Goodnow, 1992), … and affective component of parenting (e.g., Bugental, 1992; Eisenberg, Cumberland, & Spinrad, 1998)" [pp. 1-2]. The present researchers believe the confusion faced in defining parenting stems from the fact that most research projects, if not all, have adopted a macrostructural approach towards its operationalization, i.e., defining parenting in a single statement (see Khodadady, 2013).

Buri (1991), for example, equated parenting with parental authority and followed Baumrind (1973) who ignored parenting and focused on its three *distinct and unrelated* prototypes, i.e., authoritarianism, authoritativeness and permissiveness, instead. Based on Baumrind's (1966) descriptions of the prototypes he did, however, develop and validate his 30-statement Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ). Although Buri does not acknowledge himself, the PAQ does address a construct, i.e., parenting, which accommodates its constituting styles as a superordinate concept.

The present researchers argue that Buri's (1991) authoritarian, authoritative and permissive sections of the PAQ would be three macro structures if they were defined in too broad terms being open to subjective interpretation. Each of the three sections does, however, consist of ten statements with specific words. Some of the words constituting the statements of the three sections are the same and thus contribute not only to the statements but also to the whole scale consisting of the three sections. Following Khodadady (2008), Buri's *words* constituting his 30 statements are treated as *schemata* which represent his personally conceived and produced concepts involved in parenting at the lowest level. The statements, in their turn, combine with each other to form the broader concepts of authoritarian, authoritative and

permissive genera at higher levels. And finally, genera come together to generate the domain of parenting measured by the PAQ.

Figure 5.1 presents the schema tokens, types and statements forming the three prototypes of "parenting" as measured by PAQ. As can be seen, there is no connection among authoritarian, authoritative and permissive prototypes because Buri (1991) treated them as three distinct parenting styles or macro structures. Similarly, there is no connection between "the prototypes of parenting" and "parenting" itself as a superordinate concept encompassing the prototypes. However, when the PAQ is analyzed by employing the microstructural approach of schema theory, it shows that the statements comprising the prototypes do share a fairly large number of schemata with each other. The schema type "father", for example, appears in the three genera as shown in the figure. (The exact number of common and distinct schemata will be presented shortly in the discussions section.)
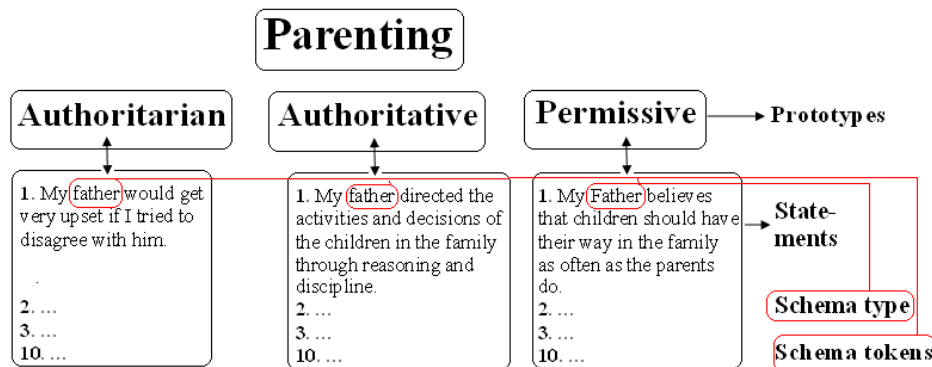
Figure 1. Schema tokens, types and species forming parenting prototypes

Based on the microstructural approach of schema theory parenting is treated as a cognitive domain as Khodadady, Aryanjam, and Ghazanfari (2015), Khodadady and Bagheri (2014), Khodadady and Dastgahian (2015a, 2015b), Khodadady and Fard (2014), Khodadady and Gholamian (2014), Khodadady and Mokhtary (2014) and Khodadady and Moosavi (2014) did with English language policy, Islamic religious orientations, Syria Unrest, motivations underlying English language learning and personality, respectively. According to these scholars, the main construct measured by any psychological measure such as PAQ, i.e., parenting, is a cognitive domain whose constituting schemata, species and genera relate to each other in a hierarchical system. Within this system, the schemata represent the main and basic concepts by use of which the broader concepts of species, genera and domain are expressed and measured.

The present study is designed to investigate whether the parenting construct underlying the development of the PAQ stands the microstructural analysis of schema theory as other questionnaires such as English Language Policy Inventory (Khodadady et al., 2015) and Islamic Religious Orientation Scale (Khodadady & Bagheri, 2014) do. It also attempts to find out whether the parenting domain relates significantly to grade one senior high school (G1SHS) students' English language achievement measured by final English language examination held nationally at the end of grade three junior high schools.

II. METHODOLOGY

A. Participants

Three hundred and nineteen female grade one senior high schools (G1SHS) students took part in this study voluntarily. (Three participants were, however, removed from the study because they had not filled out the PAQ.) They had registered as full time students at Hatami, Parvin Etesami and Noor G1SHSs in educational district four in Mashhad, Iran. They were 15 years of age and spoke Persian (n = 306, 95.9%), Kurdish (n = 4, 1.3%) and Turkish (n = 3, 0.9%) as their mother language.

B. Instruments

Three instruments were employed in this study: a Biodata Questionnaire, Parent Authority Questionnaire and the English scores the G1SHS students had obtained on their Final English Examination held at grade three junior high schools.

1. Biodata Questionnaire

In order to obtain the required demographic information a biodata questionnaire containing one short-answer question and four multiple choice items was developed in this study. They dealt with the participants' age, educational background, gender, family structure and mother language.

2. Parent Authority Questionnaire

The Parent Authority Questionnaire (PAQ) designed by Buri (1991) was translated into Persian and employed in two versions in this study, i.e., one for fathers and another for mothers. (The process of translation is described in details in the procedures section.) It consists of thirty statements which describe the participants' fathers and mothers' behaviors

and attitudes at home. G1SHS students participating in this study were required to completely disagree, disagree, almost disagree, agree and completely agree with each statement. The values of 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 were assigned to these choices, respectively. The statements (Ss) deal with Authoritarian (10Ss), Authoritative (10Ss) and Permissive (10Ss) styles. Statement two of the PAQ which describes an Authoritarian father, for example, reads, "even if his children do not agree with him my father feels that it is for our own good if we are forced to conform to what he thinks is right". Buri does not provide his readers with alpha coefficient related to the PAQ. He did, however, report .75, .85, and .82 for mothers' permissiveness, authoritarianism, and authoritativeness, respectively. He also reported .74, .87 and .85 for fathers' permissiveness, authoritarianism, and authoritativeness, respectively.

3. English Language Achievement Scores

For determining the participants' English language achievement and exploring its relationship with the cognitive domain of parenting their scores on the written Final English Examination (FEE) held at grade three junior high schools (G3JHSs) was obtained from their G1SHSs. The FEE is designed by a team of experienced English teachers and is held nationally at the end of school year. It is a criterion or content-based achievement examination developed on the textbook *English book 3* (Birjandi & Soheili, 2009). The cut-off score of 10 out of 20 is adopted to admit students to G1SHSs.

The FEE consisted of 18 sections and 57 items for which 90 minutes were allotted to be completed. The items involved restoring the deleted letters of three words having pictorial stimuli (section 1), restoring the middle letters of some words appearing in two sentences (section 2), matching the answers with the questions provided (section 3), filling incomplete sentences with scrambled phrases (section 4), finding specific phonemes in words (section 5), restoring the missing words of some sentences (section 6), collocations (section 7), filling the blanks with given words (section 8), filling a crossword (section 9), multiple choice items dealing with grammar (section 10), filling the blanks with structural words (section 11) finding erroneous parts of sentences (section 12), changing statements to questions (section 13), ordering scrambled words into sentences (section 14), giving a complete answer to an open-ended question (section 15), matching drawings with written statements (section 16), choosing the best choice to complete a sentence (section 17), and answering questions based on a reading passage (section 18)

C. Procedures

Following Khodadady and Hadizadeh's (2013) suggestion, Buri's (1995) PAQ was translated into Persian by employing schema theory (Khodadady, 2008; Khodadady & Lagzian, 2013; Seif & Khodadady, 2003). (The interested readers can contact the corresponding author to obtain a copy of the Persian PAQ.) It requires providing the best equivalents for target words by focusing on their semantic features as they relate to each other within the context of the statements they constitute. Esfandiyari's (1995) translation of the PAQ is widely used in Iran. It was not, however, employed in this study because he took the liberty to change whatever words he felt necessary to develop a localized questionnaire. The first English statement describing permissive mothers, for example, reads, "While I was growing up my father/mother felt that in a well-run home the children should have their way in the family as often as the parents do." He translated the statement as VALEDEEN BAYAD BEH BACHEHAYE KHOD EJZAZEH DAHAND TA HAR ANCHEH RA KEH MIKHAHAND ANJAM DAHAND (Parents should allow their children to do whatever they want.)

Similar to Esfandiyari (1995), however, the first introductory part, i.e., while I was growing up, was not included in the translation of the statements of which it had formed a part because the participants of this study were not university students as Buri's (1991) were. (In other words, the participants of this study were still parented by their fathers and mothers.) In addition to omitting this part, Esfandiyari, nonetheless, dropped the schema "felt" altogether and thus rendered the statement a fact. According to Onions (1973), the schema "felt" has eight senses among which "to believe on grounds not distinctly perceived; to have a conviction of" (p. 736) was chosen as the best equivalent for being translated into Persian.

Following Khodadady (1999) the redundant phrase "in a well-run home" was also not translated into Persian because it introduces some extra and irrelevant concepts into the answering process which bears little, if any, on the parenting styles of the G1SHS students' fathers and mothers. One implication of the phrase is that a mother may, for example, believe that "in a well-run home" or "ideal" family, mothers should let their children do whatever they like. However, since their own home is not well-run, it does not apply to them! In other words, children can have their own way in the families which are not well-run.

In addition to dropping the schema "felt" from translation, Esfandiyari (1995) translated "should" as BAYAD (must). In the present study, it was, however, translated as "MIBAYESTI" to reflect the advisability of action. He also added the verb schemata "EJAZEH DADAN" and "ANAJM DADAN" for which no English equivalents can be found in Buri's (1991) statement, i.e., the children should have their way in the family as often as the parents do. In other words, in Esfandiyari's translation there is no schema suggesting parents have their own way in the family. The statement above was therefore translated as MADARAM BAR IN BAVAR AST KE FAZANDAN MESSLE VALEDIN MIBAYESTI HAR CHIZI KE MIKHAHAND BEDAST BIYAVARAND. The same procedure was followed in translating the remaining 29 statements.

Upon having the two versions of the Persian PAQ prepared for students to determine their fathers and mothers' parenting styles, they were printed and copied in adequate numbers and the authorities in the Bureau of Education were

contacted in Mashhad to obtain their official approval. After scrutinizing the questionnaires, they introduced the first researcher to several schools in their fourth educational district with an official letter. She immediately visited several schools in person and talked to their principles. Three of them finally agreed to have their students participate in the study provided the researcher supplied them with the results.

To collect the data as fast and as conveniently as possible, the first researcher of this study talked to the councilors of three schools to secure their support. Fortunately, they showed great interest in the project because of their personal experiences with the parents and the necessity of providing them with some educational programs. They agreed to assign each student a code so that they could enter their FEE scores on the completed and coded questionnaires to secure their anonymity. Appreciating the help, the researcher attended classes in person and talked to the students who ultimately agreed to fill out the PAQ. All the data were collected at the end the first quarter of the school year in 2014.

D. Data Analysis

For determining the types of schemata employed in the development of PAQ, Khodadady (2013) and Khodadady and Lagzian (2013) were followed and its 30 statements were parsed and their constituting schemata were analyzed and assigned to semantic, syntactic and parasyntactic schema species, genera and domains. For quantifying the parenting style of parents Khodadady and Hadizadeh (2013) were followed and the responses on statements dealing with authoritarian, authoritative and permissive parents were added up and averaged. The highest mean obtained on any of three styles for each of the participants' responses was adopted as an indicator of her parents' style at home. If the same mean score was obtained on two styles, it was assigned to the style which had fewer followers. To make the presentation of the data and their description simpler, the two points "disagree completely" and "disagree" were collapsed to form the single point "disagree" as were "agree" and "agree completely" to form another single point. Following Buri (1989), Cronbach's (1951) alpha reliability coefficient was estimated to determine the reliability level of the PAQ as a whole. The same formula was followed to estimate the reliability level of the authoritarian, authoritative and permissive sections of the PAQ. And finally, the PAQ and its three sections were correlated with the scores obtained on the FEE to explore the relationship between parenting and English achievement. All statistical analyses were run via the IBM SPSS Statistics 20 to address the following hypotheses.

H1. There is no significant relationship between fathers' parenting domain and their G1SHS children's English achievement.

H2. There are no significant relationships between fathers' parenting genera and their G1SHS children's English achievement.

H3. There is no significant relationship between mothers' parenting domain and their G1SHS children's English achievement.

H4. There are no significant relationships between mothers' parenting genera and their G1SHS children's English achievement.

III. RESULTS

Table 1 presents the psychometrics of 30 statements measuring parenting via PAQ. As can be seen, the highest mean scores, i.e., 3.66 and 3.62, are obtained on statement eight dealing with authoritative (V) parents. They are the highest because 67% and 62% of G1SHS students believe that their fathers and mothers direct the activities and decisions of the children in the family through reasoning and discipline. Similarly, the lowest mean scores belong to statement 21, i.e., 2.12 and 2.09, showing that 72% of participants disagree that their fathers and mothers did not view themselves as responsible for directing and guiding their children's behavior. These results show that the parenting of G1SHS students' fathers and mother are very similar to each other.

TABLE 1
PSYCHOMETRICS OF ITEMS CONSTITUTING FATHERS AND MOTHERS' PARENTING

Item	Fathers						Mothers					
	N	Mean	SDS	D%	NAND %	A%	N	Mean	SDS	D%	NAND %	A%
I01P	313	2.95	1.304	40	19	41	316	2.81	1.266	46	23	32
I02N	313	2.87	1.331	47	17	36	316	2.87	1.293	47	16	37
I03N	313	2.97	1.330	41	18	42	316	2.96	1.290	43	16	41
I04V	313	3.12	1.258	35	21	43	316	2.97	1.206	40	23	37
I05V	313	3.30	1.243	27	23	50	316	3.20	1.205	31	24	45
I06P	313	2.69	1.397	53	16	30	316	2.56	1.287	56	19	26
I07N	313	2.81	1.440	50	15	35	316	2.73	1.371	51	18	30
I08V	313	3.66	1.149	19	15	67	316	3.62	1.099	20	18	62
I09N	313	2.27	1.231	61	22	16	316	2.26	1.203	62	23	15
I10P	313	3.22	1.365	34	19	48	316	3.16	1.368	34	20	46
I11V	313	3.22	1.396	35	14	51	316	3.19	1.399	36	14	50
I12N	313	2.57	1.333	56	15	29	316	2.53	1.332	57	14	29
I13P	313	2.78	1.290	47	21	32	316	2.69	1.241	49	23	28
I14P	313	3.17	1.434	36	15	49	316	3.04	1.400	38	17	45
I15V	313	3.55	1.258	22	22	57	316	3.48	1.204	23	23	54
I16N	313	3.14	1.350	38	19	43	316	2.98	1.416	42	20	38
I17P	313	2.73	1.380	49	20	30	316	2.66	1.361	53	19	28
I18N	313	2.44	1.295	62	16	22	316	2.46	1.329	61	14	25
I19P	313	2.96	1.374	42	14	43	316	2.83	1.347	49	16	35
I20V	313	3.01	1.166	37	27	36	316	3.00	1.174	39	24	36
I21P	313	2.12	1.041	72	17	12	316	2.09	1.109	72	16	12
I22V	313	2.91	1.289	43	16	41	316	2.98	1.283	43	13	44
I23V	313	3.25	1.306	35	14	50	316	3.16	1.361	38	15	47
I24P	313	3.13	1.375	37	12	50	316	3.18	1.323	32	18	50
I25N	313	2.55	1.235	52	25	23	316	2.62	1.295	53	22	26
I26N	313	3.22	1.281	33	18	49	316	3.27	1.319	30	19	51
I27V	313	2.97	1.266	39	24	38	316	3.02	1.210	38	22	41
I28P	313	2.34	1.249	62	18	20	316	2.25	1.197	65	17	18
I29N	313	2.81	1.256	44	24	32	316	2.66	1.291	49	22	29
I30V	313	2.51	1.311	54	20	26	316	2.71	1.305	46	24	30

Note: A: agree, D: disagree, NAND: neither agree nor disagree, N: authoritarian, P: permissive, V: authoritative,

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics and reliability estimates of the PAQ and its three sections measuring the parenting domain and its genera. As can be seen, among the three styles, the number of fathers and mothers determined to be authoritative by G1SHS students, i.e., 153 and 160, has proved to be more than the authoritarian, i.e., 90 and 84, and permissive ones, i.e., 70 and 72, respectively. The three genera for both fathers and mothers are all highly reliable in that they are in .80s. The PAQ itself has a relatively low alpha coefficient for fathers, i.e., .51, which is slightly higher than that of mothers, .45. The low reliability of the PAQ is, however, acceptable because Khodadady and Namaghi (2013) administered 36-item Reading the Mind in the Eyes Test developed by Baron-Cohen et al. (2001) to 181 undergraduate university students and reported an alpha of .54.

TABLE 2
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS AND RELIABILITY ESTIMATES OF FATHERS AND MOTHERS' PARENTING DOMAINS AND GENERA AS DETERMINED BY THEIR G1SHS DAUGHTERS

Parents	Genera and Domain	N	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	Alpha
Fathers	Authoritarian	90	28.00	8.976	.354	-.687	.865
	Authoritative	153	32.18	8.849	-.004	-1.001	.879
	Permissive	70	27.89	8.418	.334	-.602	.833
	Parenting	313	87.24	9.989	.436	-.225	.508
Mothers	Authoritarian	84	27.16	9.366	.395	-.738	.882
	Authoritative	160	31.94	8.773	.111	-.870	.882
	Permissive	72	27.30	8.264	.393	-.677	.834
	Parenting	316	85.95	9.372	.469	.088	.451

Table 3 presents the correlations between G1SHS students' scores on the FEE and their performance on the PAQ determining their fathers' parenting domain and its three genera. As can be seen, the PAQ correlates significant with the FEE ($r = .122$, $p < .05$) and thus *rejects* the first hypothesis that *there is no significant relationship between fathers' parenting domain and their G1SHS children's English achievement*. The three authoritarian, authoritative and permissive section of the PAQ correlate significantly with the FEE ($r = .127$, $p < .05$; .424, $p < .01$; and -.417, $p < .01$, respectively), and thus *reject* the second hypothesis that *there are no significant relationships between fathers' parenting genera and their G1SHS children's English achievement*.

TABLE 3
CORRELATION BETWEEN FEE AND PAQ DETERMINING FATHERS' PARENTING DOMAIN AND ITS GENERA

Test and Domain	FEE	Domain	Authoritarian	Authoritative	Permissive
FEE	1	.122*	.127*	.424**	-.417**
Domain	.122*	1	.357**	.496**	.342**
Authoritarian	.127*	.357**	1	-.225**	-.380**
Authoritative	.424**	.496**	-.225**	1	-.180**
Permissive	-.417**	.342**	-.380**	-.180**	1

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 4 presents the correlations between G1SHS students' scores on the FEE and their performance on the PAQ determining their mothers' parenting domain and its three genera. As can be seen, the PAQ correlates significantly with the FEE (r = .122, p<.05) and thus *rejects* the third hypothesis that *there is no significant relationship between mothers' parenting domain and their G1SHS children's English achievement*. Furthermore, the three authoritarian, authoritative and permissive sections of the PAQ correlate significantly with the FEE (r = .127, p<.05; .424, p<.01; and -.417, p<.01, respectively), and thus *reject* the fourth hypothesis that *there are no significant relationships between mothers' parenting genera and their G1SHS children's English achievement*.

TABLE 4
CORRELATION BETWEEN FEE AND PAQ DETERMINING MOTHERS' PARENTING DOMAIN AND ITS GENERA

Test and Domain	FEE	Domain	Authoritarian	Authoritative	Permissive
FEE	1	.128*	.124*	.438**	-.462**
Domain	.128*	1	.331**	.521**	.232**
Authoritarian	.124*	.331**	1	-.253**	-.471**
Authoritative	.438**	.521**	-.253**	1	-.183**
Permissive	-.462**	.232**	-.471**	-.183**	1

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

IV. DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSION

The findings of this study establish the PAQ as a measure of parenting which relates significantly to G1SHS students' English language achievement. They show that regardless of the authoritarian, authoritative and permissive genera of parenting styles, fathers and mothers explain 1.5 and 1.6 percent of variance in their female children's learning of English in the schools where the present project was conducted. Since no studies have, to the best knowledge of present researchers, explored the relationship of G1SHS students' English achievement with other variables in Iran, no comparisons could be made here to find out what position parents' styles occupy in relation to other variables such as social capitals.

Finding a significant relationship between parenting and English achievement is, therefore, unique to this study because no study has approached the PAQ as a measure of parenting per se in Iran. The finding owes to the microstructural approach of schema theory which defines language in relation to the role each schema plays in representing and understanding a specific concept at a basic level of cognition and its application with other schemata at broader levels such as species, genera and domains. To accomplish the task, the PAQ was explored at two levels in this study, i.e., linguistically and cognitively.

The linguistic analysis of the PAQ dealing with fathers shows that it consists of 656 and 197 schema tokens and types, respectively, as shown in Table 5. As a schema type, the syntactic determiner "my" is the most frequently used because it has a token of 38, followed by the noun semantic schema "father" with a token of 31. The number of noun schema types which are common to the three authoritarian, authoritative and permissive genera, i.e., 7 (behaviors, children, decisions, expectations, family, father, ways), is more than common verbs, i.e., 4 (felt, had, wanted, was). The importance of common noun genus types increases when it is realized that out of 19 pronoun types, eight are common to authoritarian, authoritative and permissive genera, i.e., he, him, I, me, that, they, what, and when. (The pronoun I has a token of 10 emphasizing the important role the students themselves play in determining their fathers' behaviors at home.) These results suggest that "parenting" is a cognitive domain whose functioning within the three genera has not been taken into account by Buri (1991). This is because he emphasizes the styles without paying proper attention to "parenting" in general.

TABLE 5
SCHEMA TOKENS AND TYPES COMPRISING DOMAINS OF LANGUAGE USED IN PAQ

Domain	Genera	Schema tokens	Schema tokens%	Distinct Schema types	Common Schema types	Total schema types
Semantic	Adjectives	20	3.0	14	0	14
	Adverbs	10	1.5	7	1	8
	Nouns	140	21.3	33	7	40
	Verbs	115	17.5	61	4	65
	Total	**285**	**43.4**	**115**	**12**	**127**
Syntactic	Conjunctions	43	6.6	4	2	6
	Determiners	83	12.7	9	2	11
	Prepositions	57	8.7	7	5	12
	Pronouns	106	16.2	11	8	19
	Syntactic verbs	28	4.3	7	2	9
	Total	**317**	**48.3**	**38**	**19**	**57**
Parasyntactic	Abbreviations	3	.5	2	0	2
	Para-adverbs	23	3.5	8	2	10
	Particles	28	4.3	1	0	1
	Total	**54**	**8.2**	**11**	**2**	**13**
	Total	656	100.0	164	33	197

The contribution of microstructural approach to understanding "parenting" becomes more vivid when it is approached from a cognitive perspective as well. As illustrated in Figure 2, one hundred ninety seven schema types combine with each other in various tokens to produce 30 species whose contribution to authoritarian, authoritative and permissive genera have been determined by specialists in various related fields. Future research must show whether the species assigned to the three genera load on the same factors if the participants' evaluation of the species are subjected to factor analysis. The findings of this study, however, show that the genera established by authorities do also share a number of concepts with each other without which their relevance to a single domain called "parenting" could not be discerned. These common schemata help children accept their fathers and mothers as their parents even if they differ from each other in certain schemata, species and genera.
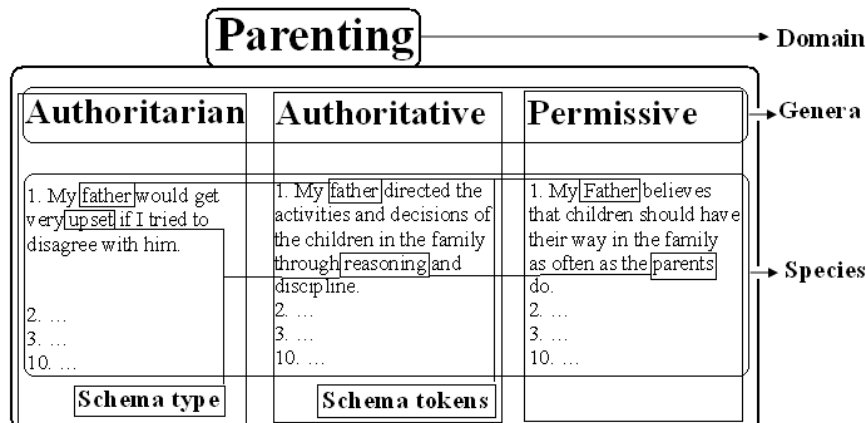
Figure 2. Schema tokens, types, species and genera forming parenting domain

Sixteen noun schema types comprise the ten species constituting the authoritarian genus addressed by the PAQ, i.e. "authority", "behaviors", "boss", "children", "decisions", "expectations", "family", "father", "force", "parents", "problems", "questions", "respect", "society", "thought", and "ways". A comparison of these schemata with those employed by Baumrind (1966) shows that Buri (1991) avoided the application of some key concepts such as "conduct" and "standard" comprising the phrasal schema of "a set standard of conduct". These differences can be utilized to revise the PAQ and explore the effect of revision on variables of interest in future studies.

Authoritarian genus of fathers and mothers as conceived by Buri (1991) and determined by the G1SHS students does relate significantly to their English language achievement, i.e., r = .127 and .124, *p*<.05, respectively. These findings have great educational implications because they highlight the importance of not only the parenting domain but also its authoritarian genus when it is compared with the students' individual abilities and attributes such as intelligence and personality. Moosavi (2014), for example, could not establish any significant relationship between G3SHS students' spiritual intelligence as measured by the Persian Spiritual Intelligence Self Report Inventory (SISRI) designed by King (2008) and translated and validated by Khodadady and Moosavi (2014)]. Neither could Mokhtary (2014) find any significant correlation between G3SHS students' English achievement and their personality as measured by the Persian Personality Inventory validated by Khodadady and Mokhtary (2014).

The authoritative genus of parenting domain consists of 239 and 94 schema tokens and types, respectively. Fathers and mothers' authoritative genus relates to G1SHS students' English achievement, i.e., r = .424 and .438, *p*<.01, respectively, indicating that authoritative genus is more related to the achievement than the authoritarian genus does. These findings show that while 18 and 19 percent of G1SHS students' English achievement is explained by their authoritative fathers and mothers' parenting it drops to only one percent when it is related to teacher effectiveness as measured by the English Language Teachers' Attribute Scale (ELTAS) at G3SHSs. Khodadady, Fakhrabadi, and Azar, (2012) administered the ELTAS to 1328 G3SHS students and correlated it with their self-reported English achievement scores and reported the correlation coefficient of .111 (*p*. <.01), indicating that authoritative fathers and mothers' role in their children's achievement is far stronger than their English teachers'.

As the third style of parenting, the permissive genus consists of 200 and 99 schema tokens and types, respectively. In sharp contrast to authoritative genus, fathers and mothers' permissive genus relates strongly but *negatively* to G1SHS students' English achievement, i.e., r = -.417 and -.462, *p*<.01, respectively, indicating that the more permissive the parents are in their parenting the less their daughters achieve in their English course at school. Based on these findings it is suggested that in addition to studying significant differences in the mean scores in variables such as achievement, the relationship of parenting and its genera with these variables be explored. Khodadady and Hadizadeh (2013), for example, showed that the mean scores of preschoolers brought up by authoritative and permissive parents did not differ significantly from each other on S-Tests measuring their children's first language acquisition, implying that the two genera are the same. The findings of this study do, however, show that authoritative parenting must be adopted if parents wish to make a difference in their G1SHS students' English achievement.

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Ebrahim Khodadady obtained his PhD in Applied Linguistics from the University of Western Australia. He holds TESL Ontario and Canadian Language Benchmarks Placement Test (CLPBPT) certificates and has taught English as a first, second and foreign language to high school and university students in Australia, Canada and Iran.

He is currently an academic member of Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Iran. He was invited as a VIP by Brock University in Canada in 2004 and served as the Associate Director of Assessment Center at George Brown College in Toronto for almost a year. His published books are *Multiple-Choice Items in Testing: Practice and Theory* (Tehran, Rahnama, 1999), *Reading Media Texts: Iran-America Relations* (Sanandaj, Kurdistan University, 1999), *English Language Proficiency Course: First Steps* (Sanandaj, Kurdistan University, 2001) and *Research Principles and Methods and Statistics in Applied Linguistics* (Mashhad, Hamsayeh Aftab, 2013). His main research interests are Psychometrics, Psycholinguistics, Sociolinguistics.

Bahareh Hadizadeh is a graduate student of Applied Linguistics in Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, International Branch, Mashhad, Iran. She has been teaching English as a foreign language to the learners of all ages in different English institutes since 2001 and Proma shopping center since 2007. Moreover; she has been the manager of Proma Educational Center offering general English to its Staff. Her main research interests are Language Learning, Teaching and Psychology.

A Corpus-based Study on Chinese EFL Learners' Acquisition of English Existential Construction*

Xiaorong Zhang

Northwest Agriculture & Forestry University, Yangling, China

Abstract—**This corpus-based study examines English existential construction used by intermediate and advanced level Chinese EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners. The corpora adopted are the sub-corpora of SWECCL2.0—TEM 4 Oral and TEM 8 Oral and a sub-corpora of COCA. The study concludes Chinese EFL learners tend to overuse English existential construction and prefer the basic tenses, simple intransitive verbs and commonly seen expressions, avoid the perfect tenses and the difficult forms. With the level of proficiency in English getting higher, Chinese students try to use fewer English existential sentences. The study also finds errors relevant to the tenses, agreements and misuse of "there + have" pattern made in TEM 4 Oral and more difficult participle errors made in TEM 8 Oral and the main reason of errors made in English existential acquisition is due to L1 transfer/ L1 influence**

Index Terms—**English existential construction, acquisition, error analysis, corpus-based, L1 transfer**

I. INTRODUCTION

Existential sentence as a special syntax and semantic structure has been widely used by Chinese EFL learners. However, various errors occurred in Chinese EFL learners' acquisition of English existential sentences.

In Sasaki's (1990) study of 173 Japanese learners' composition, she found that besides the more native-like *there be* construction which was approximately 30%. Sasaki also noted that there was a general shift from topic-comment to subject-predicate structure as students' proficiency increases.

Yip (1995) investigates some problems in Chinese learners' use of existential. However, her subjects are exchange students from Hong Kong and Singapore. These students could not really represent Chinese EFL learners as a whole. What's more, her study was confined to a small amount of data and a qualitative study.

In order to study English native-speakers' and the Chinese EFL learners' usage of EEC (English Existential Construction), Song Jingsheng (2006) compared the collected data from BNC and CLEC corpus. By analyzing and comparing distributional frequencies of different types of EEC in these two corpora, he found there are regularity and some characteristics in their distributional frequencies. In the process of negation usage, there is a significant difference between native speakers and Chinese learners. But Song Jingsheng's research just used frequency counts to answer his study questions.

Dai Manchun and Liang Yi (2007) analyzed the syntactic features of EEC from minimalist program theory and used empirical approach to study Chinese students' acquisition of EEC. They divided the EEC into five types and targeted on four group participants who included high school and university students. In the research, Dai stated there were different results of Chinese students' acquisition of different EEC because of EEC's syntactic operation. That is to say, for the more simple syntactic operation of EEC, the higher degree of mastery.

From the discussion above, researchers have made lots of contributions to the study of existential sentences in theory and in SLA, which provide useful views for the present study. These studies either focused on a stage of proficiency, or just did simple frequency counts. Related studies from corpus approach are still inadequate in exploring Chinese EFL learners' acquisition of English existential Construction.

II. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

A. Research Questions

1. In comparison with native English speakers, what features are presented in Chinese EFL learners' acquisition of English existential construction?
2. What is the pattern of Chinese EFL learners' errors of existential construction at different levels?
3. What are the causes of the errors made by Chinese EFL learners?

B. Corpus and Tools Used in the Study

The data is collected from two corpora. One represents Chinese EFL learners' speaking and the other is

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native-speaker corpus as reference. The former is SWECCL (Spoken and Written English Corpus of Chinese Learners) and the latter is COCA (Corpus of Contemporary American English). The tool adopted in the study is AntConc 3.2.1, which is green and cross-platform corpus processing software developed by Laurence Anthony. The software has a variety of functions including Concordance, Concordance Plot, File View, Clusters, Collocates, Word List and Key Word List.

C. Procedures for Data Processing

Step 1. See "there" as the key word, use AntConc3.2.1 to search all the sentences containing "there" in SWECCL which include TEM4 Oral and TEM-8 Oral and part of sample of spoken COCA is dealt with online in the same way.

Step 2. Non-existential sentences and vaguely expressed ones should be excluded and the frequency of existential sentences in the three corpora should be counted one by one. Owing to the difference in size of the three corpora, the original frequency should be standardized to make the comparison more acceptable. The formula of frequency standardization of per million tokens is (original frequency/corpus tokens) x1000,000 (Biber et al 2000).

Step 3. Classify English existential construction into five categories: "there + be" "there + modal be", "there + marginal modal be" "there + semi-auxiliary be" and "there + intransitive verb". Divide five types into two main types based on simple or complex grammatical structure.

Step 4. Compare the frequency of all existential sentences and of different forms between TEM 4 Oral, TEM 8 Oral and part of sample of SPOKEN in COCA to find out the characteristics of Chinese EFL learners' acquisition of English existential sentences.

Step 5. Collect existential sentences with errors in TEM 4 Oral and TEM 8 Oral. Next, ignore the obviously meaningless spelling errors, including those omitting the predicate verb "be" and some not belonging to errors of the properties of existential sentences such as NP (noun phrase), PP (preposition phrase). Then calculate all errors of there-existential structure in both corpora.

Step 6. Classify the errors into agreement, tense, finite/non-finite, structural deficiency. Use Antconc3.2.1 to search the frequency of these types of errors in TEM 4 Oral and TEM 8 Oral. And then calculate them.

Step 7. Compare the frequency of different types of errors between TEM 4 Oral and TEM 8 Oral to explore the regularity of Chinese EFL learners' acquisition of English existential construction. Causes for the errors are analyzed to help explain sources of the regularity and improve learning strategy and learners' awareness.

Step 8. From the analyses of the characteristics and regularity of Chinese EFL learners' acquisition of English existential construction, explore the solution to avoid errors made in the acquisition process.

III. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

A. Characteristics of Chinese EFL Learners Acquisition of Existential Construction

1. The Difference in the Frequency of Existential Construction between Chinese EFL Learners and Native English Speakers

TABLE 1
FREQUENCY AND STANDARDIZATION OF ENGLISH EXISTENTIAL CONSTRUCTION IN TEM 4 ORAL,
TEM 8 ORAL AND PART OF SAMPLE OF SPOKEN IN COCA.

	TEM 4 Oral	TEM 8 Oral	COCA
Tokens	779731	286583	554526
Frequency	3105	1013	1686
Standardization	3982.14	3534.75	3040.43

(The formula of frequency standardization of per million tokens is (original frequency/corpus tokens) x 1000,000 (Biber et al 2000).)

From table 1 it can be seen the number of existential sentences in TEM 4 Oral or TEM 8 Oral is much higher than that of COCA, which means Chinese EFL learners may tend to overuse existential sentence. It can also be observed that the number of existential sentences in TEM 4 Oral is higher than in TEM 8 Oral, which shows the higher level of Chinese EFL learners are, the fewer existential sentences they use in speaking.

2. The Difference in the Use of Various Forms of Existential Construction between Chinese EFL Learners and Native English Speakers

According to the five types of existential construction in the front, it is divided into the basic forms and other forms. The basic form are "there + be" and "there + modal be" patterns. Other forms are "there + intransitive verb" "there +semi-auxiliary be" and "there + marginal modal be" patterns.

TABLE 2
FREQUENCY OF THE BASIC FORMS OF ENGLISH EXISTENTIAL CONSTRUCTION IN TEM 4 ORAL, TEM 8 ORAL AND COCA

Basic forms of Existential Sentences			TEM 4 Oral	TEM 8 Oral	COCA
there + be	present tense	there is	660	192	185
		there are	552	465	195
	past tense	there was	467	19	128
		there were	108	20	53
	perfect tense	there has been	0	2	8
		there have been	2	0	14
		there had been	0	1	3
There+ modal be		there will/ would/ can/could/may/might/should/must be	174	96	68
TOTAL			3961	795	654

From Table 2, it can be found that the frequency of the basic form in TEM 4 Oral and TEM 8 Oral is much higher than that in COCA. For the basic form of " there be " structure, Chinese EFL learners tend to use the most of present tense and past tense and the least in perfect tense.

For the "there + modal be" form, "will" "can" "must" are the major choice of the TEM 4 Oral. "Will" "should" "must" are the major choice of the TEM 8 Oral. Of all the modal verbs in TEM 4 Oral and TEM 8 Oral, "will" is used 140 times in TEM 4 Oral and 66 times in TEM 8 Oral. However, in COCA, modal verbs are used in balance.

TABLE 3
FREQUENCY OF OTHER FORMS OF ENGLISH EXISTENTIAL CONSTRUCTION IN TEM 4 ORAL, TEM 8 ORAL AND COCA

Other forms of English existential construction		TEM 4 Oral	TEM 8 Oral	COCA
there + Intransitive verb	there lives/lived	1		
	there stands/stood			
	there comes/came/will come	7	2	
	there exists/existed	1		1
	there lies			1
	there follows			1
There + semi-auxiliary be	there is going to be	2		2
	there is likely to be			1
	there is found to be			1
	there is expected to be			
	there is said to be			
there + marginal modal be	there seems/ed to be	1	1	1
	there needs to be			1
	there used to be	1		1
	there remains to be			
	there appears to be			
TOTAL		13	3	10

As for the other forms shown in table 3, the frequency of all the structures in TEM 4 Oral, TEM 8 Oral and COCA is kept nearly the same. Amazingly, there are more structures of the other forms in TEM 4 Oral. However, it is easy to find that the structures are peculiar to some commonly seen ones, "there comes/came/will come", "there is going to be". In TEM 8 Oral, there appears another two structures "there comes/came/will come", "there seems/ed to be". Compared with TEM 4 Oral and TEM 8 Oral, flexible use of more predicate verbs and structures enrich the other forms in COCA. For instance, "there exists/existed", "there lies", "there follows", "there is going to be", "there is likely to be", "there is found to be", "there seems/ed to be", "there needs to be", "there used to be".

It is easy to see that the present and past tense used in the basic forms or "live" "come" and "exist" appearing in the pattern "there + intransitive verb" "be going to be" in the "there + semi-auxiliary be", "seem to be" and "used to be" in the "there + marginal modal be", which belong to the other forms, are the language items with high frequency. As mentioned above, language input frequency can influence language output ability to some extent.

B. The Analysis of Chinese EFL Learners' Acquisition of Existential Construction

Although there exist many differences between TEM 4 Oral and TEM 8 Oral, errors appear in both but with different number and different types. TEM 4 Oral and TEM 8 Oral are not fully error tagged, thus errors in the existential have to be collected semi-manually with the aid of KWIC and File View accompanied by the non-error context. The types of errors are divided into agreement, finite/ non-finite, tense and structural deficiency.

1. The Difference in the Number and types of Errors between TEM 4 Oral and TEM 8 Oral

TABLE 4
FREQUENCY OF DIFFERENT TYPES OF ERRORS IN TEM 4 ORAL AND TEM 8 ORAL

Types of Errors		TEM 4 Oral	TEM 8 Oral
1 tense		40	7
2 agreement		25	9
3 finite/ non-finite		7	10
structural deficiency	4 there have	15	5
	5 pseudo-relatives	11	9
	6 others	12	8
TOTAL		110	93

From table 4, it can be seen that more errors of tense, agreement, and the misuse of the "there have" pattern appear in TEM-4 Oral while there are more errors of finite/ non-finite in TEM-8 Oral. The number of pseudo-relatives and other errors classified into structural deficiency is similar in these two sub-corpora. Standardization of the frequency of different types of the errors in figure 2 directly shows the tendency that types of errors vary in the two sub-corpora.

2. Analysis of Different Types of Errors between TEM 4 Oral and TEM 8 Oral

(1) Misuse of Tense

The appropriate use of various tenses in English is always a headache for Chinese English learners. Misuse of tense in the *existential* clause in TEM 4 Oral and TEM 8 Oral mainly includes the misuse of the present tense for the past tense, the misuse of past tense present tense and the misuse of present tense and past tense for the perfect tense. Examples are selected and presented as follows:

TEM 4 Oral:

Example 1: The doctor told me that there is no hope that my mother will be waken.

Example 2: There is a little cat in the middle of the street and when... he said somebody will hurt the cat.

TEM 8 Oral

Example 3: It told us that there are still er ... very many many er ... issues that we should overcome er ... we should protect our pilots.

English is a language that possesses 16 tenses and each tense is expressed by the corresponding form of the predicate verb. However, in Chinese there is no notion of tense but the concept of time – *xianzai* (present), *guoqu* (past), and *jianglai* (future) which is expressed by simply adding the time adverbial such as *jintian* (present), 2015, *henjiu yiqian* (long time ago) with no transformation in the predicate verb, that is to say, in Chinese the time adverbial and the predicate verb are two totally independent notions and the change of one cannot influence the other. The obvious difference in tense between Chinese and English results in high degree of difficulty for Chinese English majors in learning and mastering English tenses.

To explain the phenomenon that present tense is overly misused for other tenses, we should also resort to induced interference. Due to its simplicity, the present tense is first introduced and exposed to Chinese English learners and is practiced a lot by Chinese English learners. In addition, the present tense is widely used in daily communication, argumentation writing and so on. The induced teaching and the excessive exposure and drilling altogether lead to Chinese English majors' misuse of the present tense for other tenses.

(2) Disagreement of a Subject and Predicate

In English the subject and the predicate verb must agree. In the existential clause, subject-verb agreement reflects differently from two aspects. One is that it is the postponed NP as the logical subject that determines subject-verb agreement, rather than "there" functions as the surface subject. The other is that when "there" is followed by conjoined noun phrase subjects, existential clause obeys the proximity principle, that is, the verb BE agrees with the number of the nearest conjunct rather than the number of both noun phrases combined (Murcia & Larsen-Freeman 1983). The following examples present clearly this principle:

Example 4: There is a student and two teachers in the classroom.

Example 5: There are two teachers and a student in the classroom.

However, in spoken English "there" is perceived as a singular subject, and the logical subject is ignored for subject-verb agreement purposes (Murcia & Larsen-Freeman 1983). Subject-verb disagreement is frequently committed by Chinese English majors. Some examples are extracted from TEM 4 Oral and TEM 8 Oral and presented below.

TEM 4 Oral:

Example 6: But you know there is some examples.

Example 7: You know there was many many air crashes.

Example 8: One night, there were a fire on the house.

TEM 8 Oral:

Example 9: There are someone in it.

One possible explanation for subject-verb disagreement may be interlingual interference. On one hand, the difference between meaning-focused Chinese and form-focused English interferes the mastery of subject-verb agreement in existential. As is known to all, it is the nearest conjunct of the subjects that determines subject-verb agreement when existential possesses conjoined noun phrase subjects. However, Chinese EFL learners who are deeply influenced by Chinese naturally and unconsciously consider conjoined noun phrase subjects as the determiner of subject-verb

agreement.

(3) Finite/Non-finite Errors

The major problem in TEM 8 Oral is finite/non-finite and the structure with the error is "There be +somebody/something + v-ing/v-ed + locative adverbial". As is known, although the forms of the present participle are usually regular, the forms of the past participle can be regular or irregular. Besides, there are various irregularities. The general grammatical rule to use present and past participle is clear that the present participle is used to express the active voice while the past participle is linked to the passive voice. This type of errors in TEM 8 Oral shows as proficiency of the target language increases, the learners are willing to try some complex structures. Few errors of finite/non-finite in TEM 4 Oral do not mean that students are good at using the grammar. Instead, they may employ avoidance strategy to deal with the difficulty in learning the participles, so actually there are only a very small number of existential sentences.

(4) Existential Pseudo – relatives

Sentences taking on the form of "there be +NP+VP" are called *existential pseudo-relatives* by Yip (1995). It is observed that this kind of sentence lacks relative pronoun. Some examples of *existential pseudo-relatives* from TEM 4 Oral and TEM 8 Oral are presented as follows:

TEM 4 Oral:

Example 10: And because there are many people stay in the train station.

TEM 8 Oral:

Example 11: Now there are many students study in the classroom.

Yip (1995) laid stress on the overuse of *existential pseudo-relatives,* for example, "There are many people study English" which, she thought, was caused by Chinese learners' directly copying the pivotal constructions of Chinese existential sentences. But English existential structure owns the only predicate verb "be" without any other verbs following unless they are in relative clauses or appropriate participle forms, thus this Chinese existential sentence should be expressed as " There' re many people who study English" or "There are many students studying English".

(5) Misuse of the "There have" Pattern

In regard to the question why many students in TEM 4 use "there + have" instead of "there + be", the reason may lie in that they confuse the "there + be" pattern with the content verb "have" both of which can express the meaning of the Chinese word "*you*" (have). The Chinese word "*you*" (have) is also translated into the English verb "have". It is Chinese thinking pattern that gives rise to this type of errors. At the same time, students doesn't grasp the meaning of "there be" pattern but use "have" which means "own" to express the meaning of existence. It appears the transfer of the vocabulary thus expand the usage of "have" and reduce the function of "there be". These errors are affected by the typical Chinese pivotal construction. Chinese students at intermediate level and high level are both inclined to follow it. As a result, this kind of error cannot be easily removed and has developed into a fossilized language phenomenon.

IV. CONCLUSION

A. Findings

Firstly, compared with native speakers, there is tendency that Chinese EFL learners overuse English existential construction and the distribution of different forms of the structure is rather unbalanced. In addition, Chinese EFL learners like using the basic form of the structure including "there + be" and "there + modal be". What's more, the predicate verb "be" is mainly in the present tense and past tense, but the perfect tense is even rarely used. For the other forms, Chinese EFL students also concentrate on some commonly used words and expressions. For instance, in TEM 4 Oral and TEM 8 Oral the predicate verbs of the structure "there + intransitive" are limited to the simple words "comes/came/will come". "There is/was going to be" is the only choice for the structure "there +semi-auxiliary be" in TEM 4 Oral. "There seems to be" and "there used to be", the representatives of the structure "there + marginal modal be", are only found in TEM 4 Oral. Therefore, the acquisition of existential construction mainly focuses on basic elements and lacks flexibility.

Secondly, through comparing and analyzing the errors of English existential construction in TEM 4 Oral and TEM 8 Oral, it is found errors in TEM 4 Oral are more than that of TEM 8 Oral and the errors in both sub-corpora cover nearly all the types relevant to the properties of the structure, such as the disagreement of subject and predicate and the confusion of "there + be" with "there + have". The major errors of TEM 4 Oral is the basic grammatical rules such as tense, agreement and the "there + have" pattern while the finite/ non-finite which is the more complex structure is the major error in TEM 8 Oral. They also have the common errors in pseudo-relatives and other structural errors. From various errors, it shows Chinese EFL learners' acquisition of English existential construction conforms to the general regularity of human cognition, developing in order from simplicity to complexity, from elementary to advanced.

Lastly, several factors are found to account for these errors, the main factors are: L1 transfer, over generalization and developmental factors. Generally speaking, learners with low proficiency level generate more *there*-sentences than learners with higher proficiency. There are two main factors that influence Chinese learners' over generation of *there*-sentences. One is the influence of L1. Chinese is topic-prominent language while English is subject-prominent language. This phenomenon is caused by transfer from learner's first language. Chinese learners are especially influenced by Chinese *you*-sentence. The other factor is developmental factor. With the development of learners'

proficiency level and learners' gradual perception and understanding of the L2 rules, learners employ various sentence structures and produce fewer *there*-sentences. The other one is affected by the typical Chinese pivotal construction. Chinese students at intermediate level and high level are both inclined to follow it. As a result, this kind of error cannot be easily removed and has developed into a fossilized language phenomenon that is even accepted in second language acquisition. For example, "*Jiao Shi Li You Ji Ge Xue Sheng Zai Du Shu*" (Some Students are reading in the classroom), is likely to be translated into "There are some students read in the classroom.".

B.   Pedagogical Implications

For various errors occurred in Chinese EFL learners' acquisition of English existential construction, spoken English should be paid more attention in the future teaching. The teaching of any language points should be systemic, complex *there*-sentence structures with relative clause, participles and infinitives should be taken as target grammar items to present learners. Some teaching and learning strategies need to be adopted to help students understand the correct way of using *there*-structure. Teachers and students should make clear of the frequently used "there be" structure and the ones that do not appear in natives' spoken. In most text-books or grammar books used by Chinese teachers and students, these items are not given a systematic teaching. However, if teachers' instruction should cover complex *there*-sentences, and enable learners to get a full picture of *there*-sentences, they may be able to avoid producing many pseudo-relatives to a great extent.

In the process of language teaching, teachers should pay much attention to the differences between English and Chinese and use the corpus to present the errors and analyze them. As to overused, underused and misused types, teachers should warn students to cautiously use these types when requiring students to do pattern drills. Since oral output might cause Chinese EFL learners to overuse some abbreviation forms, teachers should point the error out at proper time. Besides, English teaching materials should be as authentic as possible on the ground that the unauthentic teaching material has a negative influence on students' language learning and is one of the reasons for overuse, underuse and misuse in the process of language learning.

C.   Limitation

Due to the limit of time and energy, the present study only chooses and analyzes TEM 4 Oral, TEM 8 Oral and part of sub-corpora of COCA. In terms of the subject in this study, only Chinese English majors are included, who only account for a small part of Chinese EFL learners. Therefore, the findings may not be a reflection of the characteristics in other groups of Chinese EFL learners, and the tentative explanations may not be able to apply to problems of other learners. Besides, the study is only corpus-based, future research should include more designed experiments so as to make the finding more objective and convincing.

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Xiaorong Zhang is an associate professor at Department of Foreign Languages, Northwest Agriculture & Forestry University. She received her MA degree in linguistics from Chinese University of Hongkong. Her research interests include second language acquisition, syntax and studies on public speaking. She is a member of Asia TEFL Association.

Students' Strategic Reactions to the Role of Native Language as a Medium of Instruction in English Classrooms

Soheila Kabiri Samani

Department of Foreign Languages, Kerman Branch, Islamic Azad University, Kerman, Iran

Mehry Haddad Narafshan

Department of Foreign Languages, Kerman Branch, Islamic Azad University, Kerman, Iran

Abstract—Code-switching is the use of two languages simultaneously or interchangeably and is commonly seen with hesitation in foreign language learning classes. Hence, second or foreign language teachers and researchers have been concerned in decreasing the level of code-switching in the EFL classes. Therefore, this study aimed at investigating students' attitude towards teachers' code-switching. In order to conduct the study, the quantitative research method was used. The data was collected from a sample of 219 students (male and female, with different age level) who were selected randomly for the purpose of the study. Through a questionnaire, the students' attitude was investigated. The results revealed that students held a positive attitude towards teacher's code-switching. More than half of the students believed teachers had better code-switching to enhance students' understanding. In addition, they believed that code-switching was more useful to teach grammar and writing skills as compared with teaching speaking skill.

Index Terms—code-switching, EFL classrooms, instruction, students' attitude

I. INTRODUCTION

Most of the time teachers and students switch to first language (L1) in the EFL classes, and code-switching as one of the unavoidable consequences of EFL classes has long existed. Therefore, it is necessary to see what students' attitude towards code-switching is.

Learning a second language is a long and complex undertaking (Brown, 2000). There are a lot of factors which affect teacher's decision in using L1 or L2 in teaching. For instance, it is often reported that the choice of which language to be used in the classroom by teachers depends on their views about teaching and their L2 proficiency (Franklin, 1990; Harbord, 1992; Macaro, 1997). When L2 learners use L1, it helps them to "create a social and cognitive space where they can work effectively to enhance their learning" (Anton & DiCamilla, 1998, p. 335). In addition, L2 input becomes more salient for learners through using of L1 resulting in enhancing enhancing intake (Van Lier, 1995). In Iran, EFL classes are sometimes taught in Farsi and teachers use code-switching during teaching English. There have been various definitions of the term "code-switching". According to Lightbown (2001), code-switching is "the systematic alternating use of two languages or language varieties within a single conversation or utterance" (p.598). Poplack (1980) also had the same definition as Lightbown. He stated that code-switching sometimes called "code-mixing", "code-changing", or "code-shifting" is the act of alternation of two languages within a single discourse, sentence, or constituent.

Code-switching occurs when a speaker switches his/her speech from one language to another language. The change happens when a speaker uses a language in a conversation while the other speaker replies in another language, or an individual speaks in one language, then in the middle of his/her speech, changes it to another language (Richard & Schmit, 2002). Eliss (1984), Fillmore (1985), Chaudron (1988), and Lightbown (2001) who are specialized in second language acquisition and favor intralingual teaching strategy believed that exposure to the target language (L2) can help learners to achieve success and state that teachers are responsible for creating a pure foreign language environment. They stated that using code-switching would lead to negative transfer in learning a foreign language. Levine (2003) and Chen (2008) as advocates of cross lingual (code-switching) teaching strategy believed that L1 is a good strategy of efficiency in foreign language teaching. Code-switching helps the senders transfer the information to the receivers effectively (Skiaba, 1997).

In EFL classrooms, both teachers and students use code-switching in their discourse. Although the use of code-switching is not supported by many educators, Sert (2005) asserts that understanding the functions of switching between the native language and the foreign language and its main reasons is essential.

Many researches have investigated teachers' beliefs on using first language, but the issue which has drawn the attention of many researchers in the field of second language teaching and second language learning for the past few decades are its functions and distribution in interaction rather than the effects of code-switching on aspects of learning (Rahimi Esfahani & Kiyoumarsi, 2010).

Some teachers use code-switching as a strategy in EFL classes while others do not. So, it is urgent to see what learners' attitude towards code-switching is. Is it a facilitating factor or a debilitating one? Teachers do not know how to behave in EFL classes, use just L2 or a mixture of L1 and L2. Which one will motivate students more? And if code-switching does indeed occur, what are Iranian teachers' common code-switching practices? And what purposes and functions do teachers use code-switching for? Thus, the present study aims at investigating EFL students' attitude towards teachers' code-switching to find out why teachers use code-switching in EFL classrooms.

Research questions

The present study aims to investigate the following questions:

1) What is EFL students' attitude towards teacher's code-switching in EFL classrooms?

2) What is EFL students' attitude towards the factors that cause teacher's code-switching in EFL classrooms?

3) What is EFL students' attitude towards teacher's code-switching to teach English language skills in EFL classrooms?

Theoretical framework

There are various views about teacher code-switching which are summarized in Macaro's three designations of the L1 exclusion debate, categorized as "virtually all", "maximal", and "optimal" perspectives. Also the model does not include all arguments, it covers the basic claims in the debate of teacher language choices and in L2 classroom' alternations. The 'virtually all' argument holds that L1 does not have any value and must be avoided in all conditions. Likewise, the "maximal" perspective does not accept the role of L1. However, its view is less extreme than the view of "virtually all". The 'maximalists' view holds that we should avoid using L1, but as the ideal classroom condition does not exist using L2 is inevitable when it is necessary. Finally based on the "optimal view", using L1 has a pedagogical value and we should accept its role (Macaro, 1997). This study follows the optimal view of Macaro (1997).

Typological framework

There have been many attempts to provide a typological framework for code-switching. The researcher adopted **Hymes (1962)**'s framework, which included five basic functions of code-switching/mixing. **Expressive function:** the teacher uses code-switching to express emotions and true feelings. **Directive functions**: generally speaking, this function is used in a situation where a speaker wants to direct someone. This function can get the listeners' attention. **Metalinguistic functions:** It includes three functions: a) the definition of terms, b) paraphrasing others' words, and c) metaphors. **Poetic functions:** During the conversation, the speaker inserts some jokes, stories, and poetic quotations into an English-based conversation. It occurs while teaching in cases the teacher cannot find any related examples. **Referential functions:** According to Chen (2003), referential function has three categories: 1) terms that are not readily available in the other languages, 2) Terms that lack semantically appropriate words in other languages, and 3) Terms with which the speakers are more familiar in L1 than L2.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Definition of Code-Switching

Code-switching refers to the communicative exchange of two language codes by people who contribute to such particular codes. Code-switching is manifested in this exchange by a number of social and linguistic factors. Skiba (1997) asserts that code-switching involves 84 percent single word switches in the natural conversations of two bilinguals including 10 percent phrase switches, and 6 percent clause switching. Code-switching is seen as the alternation between two codes, either languages or dialects, among people sharing some specific codes. Redound (2005) states that code-switching's earliest definition dates back to Weinreich in 1953 who defined bilingual individuals as persons who switch from a language to another based on proper changes in speech situation. A number of social and linguistic factors affect the way Code-switching manifests itself which is quite normal in multicultural and immigrant populations.

Code-switching vs. code-mixing

Code-switching is different from the other language contact phenomena including borrowing, pidgins and creoles, loan translation, and language transfer. Borrowing influences lexicon, the constructing words of a language. However, code-switching occurs in in people's utterances (Gumperz, 1982; Poplack & Sankoff, 1984; Muysken, 2002). When some speakers who do not speak a common language form an intermediate, third language, they actually form and establish a pidgin language. However, speakers use code-switching when they have the required skill to use both languages. Code mixing is a thematically parallel term while the terms code-switching and code-mixing are used variously. Both terms are used for the same practice by some scholars, while others utilize it for the formal linguistic characteristics of language-contact phenomena. Meanwhile, code-switching refers to the actual, spoken usages by multilingual individuals (Bokamba & Eyamba, 1989; Clyne, 2000; Genessee, 2000). Woon (2007, p. 1) defined code-mixing as "change of one language to another within the same utterance or in the same oral/written text". Celik (2003) asserts that code-mixing is the combination of two languages which includes one word from a language in the syntax of another language while most words come from the latter language.

Code-switching vs. borrowing

It is important to make a distinction between 'code-switching' and 'borrowing', because the two phenomena are closely related and most of the times confused. As stated by Kieswetter (1995), borrowings are words that have been integrated phonologically and morphologically into the host language.

Haugen (1956, as cited in Obiamalu & Mbagwu, 2007) described borrowing as "the regular use of material from one language in another so that there is no longer either switch or overlapping except in a historical sense" (p. 52). He, however, described code-switching as a situation "where a bilingual introduces a completely unassimilated word from another language into his speech". Code-switching is divided into three types of borrowing, quasi-borrowing and true code-switching (Obiamalu & Mbagwu, 2007):

▪ **Borrowing:** It occurs when lexical items of a language are placed into another language and such items go through the phonological and morphological assimilations of the host language. It is used when the host language has lexical gaps.

▪ **Quasi-borrowing:** Quasi-borrowing is the condition we have the equivalent in the target language but bilinguals and monolinguals use the intruding language equivalent more often. There is the probability that it be assimilated into the host language or not.

▪ **True code-switching**: It happens when the host language equivalents are quickly available but the intruding language is chosen by the speaker. This is found only among bilinguals with different degrees of bilingualism in Farsi and English.

Studies done on teachers' code-switching in foreign language classrooms

According to Ellis (1984), learners will be deprived of valuable target language input by the use or overuse of L1 by second language and foreign language teachers will. Fillmore (1985) believed that in conditions when learners get used to receive L1 from their teacher, they are willing to ignore the TL and, hence, do not completely take advantage of valuable TL input. Also, ignoring the use of L1 does lie behind many teaching methods. For instance, the Direct Method, which has been utilized in language classes since nineteenth century allows just the target language to be utilized as a part of dialect classroom such as the language used for the exercises and teacher talk in classroom management. The very important rule is that no interpretation is allowed. Like the Direct Method, the Audio-Lingual Method is likewise an oral-based methodology in which the target language is used in the class instead of the students' native language as there is a fear that the students' native language habits may interfere with the their attempts to master the target language (Allwright, 1988).

On the opposite side of the issue, more number of researchers and analysts including Stern (1992) and Cook (2000, 2001) believed that students' L1 should have a place in foreign language classes. Such researchers attempted to scrutinize the long-held conviction of barring the L1 from the classroom. According to Cook (2000), trusting students to utilize their first language is a humanistic methodology as it grants them to say what they truly need to say. Using students' L1 is considered as a "learner-preferred strategy" (p.242). Stern (1992) emphasized "reconsidering" the use of cross lingual strategy (i.e., using each L1 and the TL). However in theory, language teaching is nowadays completely intra lingual (i.e., using the TL exclusively). According to Stern (1992, p.285), it is inevitable that the learner uses an L1 reference base so that it can help him to "orient himself in the L2 through the L1 medium or by relating L2 phenomena to their equivalents in L1".

Moodley (2007) investigated multilingual classrooms considering the use of codes-witching by English language learners in achieving specific learning objectives. In a study related to identity, Myers-Scotton (1980) suggested five maxims to be used in conversations for negotiating social identity. These maxims can be utilized to control or interpret the interrelationship of speaker/listener, and is most pertinent in weakly defined role relationships. Code switching works as both a capacity and a sign of numerous identities of the speaker. However, Myers-Scotton (1971) believed that code switching is picked by language learners to depict themselves as friendly, to ensure the listener's self-image or as a protected decision in a group having speakers of both languages.

Empirical studies of code-switching in foreign language classrooms

Guthries (1984) was one of the earliest studies to break ground on using classroom target language. Guthries examined the TL utilization of 6 college French instructors by investigating the topic of ideal classroom conditions for L2 acquisition and found that target language is mostly used by many teachers. Among the 6 teachers, 5 obviously used the TL 83 percent to 98 percent of the time.

On the other side, researchers like Rolin-Ianziti and Brownlie (2002) inferred that the utilization of the mother tongue was helpful for the correct comprehension of the newly-input target language by describing 4 high school classrooms. Likewise in Macaro's (1997) study, most students, with the exception of a small group of academically inclined females reported that they prefer their instructors to use the L1 at times to improve their understanding; Many of them suggested that they could not learn if they were not able to understand their teacher.

Dilin et al. (2004) in a survey research investigated the role of L1 in the language classes in South Korea. Their study described classroom code-switching practices in South Korean high schools. The data included the language recorded from 13 high school English classrooms teachers and responses of teachers and students to the survey. They asked about their reactions regarding the maximum use of English in language classes and the challenges they confront. A few certain conclusions were made after the data analysis: 1) The instructors used nearly a low amount of English on

average (32%), which was lower than the level they and their students regarded as appropriate (53%-58%); 2) The code-switching used by teachers followed specific patterns and principles.

Despite the fact that it was not regularly rule-governed, Dilin et al. (2004) believed that the use of Korean (L1) was influential for a few reasons: 1) code-switching practices were influenced by teachers' beliefs; 2) The language teachers used affected students' language behavior in classroom although decisions that students took on what language to use mostly depended on the complexity and level of difficulty of the question; and 3) The provided curriculum guidelines affected teachers' language use; however, factors such as teaching contexts and teachers' beliefs might seriously relieve their effect.

III. METHODOLOGY

Participants

The population of the study included 460 EFL pre-intermediate students in English language institutes located in Kerman district 2, Iran. In accordance with Morgan & Krejcie (1970), 219 EFL pre-intermediate students were selected randomly as the sample size from three English language institutes.

Instruments

In order to have a general and genuine reflection of teachers' code-switching in EFL classrooms, quantitative research method was used. The instrument applied in this study was one questionnaire. One questionnaire was administered to the students, and it was used for collecting data on the study of students' attitude towards teacher's code-switching in EFL classrooms. It consisted of fifteen closed-ended questions, moreover five-point Likert-scale was used for all responses with related labels (a. strongly agree, b. agree, c. neutral, d. disagree, e. strongly disagree) to gather data. It had three types of questions according to Dornyei (2007). Factual (the respondents' background information), behavioral (the respondents' lifestyles, habits, and personal history), and attitudinal questions (the respondents' beliefs, attitudes, values, and interests). Additionally, to make it easier for the students, the researcher translated the questionnaire to Farsi so that there were no misunderstanding due to the lack of English knowledge. It was designed with some modifications based on the mixture of the questionnaires of Duff and Polio (1990), Macaro (2003), Olugbara (2008), and Levine (2003).

The reliability of the questionnaire was (0.89). It was obtained through Cronbach's Alpha. It showed that the internal consistency of the questionnaire. In addition, to ensure the validity of the questionnaire, a sample of five university professors as experts of teaching English filed were asked to leave their comments for the redundant items, and to mark any unclear parts in the questionnaire. Then, the answers were analyzed based on the Content Validity Ratio Formula (CVR). In accordance with Lawsche (1975), questions whose CVR were more than 0.81 were chosen as the main items. At first the validity of the questionnaire was (0.67), but after validating the questionnaire, the validity increased to (0.84). They were obtained according to the professors' feedback and numerical value of sigma.

Data analysis

The data for this study were collected by asking the participants (students) to fill in the questionnaires. All the answers to the questions were used as data in this study. In analyzing the data of the questionnaire in this study, quantitative method was used. The obtained data were statistically analyzed by using Descriptive Statistics, Inferential Statistics, SPSS 16, and Excel 2010. In descriptive statistics, Frequency tables, Bar, and Histogram charts were used to describe the variables. In addition, Skewness, Kurtosis, Mean, and Standard Deviation were used to describe the variables. In inferential statistics, One-Sample T-Test, Independent-Sample T-Test, and Friedman Test were used to analyze the questions of the study.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Students' attitude towards teachers' code-switching in EFL classrooms

To investigate students' attitude towards teachers' code-switching in EFL classrooms, the one-sample T-test was used (Table 1), a 5-point scale was conducted, and the base mean was considered 3. Regarding the significant level of the test, with more than 99% confidence, it can be said that there is a significant difference between base mean and the mean of agreement with code-switching ($\Delta M = 0.33$). The mean score of agreement with code-switching ranked higher than the base mean score ($M = 3.33$) (Figure 1). That is the positive view of the majority of English students in this case was more than the mean score which means students strongly agreed with teachers' code-switching from English to Persian ($t_{(218)} = 5.97$, $p < 0.01$).

TABLE 1
ONE-SAMPLE T-TEST TO INVESTIGATE THE STUDENTS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS TEACHER'S CODE-SWITCHING IN EFL CLASSROOMS

Test Value =3					
Mean of Variable	N	T	df	Sig.	Mean Difference
3.33	219	5.97	218	0.0001	0.33
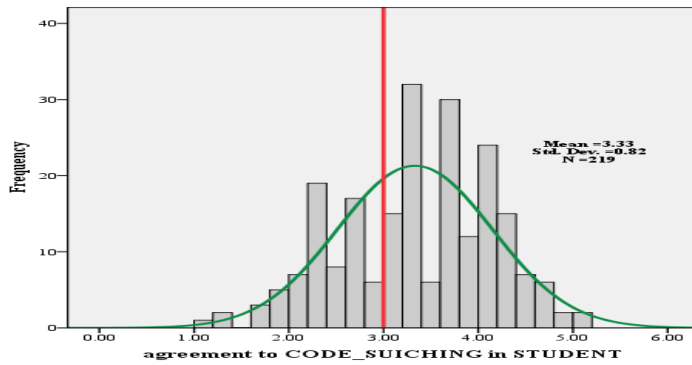
Figure 1. Histogram of Students' Attitude towards Teacher's Code-Switching in EFL Classrooms

Students' attitude towards factors that cause teacher's code-switching in EFL classrooms

Regarding Table 2 and figure 2, 6 students (2.7%) believed that the teachers code switch in order to hide their lack of knowledge, 13 students (5.9%) believed that teachers can better manage the class if they use code-switching, 110 students (50.3%) believed that teachers' code-switching can enhance student learning, 31 (14.2%) believed that teachers' code-switching can enhance students' motivation, 23 students (10.5%) believed that teachers' code-switching can make an emotional relationship between the teachers and the students, and 36 students (16.4%) believed that teachers' code-switching can reduce the students' stress at exam. Thus, more than half of the students (50.3%) believed that teachers should code switch from English to Farsi to enhance students' understanding.

TABLE 2
FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF STUDENTS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS FACTORS THAT CAUSE TEACHER'S CODE-SWITCHING IN EFL CLASSROOMS

Situation	Frequency	Percent
Teachers' lack of knowledge	6	2.7%
Teachers' class management	13	5.9%
Students' understanding	110	50.3%
Students' motivation	31	14.2%
teacher and student interpersonal relationship	23	10.5%
students chance of passing the exam	36	16.4%
Total	219	100%
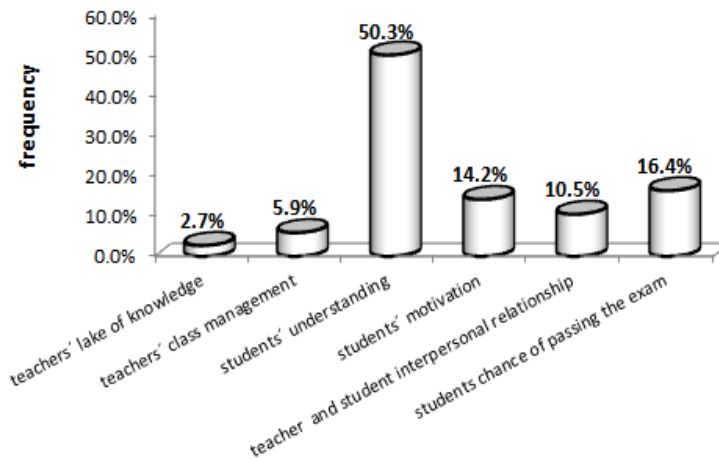
Figure 2. Percentage Distribution of Students' Attitude towards Factors that Cause Teacher's Code-Switching in EFL Classrooms

Students' attitude towards teacher's code-switching to teach English language skills in EFL classrooms

Table 3 shows that the mean agreement of students with teachers' code-switching to teach English language skills and sub skills of Vocabulary, Grammar, Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking were respectively 3.22, 3.81, 3.72, 3.24, 3.31, 3.11. So students mostly agreed with teachers' code-switching to teach Grammar (M = 3.81) and their lowest agreement was with teachers' code-switching to teach Speaking skill (M = 3.11) (Figure 3).

TABLE 3
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF STUDENTS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS TEACHER'S CODE-SWITCHING TO TEACH ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS IN EFL
CLASSROOMS

Skill	N	Very little	Little	Average	Much	Very much	Mean	Std. Deviation
Vocabulary	219	25(11.4%)	59(26.9%)	26(11.9%)	60(27.4%)	49(22.4%)	3.22	1.36
Grammar	219	6(2.6%)	35(16%)	24(11%)	84(38.4%)	70(32%)	3.81	1.13
Reading	219	7(3.2%)	35(16%)	20(9.1%)	108(49.3%)	49(22.4%)	3.72	1.08
Writing	219	17(7.8%)	41(18.7%)	52(23.7%)	90(41.1%)	19(8.7%)	3.24	1.10
Listening	219	13(6%)	52(23.7%)	43(19.6%)	76(34.7%)	35(16%)	3.31	1.17
Speaking	219	18(8.2%)	60(27.4%)	43(19.6%)	77(35.2%)	21(9.6%)	3.11	1.16
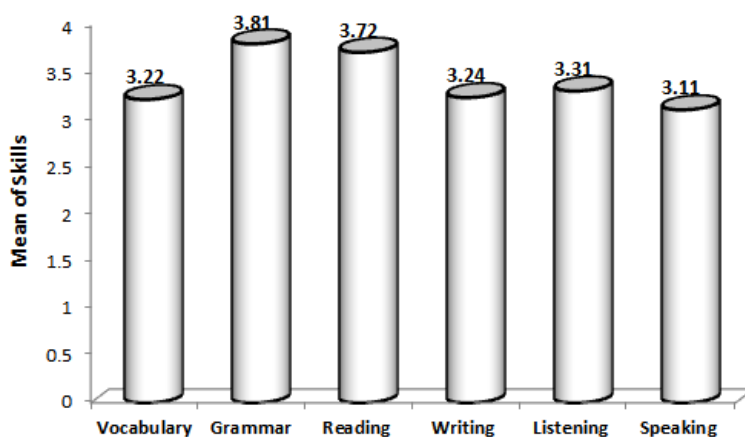
Figure 3. The Mean Score of Students' Attitude towards Teacher's Code-Switching to Teach English Language Skills in EFL Classrooms

Male and female students' attitude towards teachers' code-switching in EFL classrooms

In order to investigate male and female students' attitude towards teachers' code-switching in EFL classrooms, independent t-test was used (Table 4), given that the level of significance of this test (P-Value = 0.8) was higher than α = 0.05. Thus with 95% sureness, it can be said the male and female students' attitude towards teacher's code-switching in EFL classrooms was not significantly different ($t_{(217)} = 0.37$, p> 0.05).

TABLE 4
INDEPENDENT T-TEST FOR COMPARING MALE AND FEMALE STUDENTS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS TEACHER'S CODE-SWITCHING IN EFL CLASSROOMS

	Agreement to code-switching			T-Test	df	Sig.
Gender	Total number	Mean	SD			
Male	89	3.36	0.80	0.37	217	0.7
Female	130	3.31	0.83			

V. CONCLUSION

The results revealed that students held a positive attitude towards teachers' code-switching. In addition, majority of the students believed that teachers' code-switching motivated and engaged students more. Also, a number of students believed that when the teacher code switches he can make a better relationship with the students. Just 13 (5.9%) students' attitude was in favor of the idea that teaches' code-switching resulted in a better class management. Moreover, students believed that teachers' code-switching decreases anxiety and stress of the students during the examination. Finally, a small proportion of the students believed teachers code switch to hide their lack of knowledge. According to the quantitative data concerned with students' attitude towards teachers' code-switching to teach different language skills, they highly agreed with teachers' code-switching to teach grammar, writing, reading, and vocabulary. They did not regard teachers' code-switching useful to teach listening and speaking skills. In addition, attitude of students towards teachers' code-switching, in distinction of gender did not have a significant difference.

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Soheila Kabiri Samani received her M.A. degree with honor in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) from Islamic Azad University, Kerman branch, Kerman, Iran in 2015. She has been teaching English for about 6 years at different institutes and schools. Her research interests include CALL, Second Language Acquisition, reading and writing strategies, and material development.

Mehry Haddad Narafshan is currently an assistant professor at Islamic Azad University, Kerman Branch. She teaches at graduate and post graduate levels and has published a number of articles. Her main areas of interest are first and second language acquisition, critical pedagogy, technology, creative thinking and self identity.

On College English Teaching in China from the Perspective of MP in Generative Grammar Theory

Haojie Li

School of Foreign Languages, Southwest University of Political Science and Law, Chongqing, China

Abstract—**This paper discusses how the theory of MP in generative grammar can be used in College English teaching in China. The author holds that a brand-new teaching paradigm- autonomous English learning-will be built if certain theories and principles of Minimalist Program (MP) are used in China's college classroom teaching. College teachers of English apply theories of lexicon, derivation by phase under the framework of MP in generative grammar and organization strategies into their English teaching and learning appropriately and college students will renew their English learning ideas, their learning interest will be stimulated and their enthusiasm and initiative in active English learning will be enhanced.**

Index Terms—**generative grammar, minimalist program, college English teaching, organization strategies, lexicon theory, derivation by phase**

I. INTRODUCTION

The changes and springing up of language theories will result in impacts on the concepts and methods of language teaching (Richards, 2001). Generative grammar theory, which has experienced more than half a century's development and become the most influential theory in linguistics, will influence the concepts and methods of China's college English teaching inevitably. Many teachers of college English in China are still skeptical of the possibilities of applications of generative grammar theory into college English teaching practices for the time being. Chomsky (1971) also expressed his doubt about correlation of language theories and language teaching: "Frankly speaking, I am very suspicious of the understanding and ideas in linguistics and psychology have any significance in the field of language teaching." People interpret it out of context if people criticize that Chomsky denied or put no emphasis on the value and practical use of generative grammar. As a result, few studies have been carried out regarding foreign language teaching from the perspective of generative grammar. However Chomsky (1971) then added: "Language teachers can get great benefits if they know the developments and discussions in those two fields. It will be of great value when linguists and psychologists make efforts to study issues of language teaching from the aspect of principles no matter what angle they take, either from the perspective of society or from the perspective of academics." Chomsky's words foreshadow that the theory of generative grammar can also be applied to the practical everyday college English teaching in order to answer students' questions, enhance students' interests of learning college English and cultivate students' enthusiasm and initiative of English self-learning. This paper is going to clear up misunderstandings of inapplicability of generative grammar in practical college English teaching and learning, and then illustrate that certain MP principles can provide a brand-new perspective for college English teaching and learning and a new college English teaching and learning paradigm will be built.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. A Brief Introduction to Stages and Object of the Study of Generative Grammar

Generative grammar is established by Chomsky in 1957 (Chomsky 1957) and has become the most influential theory in the field of linguistics after the development of more than half a century. The development of generative grammar can be divided into five stages (Li 2011): (1) stage of Classical Theory (1957-1965); (2) stage of Standard Theory (1965-1970); (3) stage of Extended Standard Theory (1970-1979); (4) stage of Government and Binding (GB) Theory (1979-1992); (5) stage of Minimalist Program (MP) (1992 to now). Generative grammar itself is about the theory of language acquisition, its aim is to build the theory of children's mother tongue. The study of Generative grammar distinguishes two different "languages" (Wen, 2002): one is the discourse that people use (either listening or speaking) in certain circumstances, the other is the system of language knowledge in the brain. Chomsky calls the former Externalized language, E-language for short, the latter Internalized language, I-language for short. E-language is like everyday "language" people speak, while I-language is called "grammar", which is the target of the study of generative grammar. "Grammar" is the knowledge of language in the brain, and "language" is the outward manifestation of language knowledge. The differentiation between I-language and E-language corresponds to "competence" and "performance", which are put forward by Chomsky (1964) in the early development of generative grammar.

Competence refers to the knowledge of language, which is owned by ideal language users, while performance means the practical use of language knowledge. The object of the study of generative grammar is the knowledge of language (I-language, competence or grammar), hence Chomsky (1986, 1995) comes up with innateness hypothesis: language is the product of human brain and human brain is born with a language faculty, which is determined by inheritance. In terms of innateness hypothesis, language knowledge of human beings is composed of two parts: one is inherent, the other is acquired postnatally. The inherent knowledge of language in human's brain is called Universal Grammar, UG for short (Radford 2004, 2009).

B.   The Motivation of Generative Grammar and the Model of MP

The goal of the study of generative grammar is to solve the tension between descriptive adequacy and explanatory adequacy. The easing the tension between descriptive adequacy and explanatory adequacy is the theoretical drive for the development of generative grammar (Li, 2015). The goal of descriptive adequacy is to describe certain rule systems of specific language exhaustively in order to record specific language knowledge of speakers in specific language. The objective of explanatory adequacy is to explore common universal principles and features of human beings' languages, and then try to explain the acquisition issues of the knowledge of human language. It requires rather strong generalization of linguistic theory and some more generalized and abstract grammar theory will take shape. Then there is one tension between the two goals of theory and the efforts to ease the tension between them propel the development of generative grammar all the time (Wu, 2006). The establishment of Principles and Parameters Approach (PPA) well eases the tension between descriptive adequacy and explanatory adequacy. MP is the further development of PPA and its study objective is to simplify linguistic theories in order to reflect the simple operation mode among human language systems. MP sets out from economy principle and requires syntactic derivation to reduce unnecessary representational levels and derivational procedures. Table 1 illustrates the Model of MP (Xu, 2009).

TABLE 1
THE GRAMMAR MODEL OF MP
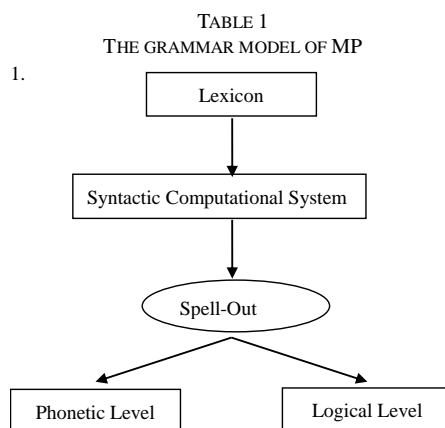
In the light of the requirement of MP, lexicon and syntactic computational system are two components of language faculty. Lexicon provides raw materials for syntactic operations and merge is the operation of syntactic operation system. Merge generates derivations to logical level and phonetic level through phase derivation. Logical level is the interface between syntax and semantics and phonetic level is the interface between syntax and phonetics. Logical level relates to conceptual-intentional system and phonetic level has something to do with sensory-motor system, they provide semantic and phonetic explanation for the syntactic derivations and guarantee the derivation success of the whole sentence.

C.   He's (2004) Study on the Application of GB Theory in English Teaching and Learning

He's (2004) study on the application of GB theory in English teaching and learning is the most comprehensive in China. He holds that although generative grammar does not set language teaching as its goal of inquiry, certain theories and principles could be used in classroom teaching. Grammatical mistakes frequently made by learners of English could be analyzed from a new perspective. The theories concerned in He's (2004) paper are Binding Theory, Case Theory, D-Structure and S-Structure. The enlightenment of latest development of generative grammar in nominal phrases and double object construction for foreign language teaching is also discussed in his paper.

(1) Binding Theory

Principle A: an anaphor must be bound in its governing category.
Principle B: a pronoun must be free in its governing category.
Principle C: an R-expression must be free everywhere.

He (2004) argues that the application of Binding Theory can make clear the uses of reflective, reciprocal pronoun, personal pronoun and proper noun for students and help students correct wrong understandings and uses of those words. For example:

(2) *Mary$_i$ thinks [that John has criticized herself$_i$].
(3) *John believes [that Tom$_i$ hurt him$_i$].
(4) *He$_i$ said [that John$_i$ is leaving].

Those three sentences violate the three principles of Binding Theory respectively. Example (2) violates Principle A, which stipulates anaphor "herself" should be bound in its governing domain. Here the governing domain refers to the object clause in square brackets. The subject "John" in object clause is not co-indexed with reflective "herself", as a result, "herself" cannot be bound in its governing domain. The subject "Mary" in the main clause is located outside of the governing domain, it cannot bind "herself". Hence the whole sentence is ungrammatical. If we change "herself" into "himself", then the sentence will be grammatical because "himself" can be bound in its governing category by "John". Example (3) violates Principle B, which specifies pronoun "him" must be free in its governing category. In this case, "him" cannot share co-indexation with "Tom". If they are co-indexed, then "him" is not free because it is bound in its governing domain. Here "him" can refer to anyone (including the subject "John" in the main clause) except the subject "Tom" in the object clause. In example (4), "John" and "He" are co-indexation, which violates principle C- an R-expression must be free everywhere.

Then He (2004) discusses Case Theory. The core of Case Theory is Case Filter, which stipulates every overt NP must be assigned abstract Case. For example:

(5) We/*Us/*Our love *they/them/*their.

In example (5), the subject should be assigned nominative case "We" and the object should be assigned accusative case "them", other manifestations are ungrammatical.

The example of D-structure and S-structure is shown in (6).

(6) a. Mary is loved.
    b. [$_{IP}$ e Infl [$_{VP}$ is loved Mary]]. (D-structure)
    c. [$_{IP}$ Mary Infl [$_{VP}$ is loved t]]. (S-structure)

(6b) is D-structure, the place of subject is empty (represented by e), "Mary" cannot get any case because the past participle "loved" has no ability to assign case. If "Mary" has no case, and it cannot meet the need of Case Filter, the whole sentence will be ungrammatical. Hence "Mary" moves from the object place to the subject place in order to get case. "Infl" can assign nominative case to the subject, and finally "Mary" gets nominative case and the whole sentence is grammatical.

III. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

He's (200s) study on the application of GB theory in English teaching and learning is the most comprehensive in China. However, some theories and principles in GB, such as D-structure and S-structure, government and the like, are sublated with the development of generative grammar. Generative grammar has entered into the stage of MP and English teaching and learning could be explored from a new perspective. Up to now, there is no one in China who tries to study college English teaching and learning from the perspective of MP. We try to do a tentative work to explore the combination of organization strategies and application of MP theory in English teaching and learning and hope to build a new teaching paradigm for college English teaching and learning.

A.   An Introduction to Organization Strategies

Organization strategies are one of the components of foreign language learning strategies. It is crucial to cultivate the ability of autonomous English learning for college students only if they have a good command of organization strategies and skillfully use it. O'Malley & Chamot (1985) divide foreign language learning strategies into three major categories: metacognitive strategies, cognitive strategies and social/affective strategies. Among them, cognitive strategies are more directly related to individual learning tasks and entail direct manipulation or transformation of the learning materials. Organization strategies are the important parts of cognitive strategies. They refer to the integration of the internal relations among new knowledge, old and new knowledge in order to form new structures of knowledge. Organization is the important means to learn and remember new information and the common ways of realizing it are to divide learning materials into some small units. And then putting those small units into some proper categories in order to make each information connect other information (Ni, 2008). Organization strategies together with theories of lexicon, derivation by phase under the framework of MP in generative grammar apply to college English teaching and learning, the abilities of autonomous English learning of college students will be cultivated, the efficiency of college English learning will be enhanced.

B.   Application of Lexicon Theory and Organization Strategies in College English Teaching and Learning

English words are basic materials to make up English sentences and mastering a certain number of vocabularies is the first step to learn English well. In the stage of MP, lexicon has become one of the formal syntactic stages (Shi, 2002). The lexicon in MP refer to the knowledge about words and its basic unit is lexical items. Lexical items are those words that experience morphological changes, such as shake, shakes, shook, shaken and shaking, all those words are regarded as different words listed in lexicon. Each word is the sum of various features, including phonetic features, semantic features, grammatical features and the like. "Shake" and "shakes" have different personal features, "shake" and "shook"

share different tense features.

In terms of lexicon theory and organization strategies, college teachers of English in their college English teaching and learning practice should emphasize that college students could divide words into a number of units according to their features to facilitate the memorization. In this way, students are easy to use those small units to form grammatical sentences. Take the word study of "shake" for example, teachers explain that "shake" possesses the following personal features: first person singular and plural, second person singular and plural, third person and plural when it is used in simple present tense sentence. "shakes" has the personal feature of third person singular when it is used in simple present tense sentence. When students realize those features, they will not make mistakes in (7).

*(7) The whole house shake when a train goes past.

In (7), the whole sentence is a simple present tense sentence and the subject "The whole house" is singular, so "shakes" is the right choice.

The word "shook" has the tense feature of using in simple past present tense sentence. Past participle "shaken" owns the tense feature of using in present perfect tense, past perfect tense and passive voice sentence. Present participle "shaking" is used in continuous tense sentence. Then students could find mistakes in the following examples.

*(8) They shake hands in a friendly fashion yesterday.

*(9) I was shook like a leaf.

*(10) We were badly shake by the news.

In (8), in the light of the word "yesterday", the whole sentence could be judged as simple past present tense, and the correct verb form taken from lexicon should be "shook". (9) is a past continuous tense sentence, "shaking" is the right choice. In regard to (10), it is a sentence of passive voice and "shaken" should be used here.

From mentioned above, we could find that college English teaching and learning based on MP and organization strategies provide college students with a new way of learning English, which makes students understand how and why. It is better than the traditional English teaching and learning, which simply uses conventional rules to make students learn English. Students do not know the reason of their mistakes and they only learn by rote. In the new teaching and learning paradigm, students could find mistakes in making sentences and know the reason which give rise to those mistakes. And then, students' interests in learning English will be simulated and cultivated.

Chomsky (2005) mentions that there are three factors in language design: genetic endowment, experience and principles that are language- or even organism-independent. Experience plays a very important role in college English vocabulary study. College English teachers should make clear the side effects of learning by rote in traditional vocabulary learning and guide students to use the new way of learning to set learning tasks. Teachers could use all kinds of audio-visual teaching means, such as ppt, recordings, films, online database and the like, reading classic English works, reading English newspapers, to create English situations and atmospheres, expanding students' verbal communicative competence, promoting students' vocabularies in order to build their own "lexicon". In this way, student' will lay a solid foundation for their autonomous English learning.

C. Application of Derivation by Phase and Organization Strategies in College English Teaching and Learning

In recent MP framework, Chomsky (2001, 2007, 2008) put forth the derivation of syntactic structures is conducted on the basis of the unit of phase because faculty of language, which is the biological object, must abide by organism operation law. The memories of human beings are limited and could not load too many syntactic structures at a time. The goal of derivation by phase is to reduce computational burdens and enhance computational efficiency. In recent MP framework, the basic sentence structure is [CP > TP > v*P > VP] and CP and v*P are phases, which are complete propositional structures. v*P possesses complete argument structure and CP includes tense, event structure and force. Force is the element to represent sentence types. All syntactic operations are determined by the heads of phase CP and v*P and conduct derivations through phase units. In the light of principles of derivation by phase, the formation of sentences is through the combination of two syntactic elements, the order is from below to above, from right to left in linear structures. The concrete derivation process is illustrated in (11).

(11) Will they move the office to the third floor?

In terms of the principle of from below to above, relevant lexical items should be selected from lexicon and form VP through merging, as shown in (12).

(12) [$_{VP}$ the office [$_V$ move [$_{PP}$ to the third floor]]]

And then VP merges with "they", the verb "move" moves to the place of light verb v*P, "move" in the original position is erased and get (13).

(13) [$_{v*P}$ they [$_{v*}$ move [$_{VP}$ the office [$_V$ ~~move~~ [$_{PP}$ to the third floor]]]]]

The derivation of the phase v*P is completed and the complement of phase head "the office to the third floor" is transferred to phonetic level to spell out. Then "will" merges with v*P are selected from lexicon to form TP. The modal verb "will" has the unvalued agreement Φ feature (person, gender and number) and then it possesses the function of the probe. The probe searches the target, which is the element that has agreement Φ feature in its commanding domain. "The office" and "the third floor" are transferred to spell out and they do not participate in the derivation any longer. Hence only "they" can be used as the target. "They" moves to specifier of TP and matches the unvalued agreement Φ feature of "will" and then the unvalued agreement Φ feature of "will" is erased. The uninterpretable structure feature of "they" is also eliminated incidentally and "they" is erased at the same time, as illustrated in (14).

(14) [$_{TP}$ they [$_T$ will[$_{v*P}$ ~~they~~ [$_{v*}$ move[$_{VP}$ the office [$_V$ ~~move~~ [$_{PP}$ to the third floor]]]]]]

Then "will" raises to the position of C, which is the head of CP to form interrogative sentence, as shown in (15).

(15) [$_{CP}$ [$_C$ will[$_{TP}$ they[$_T$ ~~will~~[$_{v*P}$ ~~they~~ [$_{v*}$ move[$_{VP}$ the office [$_V$ ~~move~~ [$_{PP}$ to the third floor]]]]]]]]]

So far, the derivation of the second phase CP is completed and "they move the office to the third floor" is transferred to the phonetic level to spell out. "Will" is finally transfer to phonetic level to spell out because the derivation of the whole sentence is finished, (11) is formed in the end.

The traditional memorization way for college students to learn (11) is to learn (11) by heart in terms of the order of left to right. MP's right to left merging order could solve the problem of remembering the whole sentence at one time efficiently. The theory of derivation by phase coincides with the idea of organization strategies in that their core is to segment the larger units materials into several small units to facilitate analysis and memorization. In the process of guiding students to remember English sentences, college English teachers could guide students to divide sentences into a number of sections in accordance with the principle of easy to pronounce and memorize. It will have a better memorization effect if students remember sentences section by section following the order of right to left. Take (11) for example. The basic structure of (11) is [CP > TP > v*P > VP], students can remember VP: "move the office to the third floor"in the first place. And then remember TP "they will move the office to the third floor", finally remember CP "will they move the office to the third floor". The merit of remembering sentences section by section is to make college students have a better idea of the derivation of the whole sentence. In this way, students' memory burden is reduced and their memory efficiency is enhanced, students will avoid the dilemma of spending a lot of time on learning by rote and still do not have the ideal memory effects. Remembering section by section has a remarkable effect in memorizing longer sentences, as illustrated in (16).

(16) [$_{TP}$ He wasn't sure [$_{CP}$ which picture of himself that [$_{TP}$ Mary like best]]]

(16) is a long sentence which contains a clause and it is very difficult to remember it directly in the traditional way. Then students could take the method of remembering it section by section. Firstly remembering "Mary like best" and then remember "which picture of himself that Mary like best", finally remembering the whole sentence. The combination of derivation by phase and organization strategies can renew ideas of college English learning for college students, promote the overall increase of memory efficiency and strengthen the confidence of autonomous English learning for college students.

IV. CONCLUSION

The lexicon and derivation by phase of MP together with organization strategies could apply to college English teaching and learning and a new teaching and learning paradigm will be built. College teachers of English apply theories of lexicon, derivation by phase under the framework of MP in generative grammar and organization strategies into their English teaching and learning appropriately and college students will renew their English learning ideas, their learning interest will be stimulated and their enthusiasm and initiative in active English learning will be enhanced. Autonomous English learning for college students will finally be established.

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Haojie Li was born in Laizhou, Shandong, China in 1974. He received his M.A. degree in Sichuan International Studies University, China in 2005.

He is currently a lecturer in the School of Foreign Languages, Southwest University of Political Science and Law, Chongqing, China. His research interests include syntax and theoretical linguistics. He has published a number of studies in his areas of expertise, which have appeared in scholarly publications in China and Europe.

The Impact of Different Teaching Strategies on Teaching Spelling to Kindergarten Children

Ali Hashemi
University of Zanjan, Zanjan, Iran

Omid Ghalkhani
Islamic Azad University, Karaj Branch, Karaj, Iran

Abstract—**Many specialists in the field of foreign language teaching consider spelling as an important and perhaps necessary part in language teaching, and observe that spelling is a significant concern among both the language arts community and the public. The teaching of spelling is an issue that provokes strong feelings and attitudes in teachers, students, and parents as well, and those involved have strong opinions about the importance of correct spelling at school. A close look at the role of spelling in the general language curriculum, makes it known that learning to write and read in the whole language can benefit greatly from teaching spelling. Searching the Net under the keywords 'spelling' and 'teaching spelling' reveals many studies on spelling and the interest of the readers. In this study, we made use of two techniques to teach spelling, which included "the Personalized Instruction Technique", or simply the PI technique, and "the Detection Technique" or the D technique. Meanwhile, a control group was included to make up for and take into account any possible background differences.82 kindergarten children, studying at three kindergartens in Tarom, Zanjan, took part in the study. They were randomly assigned to three groups: one control group and two experimental groups. The PI group consisted of 28 kindergarten students both boys and girls, and the Group comprised 27kindergarten students, both boys and girls. The control group, too, contained 27 kindergarten students, both boys and girls. The findings indicated that both the experimental groups that used the spelling techniques performed significantly better than the control group. Meanwhile, the PI group exceeded the DT group.**

Index Terms—**spelling, teaching spelling, Personalized Instruction (PI) technique, and Detection technique (D)**

I. INTRODUCTION

Correct spelling is not a separate skill restricted to a test of spelling. Spelling ability is one of the sub-skills of practical and effective written communication. In recent years, interest in the subject of children's spelling and how to teach it, has developed enormously both in the public and in the individual professionals, as evidenced by the growing number of research papers and articles in professional language teaching and research journals. Spelling is of great concern for classroom teachers, parents and learners. Specialists consider spelling as a tool for communication, not an end in itself (Chandler, 2000).

The study has important implications for students, teachers, and material developers. Students can make improvements in their own spelling skill by using the techniques mentioned in the study, and consequently enhance their writing and reading ability. At the elementary levels, learning to read and write is all important and spelling is the medium through which this objective could be achieved. If teachers realize these spelling techniques effectively in their teaching practices, students could benefit from it and improve their reading and writing ability. Material developers and syllabus designers can make use of these findings for providing better conditions for learning and teaching; they can help students, especially at the elementary level read effectively and have meaningful comprehension.

II. REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

A. The Importance of Spelling

What is the significance of spelling and the teaching of it while, in our modern societies, computers spell everything easily and correctly? What is the reason for failure in developing reading skills in children and even adults? Studies indicate that children are not acquiring written language system. If children cannot read efficiently, they will encounter problems in educational subjects in which writing is necessary. In combined teaching of the two skills, reading and spelling, one encourages and enhances the other leading to a better and effective learning and success in students.

Considering teaching spelling, one view maintains that, as favored by some researchers, in writing, the ideas to convey and the quality of the language used for communication are far more significant than accurate spelling, and placing too much emphasis on accuracy, at the cost of fluency, in spelling hinders children's tendency to write. This overemphasis on spelling, directs their mental efforts toward the lower-level cognitive process of encoding each word

correctly, rather than to the higher-order processes involved in generating new ideas and expressing these in an interesting written form (Huxford, McGonagle & Warren, 1997).

A different perspective holds that accurate spelling is of great significance and teaching spelling skills to help students master spelling principles (Meeks, 2003). As a common belief, a person's literacy is assessed by others based on his ability in spelling correctly in daily written communications, such as in letters, reports and application forms.

Poor spelling hinders academic performance in a number of ways. Researchers believe that inaccurate spelling reduces intelligibility of written work, and implies to others the impression that the writer is either careless or less intelligent than other students (Graham, Harris & Chorzempa, 2002; Stewart & Cegelka, 1995). This problem even gets worse for dyslexic students. Thomson (1995) holds that in many schools and universities the written work of intelligent students with dyslexia is frequently misjudged and undervalued due to the large number of spelling errors it contains. Graham (2000) and Schlagal (2002) in a comprehensive article review provide a thorough detailed analysis of different views on the importance of spelling.

By combining the teaching of reading and writing with spelling, we can attain the objectives faster which, in turn, leads to ease of learning; we can make sure that learning is happening, and eventually have more confident learners who can become writers and readers and communicate their viewpoints practically and effectively which is an optimal goal of teaching and learning. Spelling fixes learning into long-term memory and provides conditions for a more tangible practice and creates information concerning sounds, rules and concepts that have been learned. Spelling is also a key element in diagnostic teaching (Carreker, 2005).

Based on research findings, a structured systematic phonic approach is an effective way to teach students suffering from dyslexia (learning disability characterized by difficulty in reading and writing). According to research conducted by The National Reading Panel, effective reading programs should include phonological and phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension (Report of the National Reading Panel, 2000; Carreker, 2005)

Anna Gillingham, using the scholarly findings of Samuel T. Orton and co-working with Bessie Stillman, developed *Remedial Training for Children* (Gillingham, Stillman, 1960) to teaching reading, writing, and spelling which is widely used with students of all ages who have difficulty learning written language skills. The Orton-Gillingham Approach is alphabetic-phonetic, based on the letter-sound connection that forms the basis of the English language. In this approach, sounds and word families are taught simultaneously with rules governing reading and spelling. It is a cognitive approach. The learner understands how he is learning and develops strategies for reading and spelling without relying on memory alone. Reading and spelling, when taught simultaneously, are mutually reinforcing (Moats & Farrell, 2005).

B. Spelling Instruction

Adopting certain instructional strategies to achieve the intended aims seems to be an important issue in teaching spelling. Instruction should be sequenced with great care to build up from general, regular words to specific, specialized words. According to Steve Graham (2000) evaluation of instructional approaches to spelling, such as the 'natural learning method , is essential as ineffective programs may result in arrested spelling development, and this, in turn, may constrain other aspects of literacy. The acquisition of spelling knowledge can enhance reading acquisition by extending and reinforcing children's orthographic knowledge (Graham 2000).

Traditionally, in the primary schools, teachers provided spelling lists based on some word lists or the vocabulary students acquired in the textbook. Students, sometimes, were asked to correct the spelling errors of their own writing papers or those of their peers, too. In addition, they were expected to write each correction several times for additional practice (Westwood, 2005). It was a systematic approach in that, students spelling needs were addressed and parents and teachers knew how to handle spelling in schools.

However, there are major deficiencies in this traditional approach. The main shortcoming was that children might memorize words from lists but often not spell them correctly when they used them later in their writing (Beckham-Hungler & Williams, 2003). Meanwhile, a major limitation of the word list is that there are wide variations in children's spelling ability, and that teachers expected children to memorize words without teaching them any specific strategies to build effective spelling techniques (Westwood, 2005).

This strategy was by no means effective in teaching spelling skills. This old strategy is quite opposed to the common belief in modern psychology and in novel learning and teaching theories, especially to the *meaningful learning* theory which involves that for learning to occur, new material should be linked to the background knowledge. The traditional approach is in accordance with *rote learning* which states that repetition and practice would store patterns in the memory. According to Templeton (2004), learning to spell is not the same as memorizing words, but rather understanding patterns that apply to a large number of words.

With the emergence of the 'whole language' or 'natural' approach to language teaching, spelling was no longer an isolated skill for which to set a special time, but rather it was handled within the context of the children's everyday writing. Teaching spelling as a separate subject is frowned upon, since it is felt that such an approach decontextualizes word study and does not link the importance of spelling with authentic attempts at communication. It is assumed that studying isolated words will not help the child transfer and use this knowledge in writing. The underlying belief is that children can be helped to acquire proficiency in spelling simply through engaging in a great deal of daily writing with regular constructive feedback from the teacher and from peers (Westwood, 2005).

Later on the practicality and suitability of incidental teaching of spelling was questioned, especially for students with learning problems. While, contrary to the common sense, some children will progress quite rapidly with little or no explicit instruction, others will make much greater progress if they are explicitly provided the skills and strategies needed to take them from one stage to the next (Graham, 2000). To Bosman and Bartelings (2003), as cited in (Westwood, 20056), students with spelling difficulties do not learn effectively and cannot develop an awareness of spelling generalizations simply through random experience with words, and instead require direct teaching. Gentry (2001), in line with the above-mentioned researchers, holds that most students do not attain spelling skills from mere exposure to reading and writing, rather a combination of reading, writing, and direct spelling instruction.

C. Stages in Spelling

Some specialists (Bryant, 2002; Helman, 2004) hold that spelling acquisition is a developmental process. Spelling ability advances through a series of interconnected stages, each stage reflects the children's existing knowledge about speech sounds and the specific strategies they are utilizing in their spelling.

In order to decide the developmental stage of spelling, it is wise to consider the following guidelines:

• base your generalization on many different samples on different topics and under different conditions.

• discuss with the student the strategies he or she uses when faced with writing an unfamiliar word (Dahl et al., 2003).

Westwood (2005) in a comprehensive and profound study divides these stages into the following divisions. The **pre-phonemic stage** is marked with the child imitating writing by copying down or inventing random strings of letters. In **early phonetic stage**, the child begins to use incidentally acquired knowledge of letter names and sounds in an attempt to write words. The **phonetic stage** is marked with the child's more accurate use of regular sound-symbol relationships. **Transitional Stage** is characterized the phase in which students have acquired a much more sophisticated understanding of word structure. The final stage, according to Westwood, is the **independence stage** where students are competent and can make use of a very wide range of strategies for checking and self-correcting words (Westwood, 2005).

D. Spelling and Reading

Good readers are generally good spellers. Reading and spelling are related and explicit instruction in spelling has a beneficial impact on children's reading in the early years of schooling (Berninger et al., 1998). According to Graham, Harris and Chorzempa (2002), some experts in the literacy field believe the relationship between reading and spelling is very close, and that learning about spelling enhances reading ability.

Spelling skill, writing, and reading ability are inter-related and improving spelling will eventually lead to a mastery in reading and writing. Reading Specialists maintain that spelling reinforce the link between sounds and letters, and learning high-frequency words improves both reading and writing. Joshi, Treiman, Carreker and Moats (2008, 2009) describe this relationship as, "The correlation between spelling and reading comprehension is high because both depend on a common denominator: proficiency with language". Reading is greatly important especially to EFL (English as foreign language) learners who rarely have an opportunity to speak English in their everyday lives (Razi, 2010). According to Susan Jones (2009), spelling improves reading and writing fluency as well as vocabulary and comprehension.

E. The Notion of Good and Poor Spellers

There are some features that characterize good and poor spellers. Good spellers make active use of strategies for recognizing sound sequences (Dahl et al., 2003), and try to monitor their spelling and self-correct. They are aware of the possible and impossible combinations of strings of sounds. They skillfully use different mnemonic strategies and are interested in word study and take advantage of resources available to them.

Poor spelling, on the other hand, may be due to faulty or inadequate instruction or a failure in using appropriate strategies. These students should be provided with writing situations in which positive and supportive feedback is presented to make sure they are advancing and internalizing spelling skills. In acquiring the principles of writing and spelling, especially in elementary students who are the concern of this study, it is necessary to raise their awareness of the phonological processes as an essential prerequisite for reading and spelling (Chan & Dally, 2000). Weaknesses in the spelling of these students could be made up for, for example, by limiting the number of words, focusing on high frequency words, discussing sources of errors with the students, teaching them self-monitoring techniques, and frequent revision and peer tutoring (Graham, 2000; Moats, 1995).

F. Teaching Spelling

In teaching spelling, some basic principles and approaches should be adopted using continued instruction and regular testing. According to O'Sullivan (2000), effective teaching involves having children think about spelling, discussing issues in relation to spelling, and actively demonstrating approaches to learning to spell. Effective teaching needs to take into account the building of positive attitudes, promoting students' on-going interest in words, and teaching strategies for learning (Redfern, 1993).Good teaching is not only teaching word knowledge, but also strategy training of writing, reflection, revising, monitoring, and self-correction.

1. Word study

"Word study" is the opposite pole to the traditional spelling instruction. It is based on learning word patterns rather than memorizing unconnected words. Studying the pattern and formation of words is an indispensable element of all effective instruction to spelling which reflects the developmental stage of the learner. A word study program is a cohesive approach that addresses word recognition, vocabulary, and phonics as well as spelling (Zutell, 1992). For a better word study, teachers and students try to understand word patterns and how words are connected to one another, and it is the task of the students to make generalizations and discover the patterns by comparing and contrasting words.

2. Teaching phonics

Phonics is a systematic attempt to teach the sounds conveyed by letters or strings of letters, and instructing students to mix letters to spell words. The Knowledge of when and how to pronounce a letter, and how a certain part of a word is stressed, is a crucial aspect of the meaning of words. Teaching phonics can improve spelling in the beginning stages in a number of ways for a variety of reasons including:

● A great deal of information conveyed by letters involves sounds.

● Direct observation in schools has shown a consistent link between phonics and successful reading (Rose, 2006).

● We are not fluent readers unless we read correctly, which requires accurate use of the information conveyed by letters.

● As English is not completely regular, most children are unlikely to be able to perceive and use patterns in language for themselves (Rose, 2006).

G. The Instructional Techniques in the Study

1. The Personalized Instruction Technique

The researcher came to the idea of the efficiency of the *personalized instruction technique* during his experience of teaching English and made effective use of it during the time. Personalization is a key notion in the modern theories of teaching and learning. In this technique, it was tried to connect each letter/sound to the initial letter/sound of the children's own names, objects, relatives, favorite TV programs, cartoon characters, etc. For example, the letter A could stand for Ali, a boy in the group, B for Behnaz, a 5-year-old girl, F for Fatima, H for Hadi, J for the lovely Walt Disney character Jerry, T for Tom, and so forth. All the children could make connections, in an effective way, between these letters and their own favorite things or persons in one way or another. The association between the letters and the objects or people, resulted in permanent storage and retrieval of the letters. It was so amazing that all parents expressed their deeply-felt gratitude to the author. One mother, holding me on the street, told me that his 6-year-old girl reads whatever letters she sees on the packets, boxes, walls, posters, TV, and so on. For all parents as well as children, it was a startling experience which helped make a rich perfect basis for the children's later English spelling.

2. The Detection Technique

The other instructional technique used in the study was *the detection technique.* In this technique, the children were asked to identify the letter, presented to them during the session, wherever they could find them. This group was given numerous sources including a newspaper page, a page in a story or other similar material to circle the sound or highlight it using a favorite color. In addition to these, they were allowed to find and underline the letters in packages, bags, boxes, envelopes or even on their clothing, and the like.

III. METHOD

A. Participants

Three kindergarten centers in Tarom, Zanjan were selected to take part in this study. The children in these three kindergartens were roughly all at the same age, five or six years old, consisting of both boys and girls. None of these children had prior experience in the English language instruction and this was the first time they were introduced to English. All the participants were fluent Persian speakers, but most of them were bilinguals and could understand both Turkish and Persian and only a minor group of them was able to understand Tati, a native language spoken in some parts of Tarom.

The participants had no formal training before the study, even in Persian, and not even one of them could read and write a word of Persian, let alone English. The parents, whose children were involved in the study, were all enthusiastic to observe the result of the study and this was very helpful to the researcher. They were assigned to three groups: two groups for the two techniques used in this paper and one to control group. The *personalized instruction technique*, or simply the PI technique, consisted of 28 children both boys and girls, and the *detection technique*, or just the D technique, comprised 27 children both boys and girls. Meanwhile, to take into account the background differences and previous knowledge among the children, the third group was assigned to control group.

B. Instrumentation

1. Pre-test

The children in the study had no formal training in Persian and they could not read or write in Persian, too. Since, this was the first time they attended an English class, so the current researcher could make sure there were no previous differences among them. However, the researcher tested the children on some basic elementary questions on the English letters 'spelling and reading. As expected, this observation (pretest) revealed that they were absolutely illiterate

concerning their knowledge of English spelling. Of course, to reduce the probable effects of other irrelevant factors on the study, the researcher decided to include a control group into the study, too. All groups were at the same level concerning their English background i.e. no English at all, and all groups' performance was the same in the initial phase prior to the experiment. In this way, groups' homogeneity was ascertained and allowed for enquiry.

2. Post-test

Since, there was no standard test for our purpose, the researcher had to develop a test. The researcher tested the children on the English language letters presented to them during a course of two moths. The test was tape recorded to eliminate any probable inconsistencies in the manner of conducting it. For a better outcome, the author brought the tape recorder several times to the classroom so as to remove the presence effect of the tape recorder and the problem of distracting students' attention during the actual test implementation. The problem of distraction was very important as children at those ages are all curious and playful and the sudden arrival of a recorder could influence test result.

3. The on-going quizzes

In addition to the posttest, three other quizzes were given to the children. These quizzes were intended to make sure of the on-going beneficial impacts of the instructional techniques. Each of these quizzes was given after the introduction of about 10 letters. These quizzes helped the posttest take shape and refine the manner of its implementation. They also introduced the children to the way they were to be tested.

4. The questionnaire

In addition to the tests introduced earlier, the researcher made use of a simple questionnaire in the study to assess the impressions and attitudes of the children concerning the use of instructional techniques. As the children could not read or write, the questionnaire was conducted in an oral format. The same questionnaire with minor revision was given to the parents in an attempt to check their viewpoints regarding the study.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. The Post-test

All the three groups were assessed on the letters of the English language at the end of the program. The tests only consisted of isolated letters, but not combined together, as the letters were presented in isolation and the children could not attend to combined letters or words at this age. This posttest was a simple test consisting all the letters, but in displaced order, which were recorded and presented to them to remove any inconsistencies in manner and provide uniformity and have homogeneous results. The posttest was aimed to observe the results of the intervention and the success or failure of the techniques. The posttest was straightforward; in one part of the test, the children were asked to write down what they heard from the tape recorder. In the other part, they were required to identify in a piece of writing, letters they heard.
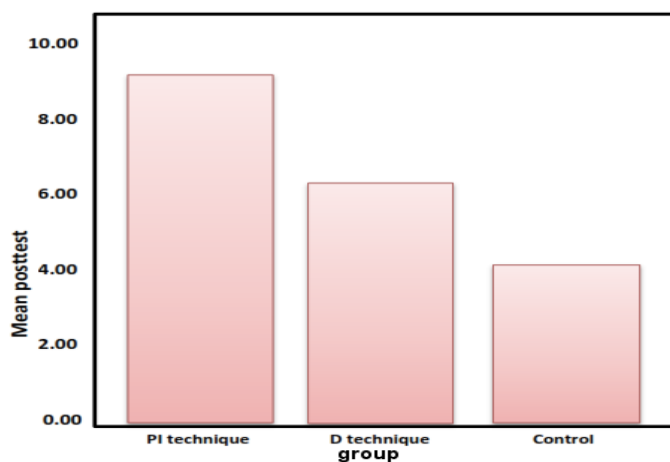
Chart 4.1 Comparing the Results of All Groups in the Post Test

The results highlight the important changes taken place due to applying the spelling techniques. This is a confirmation of the positive impact of these techniques on the spelling skill of the children in the study. As the means in the post-test suggest, the control group with no treatment shows no such changes and improvement in performance. Thus, the first hypothesis, on the success or failure of the techniques, is rejected as these techniques *do* lead to a better and more effective spelling skill.

The first research question concerns efficiency of the spelling techniques. As confirmed by the results of the tests, illustrated by the above chart, these techniques are all helpful and all enhance spelling. Thus, both techniques implemented in the study significantly lead to a better performance, the degree of change, however, is not equally the same for both techniques.

The other finding concerns the second research question (the most effective technique) and the second hypothesis. Based on these results, the answer to the second question is presented here. It seems that the PI technique is more effective as compared to the other technique. Taking a look at the chart, the post-test mean in the PI group is above the other group. The results also make clear that the D technique is not the most effective technique, rather, based on these findings, the most effective technique is the PI technique.

B. Quizzes

After the pretest observation, three tests were administered to all groups. The results revealed several facts; both the experimental groups outperformed the control group; compared to that of the other groups, the control group had a weak performance in these tests.

The PI group had the best results in the test. These findings conform to the previous results; therefore, we can seek answer to the research questions in the study. Both techniques actually led to effective spelling, but the PI technique was more efficient in this regard.
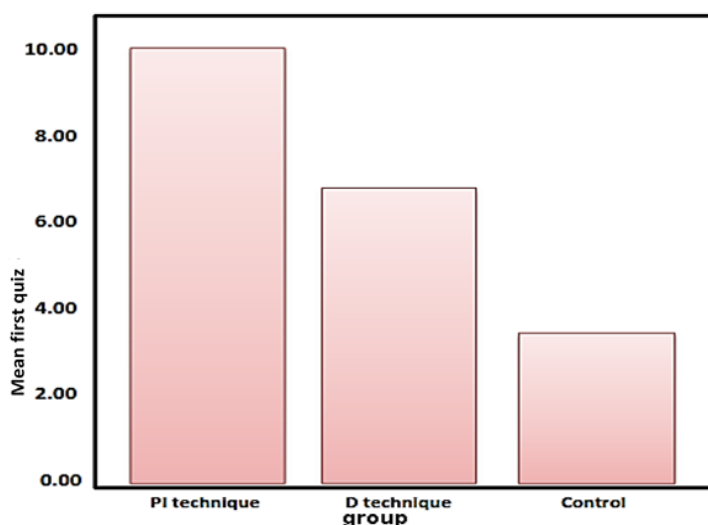
Chart 4.2 Comparing the Results of All Groups in the First Quiz
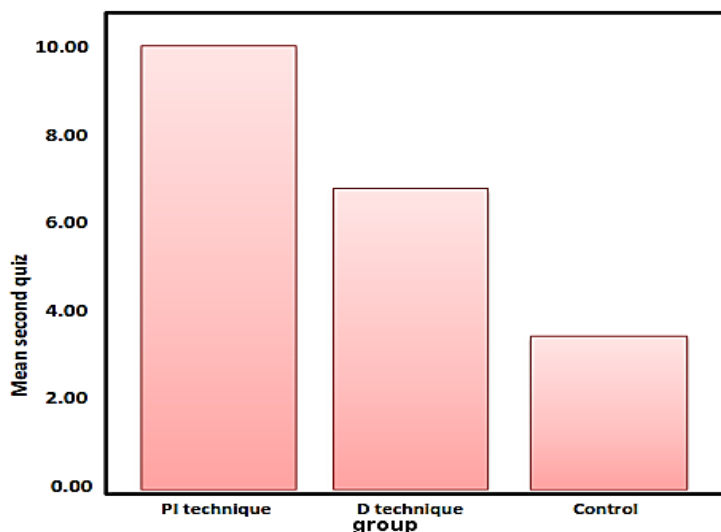
Chart 4.3 Comparing the Results of All Groups in the Second Quiz

Based on the findings, significant differences in the performances of the groups were observed. The mean scores of all tests in all groups were considerably above that of the control group; the control group had the lowest mean as compared to other two groups; that is, the instructional techniques had great impacts on the spelling skills of students in the experimental groups, but the control group had the weakest performance.

This analysis provides answer to the pre-posed research questions. The results reveal that all techniques led to more meaningful spelling ability. In line with previous findings, again, it was the PI technique which yielded better results as compared to the other spelling techniques.
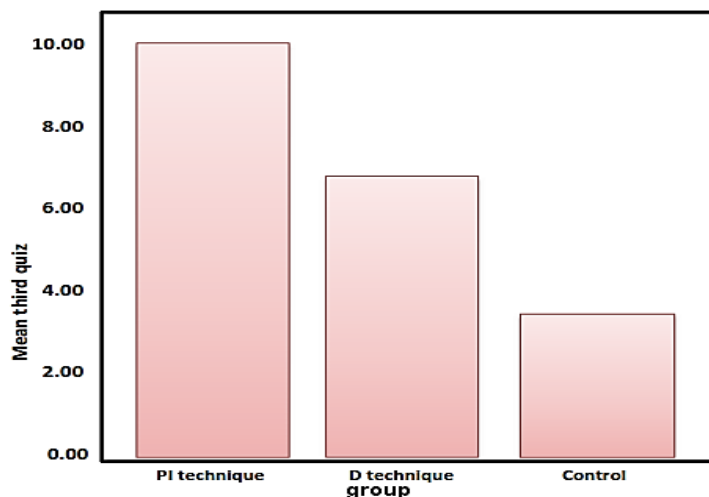
Chart 4.4 Comparing the Results of All Groups in the Third Quiz

V. Conclusion

A. Findings

This study aimed at evaluating the efficiency of the pre-posed spelling techniques (the personalized Instruction, and the Detection techniques) on kindergarten children. There were three research questions this paper tried to answer. The participants comprise 82 kindergarten children, both boys and girls, who were divided into two experimental groups, for the two techniques, and a control group.

The observation made as the pre-test, assured the researcher of the similarity and homogeneity of all three groups. The observation revealed that the students were at same level. All the participants in all groups made progress to a large extent except for those in the control group who received no treatment.

B. Applications and Implications

In some situations, it seems that spelling, in contrast to grammar or writing, is handled as unnecessary devoid of any importance. However, teaching spelling is a specialty in its own turn. Familiarity with the stages involved in spelling process and activities which are special for each phase and applying them into classroom settings are of key help in the promotion of spelling skill in students.

In the present study, there were three research questions and hypotheses. Based on the findings in the study, we could draw the conclusion that the instructional techniques all lead to an effective spelling. The most successful technique in bringing about the change and improvement, based on this study, is the *PI* technique that yields better results than the other technique.

The *questionnaire* used in the study indicates that all participants, as well as their parents, enjoyed the instructional techniques and improved their spelling skill.

As for children, they could improve their own reading and spelling skill by using these spelling techniques. If students get familiar with these techniques, they could make more progress and gain an efficient reading and spelling.

The results of the study can potentially change EFL teachers' attitudes about the nature of spelling. Teachers, too, can help their students in achieving the intended change in them. They can introduce suitable spelling techniques and encourage the use of them. They can help their students by providing opportunities for the students to use these spelling techniques in practice in real situations. The role of EFL teacher is all important in this respect. He can make up for the shortcomings in the course books through his own experience and the provision of effective techniques (Hashemi, Mobini, and Karimkhanlooie, 2016).

Material developers, syllabus designers, parents, and all those in charge and involved in teaching and learning, can make use of these findings for providing better conditions for learning and teaching. Providing students with modern and scientific methods and techniques for learning is undoubtedly a great thing; we can help them to read effectively and have better comprehension and enjoy reading as fun (Hashemi, Mobini, and Karimkhanlooie, 2016).

C. Suggestions for Further Research

In the present study, some variables such as gender were not taken into account. Further studies can focus on the role of gender and age range in comprehension. Future research, also can focus on other aspects of language and explore the efficiency of such techniques on other language skills, i.e., listening, speaking, and writing.

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Ali Hashemi is an experienced English teacher and head of ELT board at Tarom, Zanjan, Iran. The author has
an M.A. is TEFL and is currently teaching at high schools. He also works as an instructor at Payam Noor
University and Applied Science Center. He teaches both general English as well as some ESP courses on a
variety of fields. His fields of interests include: reading, ESP material development, and teacher education.

Omid Ghalkhani is an M.A. candidate in translation studies and currently teaching at Aban English language institute.

A Study on the Autonomous Learning Validity of Chinese EFL Students[*]

Guobing Liu

School of Foreign Languages, Henan Normal University, Xinxiang, China

Abstract—In accordance with the autonomous learning theory, the present study mainly reports the validity of junior middle school students' English autonomous learning and explores the strategies to improve students' English level by the teaching experiment between two classes of Grade Eight in one of the key schools in Henan, China. The researcher selects 115 students as the research subjects who are from two classes of Grade Eight and the teaching experiment lasts for 18 weeks. In this research, the subjects are investigated with questionnaires and interviews. The research results show that students in class one who learn in autonomous ways have higher remarks than those in class two who learn in traditional ways. Students are quite interested in learning English and their ability of autonomous learning has been promoted with the teaching mode of autonomous learning. From the experiment results, it is shown that students' learning ability can be improved with the training of the autonomous learning strategies. Based on the research results and the current learning situation, some suggestions on cultivating students' ability of English learning is put forward in the end of this thesis.

Index Terms—validity, autonomous learning, Chinese EFL students

I. INTRODUCTION

The English curriculum standards propose that the main goal of education is to develop students' comprehensive ability of using language. It also advocates teachers to adopt new teaching methods which can help to improve students' learning effects and students are encouraged to grasp the language through practice and exploration with the guidance of teachers (the National Ministry of Education, 2011). Teachers need to create specific conditions to develop students' ability of autonomous learning and make sure that students' comprehensive ability is promoted in the learning process. The key point of English curriculum standards is that teachers should alter the old teaching mode which focuses on teaching knowledge and explore the new teaching mode which pays special attention to cultivate students' capacity of applying knowledge and autonomous learning. Therefore, changing the traditional teaching mode is the cardinal task in language teaching.

Autonomous learning is one of the most important educational research fields and it is also the urgent need of the current education reform (Jiang Hui, 2008). Modern educationists advocate that students' initiatives should be promoted and teachers should change the traditional teaching mode. Autonomous learning can help to improve the traditional teaching mode and foster students' overall development. Cultivating students' learning ability is a mission that teachers meet in English teaching. This research explores several learning strategies to promote students' ability of autonomous learning through the experiment of learning English autonomously. If the learners' ability of autonomous learning is promoted, the desire for learning knowledge can be inspired and students can possess the sense of innovation in learning (Liu Runqing, 1999). So autonomous learning is in favor of the sustainable development of humans as well.

Autonomous learning is a new learning mode advocated by the English curriculum standards and it advocates students' overall development. Autonomous learning helps to develop students' intelligence and also influences their exploitation of non-intellectual factors. Every student is an individual and they are different in many aspects such as interests, attitudes, motivations and so on. However, teachers who teach in a traditional way neglect students' differences. As a result, students have the low learning efficiency. Therefore, teachers should design their teaching procedure which based on students' individual deference and help students explore the proper learning strategies. Students' learning efficiency can be promoted greatly if they grasp the autonomous learning strategies.

The study of autonomous learning can enrich the autonomous learning theory, and also can offer the effective reference to the further studies. The research on autonomous learning helps to stimulate students' learning interests and helps to improve their learning effects. It also benefits teachers to change their teaching ideas and guides teachers to cultivate students' ability of autonomous learning by the proper strategies.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Basic Issues about Autonomous Learning

Since 1980s, educational researchers have attached importance to autonomous learning. Different researchers have different views of this theory, therefore the term of autonomous learning is so difficult to be defined. This study introduces some definitions of autonomous learning by scholars at abroad and home to provide fundamental basis for the further researches on autonomous learning. Holec introduced "learner autonomy" into foreign language teaching in his work named Autonomy and Foreign Language Learning. He states that autonomous learning is such a phenomenon learners have the ability of taking charge of their own learning. Learners decide their own objectives, define the contents they learn and the course progression, select methods they use and monitor the learning process in the learning (Holec, 1981). Dickinson (1978) defines autonomous learning as a situation in which the learners take charge of all the decisions related to the learning and are also in control of carrying out these decisions. In the real practice of autonomous learning, Dickinson (1978) states that autonomous learners can choose their own contents, study independently, decide learning process and when and where to study, choose learning materials, monitor themselves and test themselves. Benson and Voller (1997) state that autonomous learning refers to learners study without teachers' interaction and create learning chances including learning time, places and contents. In addition, Benson summarizes the following aspects of autonomous learning. First, learners' study depends on themselves. Second, learners apply the learning skills to the learning. Third, learners are in control of their learning. Fourth, learners have the authority of deciding their goals of study. Nunan (1995) states that learners who set goals and create learning opportunities are autonomous learners.

Most of the studies show that students play an important part in learning and should learn with learning skills, based on the above definitions of autonomous learning (Little, 1991; Dickinson, 1995). It emphasizes that students should rely on themselves, not teachers. Benson, Voller and Nunan have the same idea that students create learning circumstances and opportunities and they are responsible for their learning. However, they ignore the teachers' roles in the teaching. This the difference that Benson, Voller and Nunan and the other scholars hold when they defined this term.

B. Studies of Autonomous Learning in China

In China, the studies on autonomous learning are later than those in western countries and many studies are on the basis of theoretical researches in foreign countries. Lin Yuqi (1987) puts forward that autonomous learning not only contains learning methods but also contains self-recognition, self-decision, self-cultivation and self-control. He also proposes that autonomous learning should follow the principles of pertinence and interestingness.

Cheng Xiaotang (1999) states autonomous learning contains three aspects. First, autonomous learning is an internal mechanism which dominates learning and it includes learning attitudes, capacity, learning skills and others. Autonomous learning is that learners have the ability of guiding and controlling their learning process. Second, autonomous learning is that learners take charge of their learning goals, contents and materials. Third, autonomous learning is a teaching mode in which learners set goals and achieve goals under the guidance of teachers. Cheng Xiaotang also has a profound study on the definition of learning autonomy and her comprehensive elaborations are conducive to the related studies.

Recently, a great many researchers survey learners' current learning situations and study the application of autonomous learning(Ren Xiaohua, 2015). The researches show that most learners have the weak consciousness of autonomous learning and learners of different levels behave differently in learning process. The measures of improving learners' autonomy are put forward which based on the current learning situation. Although the researchers study in different ways, they reveal the real situation of autonomous learning from a variety of views and help to explore the autonomous learning methods at the same time.

In addition, a large amount of researches are focused on the autonomous learning strategies. Pang Guowei expounds the teaching and learning strategies systematically in his work. He puts forward that the autonomous learning mode should be formed both from the macroscopic perspective and microscopic perspective. In his opinion, it is learners who learn first by themselves and then teachers teach them during the learning. Besides, teachers must introduce autonomous learning strategies to students which can promote students to learn actively (Pang Guowei, 2001; 2003). The study on autonomous learning is in favor of perfecting autonomous learning strategies.

C. Studies of Autonomous Learning in Other Countries

Autonomous learning at abroad can date back to the ancient Greek and numerous western educationalists put forward the idea of learning autonomy(Wenden, 1998; Schunk, 1989). However, they mainly focus on the theoretical study instead of verifying their ideas. As the earliest one, the famous philosopher and educator Socrates has proposed autonomous learning. Since the 1960s, with the development of humanism, foreign educators have advocated that cultivating learners' ability of autonomous learning is the final goal of education. From the 1970s, numerous scholars have studied autonomous learning theories and they have introduced it to the language teaching. In the 1980s, Holec first proposed learning autonomy and he introduced autonomous learning into foreign language teaching. He states that autonomous learning is the ability of being responsible for one's own learning (Holec, 1981). In this period, researchers take autonomous learning as the learners' independent learning. Since the 1990s, scholars make further studies on the factors which affect autonomous learning, and how to cultivate learners' ability of autonomous learning and so on(William & Burden, 1997). The studies also include politics, psychology and other fields of autonomy. For example, Benson & Voller (1997) proposes that autonomy focuses on the importance of the "psychological" or "internal"

capacities of the learner, such as learning styles, cognitive, learning attitudes and so on. Some educationalists also concentrate on the social levels of autonomous learning. They believe that learners' autonomy can be developed and cultivated by the social learning guide.

The western scholars conduct their researches on autonomous learning in a very systematical way. Western scholars not only place the particular emphasis on the theory of autonomy, but also concentrate on the application of autonomous learning to the teaching. They insist on their opinions and also absorb the excellent achievements from other research fields. They emphasize students' subjective initiatives in the learning process. Meanwhile, many scholars explore the learning strategies of autonomy and obtain certain results. These researches enrich the autonomous learning theory and promote the language teaching.

III.   DATA AND METHODOLOGY

A.   Subjects

The subjects of this survey are 115 students in Class One and Class Two of the Attached Middle School of Henan Normal University. Sixty-five are boys and fifty are girls among the students. The reason why the author chooses students of Grade Eight is that first, students in Grade 8 have the certain English skills after one year's study of English and they have been already adapted to the English teaching in the junior middle school. Second, students in Grade Eight have a burning desire for knowledge and hope to get better grades so they have the aspiration of autonomous learning.

B.   Instruments

(1)Questionnaire

The questionnaire is designed mainly based on the research content and it contains learning attitudes, motivations, methods, abilities and so on. Meanwhile this questionnaire investigates the specific behaviors of students' learning. The questionnaire is conducted among 115 students. All the students must be informed that they should answer the questions of the questionnaire according to their true representation without discussion before answering these questions. They can get advice from the teacher if they meet any problem during finishing the questionnaire. After the questionnaire, their answers of each question in the questionnaire will be calculated and analyzed by the researcher.

(2) Interview

The researcher will interview some students in two classes of Grade Eight about their current situations of English autonomous learning before the experiment of autonomous learning. The interview is convenient and feasible and the interviewer can get more reliable information from students. The questions of interview are easy to answer which are about students' ability of autonomous learning. The author chooses 20 students to have the interview. Ten are boys and ten are girls among these students. Students who are chosen are of different levels, so their interview records can reflect the current learning situation accurately. On the basis of students' characteristics, the questions of this interview conclude different aspects of learning. The interviewer will tell students the aims and objectives of this interview and students can answer questions without misgiving before the students have the interview. In the interview, the interviewer will note down the interviewees' answers in order to collate the information.

(3) Pre-test and Post-test

Testing students is a good way of verifying students' learning effects. Two tests will be given to students in two classes. One is given before the experiment of autonomous learning which is called pre-test. This test is to examine students' level of English in two classes and verify whether there is the significant difference between two classes. After the test, students in Class One would learn English through the experiment of learning in autonomous ways, while students in Class Two would learn English in the traditional ways. The other test is held after the experiment called post-test. This test is to verify whether the students in Class one have the higher English level than those in Class Two. The scores of two tests will be analyzed after the experiment, in order to prove if autonomous learning is helpful for students to learn English.

C.   The Experiment Process

The searcher tries to study the validity of English autonomous learning and discusses how to improve students' ability of autonomous learning by several ways. The experiment of autonomous learning lasts for about sixteen weeks which is from September 1st to the last day of December in 2015. Students will learn how to study English in autonomous ways through the experiment. Class one from grade eight is the experimental class which has 56 students while Class two is the control class in which 59 students learn English in the traditional ways. The author adopts measures of autonomous learning to teach students in class one. Conversely, the author teaches students in class two in traditional ways. After the experiment of autonomous learning which lasts for sixteen weeks, students in two classes would have an exam to test if autonomous learning methods are in favor of improving students' English learning effects.

In the experiment of autonomous learning, the teacher asks students to provide at least one question in each day. Then students will write down answers in their notebooks and then summarize them. Many students ask questions actively and some of the questions are from the extracurricular books which are more difficult than those in the textbook. Some students also discuss the questions in groups. This method can help students find problems by

themselves and solve them actively. In the experiment which lasts for sixteen weeks, those methods are applied to the teaching in class one. And we find most students show great interests on the new teaching methods. Students in class two learn English in the traditional ways. After the experiment, students would have the post-test to verify if autonomous learning is helpful for students to learn English.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. The Analysis of the Questionnaire

One hundred and fifteen students answered the questions in the questionnaire before the experiment. The questions are about five aspects of learning, i.e., attitudes, students' behaviors in class, methods, learning ability and expectations of learning. The data in the table are accurate to the second decimal place.

TABLE I.
RESULTS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Items	Choice A		Choice B		Choice C		Choice D	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
1	22	19.13%	30	26.09%	37	32.17%	26	22.61%
2	30	26.09%	33	28.70%	44	38.26%	8	6.96%
3	10	8.70%	27	50.43%	58	23.48%	20	17.39%
4	51	44.35%	22	19.13%	28	24.35%	14	12.17%
5	25	21.74%	19	16.52%	41	35.65%	30	26.09%
6	19	16.52%	49	42.61%	31	26.96%	16	13.91%
7	15	13.04%	20	17.39%	54	46.96%	26	22.61%
8	19	16.52%	67	58.26%	9	0.78%	20	17.39%
9	12	66.96%	8	6.96%	77	10.43%	18	15.65%
10	16	13.91%	40	34.78%	41	35.65%	18	15.65%
11	7	6.09%	19	16.52%	72	62.61%	17	14.78%
12	13	11.30%	48	41.74%	41	35.65%	13	11.30%
13	7	6.09%	24	20.87%	66	57.39%	18	15.65%
14	73	63.48%	28	24.35%	8	6.96%	6	5.22%
15	14	12.17%	32	27.83%	53	46.09%	16	13.91%
16	20	17.39%	36	31.30%	43	37.39%	16	13.91%
17	18	15.65%	38	33.04%	46	40%	13	11.30%
18	16	13.91%	59	51.30%	28	24.35%	12	10.43%
19	15	13.04%	24	20.87%	61	53.04%	15	13.04%
20	28	24.35%	45	39.13%	26	22.61%	16	13.91%
21	13	11.30%	71	61.74%	17	14.78%	14	12.17%
22	13	11.30%	23	20%	46	40%	31	26.96%
23	36	31.30%	53	46.09%	15	13.04%	11	9.57%

The titles from 1-5 are about students' learning attitudes. From the data, it is known that 32.17% of students think that English is interesting while 26.09% of students think that English is extremely interesting. However, 19.13% of students think English is extremely uninteresting while only a small number of students think English is boring. From the data, it is clearly shown that most of the students are interested in English. On the students' faith in learning, only 6.96% of students don't believe they can learn English well while 93.04% of students believe they can learn English well. It illustrates that most students have faith in learning English and trust themselves to learn English well. About autonomy, 8.70% of students can learn English very autonomously which shows that a small number of students have the consciousness of learning autonomy and can learn autonomously. Besides, 44.35% of students think the purpose of learning is for the admission tests. Thus, it is obvious that tests are very important in students' minds.

The factors affecting students' learning are also important. 35.65% of students think methods and environment mainly affect their learning effects. And 26.09% of students think that learning motivation is very important to them. The items from 6-8 are about students' behaviors in class. 86.09% of students can listen to what teachers said very carefully or can follow the teachers totally in English class. However, only 13.91% of students can't understand the knowledge the teacher taught in class. Based on the statistics, most students sometimes or never join in the learning activities and they seldom take notes. So it can be seen that most students learn English automatically for they only listen to teachers and seldom show their initiatives. This is the most typical current situation of Chinese students in learning English. The items from 9-14 are concerning learning methods. Based on the statistics, 66.96% of students learn English depending on the teachers while 6.96% of students learn English autonomously. It is known that only a few students learn with autonomy. From the data, it is obviously shown that a large number of students don't make plans of learning English or they make plans but never carry them out. In addition, 62.61% of students sometimes preview the new lesson and 57.39% of students sometimes review and summarize the important knowledge points. The data tell us that most students don't learn English in the autonomous ways. The items from 15-22 are about students' ability of autonomous learning. Based on the statistics, it is clearly seen that a large number of students sometimes do extracurricular exercises, but not always. And they seldom analyze the reasons of mistakes and correct them after examinations or explore the proper learning strategies. Besides, 53.04% of students seldom read extracurricular books. It is known that students don't learn English autonomously from the statistics. On the contrary, they learn in traditional

ways passively. So students' ability of autonomous learning needs to be improved. The last item is related to students' expectation of English learning in the future. 46.09% of students hope to learn by themselves and the teacher plays a role as a director or sponsor. This indicates that learners have a desire for autonomous learning.

The above statistics show the current situation of students' ability of autonomous learning. Most Chinese students learn English in the very traditional ways and most of them are lack of initiatives. They mainly depend on teachers for they have no habits of autonomous learning. In a word, students' ability of autonomous learning should be improved.

B.   The Analysis of Interviews

Tables II presented a descriptive statistics on each self belief in English writing with a brief description of all these strategies employed and items in the study.

TABLE II.
RESULTS OF THE INTERVIEW

Questions	Answers		
1. Do you think learning English is difficult?	Yes 20%	A little 50%	No 30%
2. Do you set goals of learning English?	Yes 35%	Sometimes 40%	No 25%
3. How often do you review lessons?	Every day 25%	Sometimes 60%	Hardly ever 15%
4. What are your learning strategies?	Have own strategies 35%	Copy others' strategies 50%	Have no strategies 15%
5. How do you solve problems in learning?	Solve problems independently 20%	Ask for help 70%	Avoid problems 10%

From the Table II, it is seen that 30% of the students think English is not difficult and 20% of the students think English is difficult. Their answers to the interviewer's questions are quite different. For example, when the interviewer asked the question that whether English is difficult or not, one said: "I don't think English is difficult for me and I can learn it very well." Another one said: "English is a little bit difficult for me so I spend much time on it." But there is also different answer: "English is difficult for me and I don't know how to learn it well." The data show that most students think English is a little difficult, so teachers should alter teaching methods to make students learn English more easily. Besides, 35% of students have goals of learning English while 25% of students never have goals of learning English. Here are the typical answers. One student answered: "I have clear goals of learning English and I study hard to achieve the goals." One said: "Sometimes I have my goals of learning English but I can't achieve them." There is also different answer: "I don't set goals of learning English because I don't know how to set goals."

There is a question about students' habits of revision in the learning. 25% of students have the habits of reviewing lessons every day while 60% of students sometimes review lessons. For example, when the interviewer asked how often students review lessons, one said: "I review lessons every day and summarize the knowledge points after class." Also some students answered, "I sometimes review the new lessons but not often." Another one said: "I don't have the habits of revision so I hardly ever review lessons." All the answers show that only a small number of students have the good habit of revision while most students learn English passively. From the data, we can see 35% of students have their own learning strategies while 15% of students learn English without learning strategies. It can be seen most students have no proper learning strategies. When students are asked how they solve problems in the learning, only 20% of students will solve problems independently while 70% of students ask for help. It is known that only a few students can solve problems independently but most of them depend on others.

From the interview, the researcher finds that different students learn English with different attitudes. The top students have the most active attitude towards learning English and most of them can learn English autonomously. However, the poor students don't spend much time on learning English. The interview results basically reflect the current situation of students' English learning. Students of different levels learn English in different ways which make them have various grades. From the interview records, the interviewer finds that only a few excellent students can learn autonomously while most students have a weak ability of autonomous learning.

C.   Factors Affecting Students' Autonomous Learning

From the research results, it is known that junior middle school students have a poor ability of autonomous learning. However, there are a large number of factors which affect students' ability of autonomous learning. Autonomous learning is not only determined by self-control, but also affected by the environment, society, family and so on (Pang Guowei, 2003). It relies on learners and cannot be independent from the external environmental conditions.

(1) Internal Factors

1) Learning Motivations

Wen Qiufang (1996) states that learners are the first factor of success and they are the internal factors in the two-way teaching. Thus, teachers should pay special attention to the students' learning motivations during the daily teaching. Zimmerman (1985; 1999) think that motivation is the intention which causes the activity and maintains the activity. It is an internal power which impulses persons to obtain the goals and the motivation is produced on the basis of needs. So there is a need for learners to have the learning motivation to study efficiently. Learning motivation is an internal factor

that can help learners to learn autonomously. Any activity of persons relies on the motivation. Learners' internal motivation is stimulated by their needs and interests. Learners will control their behaviors actively if they can realize the significance of learning autonomously. Generally, learners have the strong motivations at the beginning of study. However, as the learning difficulty increases, learners' motivations become weak and weak. It is learners' spirit that keeps them studying. In other words, learning motivations have the strong function of keeping learners learning autonomously. Internal learning motivations are in favor of the development of students' ability of autonomous learning. It is known that if students have no learning motivations of learning English, they will not have the real language learning (He Xiaodong, 2005).

2) Attribution Patterns

Attribution can be defined that persons infer the reasons of behavior consequences and then acquire, predict and control the environment and behaviors by the causal relationship (Huang Meihua, 2015). Some researchers believe that attribution patterns are also one of the main factors which affect the autonomous learning. If learners attribute the activity results to the internal factors, and believe that learning process can be changed by controlling individual endeavor, time arrangement and selection of methods which can help learners achieve the goals of study, then they can learn autonomously. If students regard the inexertion as the reason of bad learning results, they will have the stronger motivation and have more desire for perfecting learning skills. Attributing the success to the internal and the controllable factors like capacity can strengthen the learning motivation of activities. On the contrary, attributing the success to the external or uncontrollable elements such as environment or luck can weaken the learning motivation. In addition, feeding back the attribution can also influence the self-efficacy and motivation.

3) The Setting of Learning Goals

Setting learning goals is very important of all the affecting factors. The top students will set goals based on the learning tasks and they monitor their learning and control the learning process according to the goals. Learners must set goals which depend on the complexity of tasks and the goals must be feasible. Besides, the more specific the goals are, the better learners' learning effects are. The research findings show that learners who set mastery goals have stronger self-efficacy and can get better skills than those who set performance targets (Hu Nianhong, 2012). Moreover, the top students basically have the good habits of setting goals and the active attitudes towards learning.

4) Self-Efficacy

Due to the junior middle school students' psychological features, their self-efficacy is extremely weak and they mainly put more reliance on teachers. The psychological features restrict the students' autonomy of learning and lead to their weak consciousness of autonomous learning.

Self-efficacy is that learners judge whether they have the ability of taking up the activities. In fact, self-efficacy is not students' real ability but their confidence in their learning ability based on the self-evaluation (Du Suqing, 2015). Self-efficacy is an important factor which affects autonomous learning (He Dong，2005). First, learners choose tasks based on their self-efficacy. Students with the high self-efficacy always select the difficult tasks which need their hard-working while students with the low self-efficacy always select easy tasks. Second, self-efficacy greatly influences goals which learners set. Students with the high self-efficacy set high and challenging goals before they study. In the learning process, the students with the high self-efficacy will finally obtain the goals through their hard-working. Third, self-efficacy affects learning methods selected by learners. When learners with the high self-efficacy meet the challenging tasks, they are inclined to work harder and choose much proper leaning strategies. Fourth, the low self-efficacy affects students' emotion. When learners with the low self-efficacy meet the challenging tasks, they will feel nervous and do badly in learning.

(2) External Factors

Of all factors, internal factors are quite important but the external factors are also significant. And external factors which affect autonomous learning greatly are as follows:

1) Teaching Styles of Different Teachers

The teaching styles of different teachers affect the learning of students during the teaching process. Especially, the teaching styles play an important role in learners' autonomous learning. Different teaching styles affect students differently. The arbitrary style and the laissez-fair style hinder students' autonomous learning while the democratic style contributes to the autonomous learning. With the democratic styles, students' ability of independence and self-control are fully improved as well as their autonomy for the lack of the external restriction. Thus, students' interests of learning are stimulated, and they can make efficient plans and feedbacks and evaluate learning results. So there is a need for teachers to teach in a relaxing and democratic style. In modern teaching modes, teachers should focus on students' comprehensive ability and teachers should become the guides and promoters to help students to learn autonomously.

2) Learning Environment

Zimmerman (1995) and other scholars divide the external factors affecting autonomous learning into two categories: the social environment and the class environment. In the social environment, friends, teachers and families play important roles in students' autonomous learning. They are the models for students and can guide students to learn actively. Learners will ask teachers or parents for help if they came across problems in learning. They want to get enlightenments and then think independently. In the class environment, libraries, computers and other information resources also affect learners' autonomous learning. Those information resources can offer much information to learners,

so they can get more extracurricular knowledge based on their needs.

It is clearly known that autonomous learning is affected by a large number of factors. Internal factors are the most important factors for the learners but external factors are also indispensible. Therefore, learners' ability of autonomous learning should be cultivated through both internal and external factors.

V. CONCLUSION

This study combines the autonomous learning theory with practice and applies it to the real English teaching through the experiment. During this research, the researcher applies questionnaire, interview, pre-test and pro-test to investigate Chinese learners' ability of English autonomous learning. Now we conclude the research findings as follows:

First, based on the questionnaire and interview results, it is known that the current learning situation of Chinese junior middle school students is they learn English in traditional ways and have no proper learning strategies. Students are lack of learning motivations and they think learning English aims at tests. Most of them learn English passively instead of learning autonomously. It is shown that students in junior middle school have the low autonomy of learning.

Second, factors affecting students' autonomous learning are found and analyzed according to the research results. The factors contain internal factors and external factors. Learning motivations, attribution patterns, setting goals and self-efficacy are very important to the learners. Moreover, teaching styles and external environment can also affect learning results as well. Thus, teachers should promote students' ability of autonomous learning through the internal and external factors.

Third, according to the pre-test results, there is no significant difference between two classes. However, based on the post-test results, students in class one who learn in the autonomous ways can get the higher marks than students in class two who learn in traditional ways. It is shown that the autonomous learning can help improve students' learning results. In addition, the proper strategies are explored in the experiment which can help to improve students' autonomous learning ability. Through the experiment, students in class one gradually form good habits of autonomous learning and they begin to have the consciousness of autonomous learning. They can set goals and make plans autonomously and have the right attitudes towards English learning. Their motivations of learning are stimulated and most students can evaluate themselves and explore the proper learning methods actively. Moreover, the autonomous learning not only focuses on students' dominant roles but also attaches importance to the teachers' leading roles. The teacher is a promoter and a helper in this new teaching mode. Students will get the suggestions from the teacher when they come across troubles in learning English. So students' autonomous learning cannot be independent from teachers. The teacher's guidance and help are very important to students. They need to teach creatively and adopt new teaching methods to explore the new teaching modes. But the students' learning ability cannot be improved in a short time. So students need to be cultivated in systematical ways for a long time.

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Guobing Liu was born in Henan, China. He received the master's degree in corpus linguistics in 2005. Now he is an associated professor and EFL teacher at the Faculty of International Studies, Henan Normal University. He received the doctoral degree in corpus linguistics and computational linguistics in 2013. In recent years, he published two books and more than twenty academic papers in the key journals both home and abroad. His academic interests include corpus linguistics and foreign language teaching.

The Effect of Employing Electronic Portfolio on Iranian EFL Learners' Writing Skill

Nona Masaeli
Islamic Azad University, Isfahan (Khorasgan) Branch, Iran

Azizeh Chalak
Islamic Azad University, Isfahan (Khorasgan) Branch, Iran

Abstract—A superior method of language teaching is what all researchers and language teachers look for. In order to facilitate the process of language learning, technological tools can be helpful. The present study aimed to investigate the effect to employing electronic portfolio on Iranian EFL learners' writing skill in a language institute in Isfahan, Iran in summer 2014. To find the homogeneity of subjects, the Oxford Quick Placement Test was administered and the subjects were divided into experimental and control groups. The experimental group received the treatment which was employing the electronic portfolio, while the control group had the conventional context of language classes. At the end of the study, the obtained scores on the pretests and post-tests were analyzed. Independent t-tests were run to compare the collected scores in the two groups. The results of the study showed significant difference between the experimental group and the control group. The findings of the study can bear implications for EFL student, teachers, policy makers, university and institute organizations, and syllabus designers.

Index Terms—electronic portfolio, Iranian EFL learners, web-folio, writing skill

I. INTRODUCTION

Teaching and learning languages have become more and more important these days, parents look for the best language schools to register their children, and children seek for the most attractive and fun classes to take. Based on the curriculum used in different language schools and language institutes, different methods are being employed by teachers and are being focused differently. The majority of students agree that coping with productive skills, speaking and writing, are much more difficult compared to coping with the receptive ones, listening and reading. Sometimes, teachers employ different tools and activities to make the learning process easier and more attractive. Many teachers believe that using technology and especially the Internet can affect the process of teaching and learning, so they employ different technological devices or make use of different websites, blogs, or wikis to make teaching process more attractive to their learners. Some teachers employ electronic portfolios and web-folios both to make the learners study more and to evaluate them regularly throughout the semester. This study seeks the possible effects of employing electronic portfolios on a group of Iranian EFL learners' writing ability in a language school, Isfahan, Iran.

The concept of portfolio has been attractive to many researchers from 1986 up to now. Portfolio use involves collecting samples of students' work and experiences which reflect through the things they do and say the ways in which they think. Teachers that have paid attention to the process of learning as well as to the products of that learning evident in the portfolio collection, can collaboratively assess the students' abilities, skills and knowledge to accurately evaluate, whether or not their teaching is preparing the students for the real world (Batzle, 1992).

Ali (2005), a researcher in this field says that, on most traditional tests the learners are given a specific time-frame to take the test. This makes the learners think, reflect upon and judge their work in a limited set of time that means little or no opportunity to present what they had done throughout the course. Sometimes peer-correction is assigned to the learners and as a result the final draft reaches the teacher after corrections that means less mistakes in each draft. The portfolio approach is developed from this concept of reflective practice. Portfolios also give students the opportunity to reflect on their learning so they may evaluate their progress in a course or program. Ali (2005) also mentions that: "The electronic portfolio is a result of technology being readily and conveniently used in most classrooms today. They are highly motivating for the students who are encouraged by exhibiting their work."

Electronic Portfolio

According to Busby (2012), first portfolios, which were paper-based, were used by early adopters in Alverno College in the U.S. in 1970s. In late 1980s, they were used in general education, and the development of electronic portfolios was in late 1990s. As described on the McGraw-Hill Higher Education webpage, portfolios are considered as both objects and methods of assessment. As objects, they are place for holding materials such as paper photographs, or drawings that represent students' work, and as a method of assessment, a portfolio is used by a teacher to continuously observe students' work and assess them not just by one test but along the course.

Barrett (1999, 2000) described e-portfolio as the combination of technology and portfolios that means applying technological tools to make the appropriate work for the portfolio. E-portfolio may include videos, audio tracks, graphics, and text. She also believed that an electronic portfolio is not a haphazard gathering of homework like a digital scrapbook! It is a tool which can reflect improvement along the course. Barrett (2006) defined a portfolio as "a collection of work that a learner has collected, selected, organized, reflected upon, and presented to show understanding and growth over time (p. 1)."

Writing is a productive skill which is totally dynamic and is getting more and more important in different aspects of education, business and communication. According to Ferris (2002), many learners are getting interested in and motivated about improving their writing skills to be more successful in research and pedagogy fields. Many researchers have conducted studies to investigate different aspects of writing skills. Al-Jawi (2011) wrote an article on teaching the productive skills in TEFL with the focus on teaching EFL writing skills. In his article, he pointed out the necessity of writing as a productive skill which has to be taught to students so that they can communicate with the world. He mentioned that writing is putting signs and symbols on paper in order to communicate ideas. According to him, there are different factors a writer needs to keep in mind when writing, which are the subject matter, the purpose, the interaction and sense of audience, language, and writing conventions regarding different genres.

This study could be a significant one because of the absence of similar settings in the Iranian context. Moreover this study can have implications for teachers, learners, test developers and curriculum designers. It also aimed to provide evidence that using e-portfolios can help both learners and instructors improve learning and make better assessment tools in EFL classes. As a result, ordinary testing methods may be replaced by using portfolios, both to motivate learners and to help teachers provide better environment for teaching, learning and testing. To achieve this goal, current study was done on a number of students in a language school in Isfahan, Iran. The results gathered from this study can be useful to all language schools and teachers who hope to improve the learning environments in their language institutes.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Many researchers around the world have thought of portfolio as an appealing topic and have worked on different types of portfolios. Driessen, Muijtjens, Tartwijk, and Vleuten (2007) studied the effect of web-based and paper-based portfolios to see whether there are any differences or not. To conduct the study, a total of 92 reflective portfolios of year one medical students were scored independently by two mentors using a portfolio quality-rating instrument. Although the quality of evidence and reflection showed no significant effects of the presentation medium, multi-level analysis results revealed that web-based portfolios had been more motivating for the students since they had spent much more time providing visuals in their portfolios. The researchers concluded that the web-based portfolios can be more productive since they enhance students' motivation and are user-friendly for the mentors.

Lucas (2007) conducted an experimental study on portfolio assessment as an effective student self-evaluation scheme. To do his research, a group of 156 reflective essays written by college students taking the first grade, were chosen and analyzed. The essays were a part of a portfolio project. The results of this study revealed that through self-evaluation, students were able to recognize linguistic problems in all macro skills. The students were also able to define deficiencies in self autonomy and independence in learning that they have developed.

Iranian researchers also worked on different aspects of employing portfolios on students' proficiency. Madaran and Hedayati (2011) investigated the impact of portfolios and conferencing on Iranian EFL learners' writing skill. Their study was conducted on a group of Iranian intermediate students who were assigned into two experimental and a control group. One of the experimental groups were asked to provide portfolios of their written texts during the course, the other group prepared and presented their writings in the form of a conference, and the control group was taught and assessed in the traditional way. The experimental group significantly outperformed the control group, however the two experimental groups were not significantly different.

Biglarbeigi, Pooersgasemian, and Yazdani (2014) conducted their study on the impact of electronic portfolio assessment on Iranian EFL learners' proficiency level regarding their metacognitive awareness. To do their research, they chose two groups of learners and assigned them into two groups of experimental and control. First they taught the two groups the concepts of metacognition, metacognitive strategies, self-management and self-monitoring. Each group was taught eight TOEFL reading passages during the semester. While the control group was exposed to traditional teaching and assessment, the experimental group received the expected treatment which was using e-portfolios to collect their work. The results of their study revealed that both groups performed better in post-test due to their becoming metacognitively aware in taking tests. Extra progress was observed in the experimental group because of using e-portfolios.

III. METHOD

In this study, the researcher employed electronic tools and the Internet in order to conduct the study on the effect of using electronic portfolios on Iranian foreign language learners' writing ability in summer 2014, in one of the leading

language institutes in Iran. Certain instruments, data collection and data analysis procedures were used to conduct this research.

A. Subjects

The research was conducted in summer 2014, in one of the leading language institutes in Isfahan (Pooyesh Language School) in which most of the students are teenagers. Among several classrooms in this language institute, four classes of the same level were chosen; two as the control group and two as the experimental group. These classes were chosen because the researcher was the teacher of all these four classes. The classes were held six days a week and lasted for 30 sessions that was 45 hours of instruction in five weeks. The institute headmaster claims that the approach of teaching in this language school is the communicative approach. In other words, CLT is the dominant teaching method in this language school.

The subjects of this study were all female students at the pre-intermediate level in one of the main language institutes in Isfahan, Iran. The researcher chose the subjects because of their being available, so convenience sampling was employed in this study. The researcher who has been teaching English for nine years in different language institutions and schools, is a student of TEFL in Islamic Azad University of Isfahan, Khorasgan Branch, in Isfahan Iran. The table below demonstrates the demographic information of the subjects of this study.

SUBJECTS' DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION	
Number of participants in control group	32
Number of participants in experimental group	32
Sex	Female
Age	15 to 22
Mother tongue	Persian
Nationality	Iranian
Level of proficiency	Pre-intermediate

Lack of Interest and motivation seems to be the main reason of students' unwillingness in writing in a foreign language. Most of the teenagers like working online and even typing homework compared to the traditional ways of contacting their teachers and handing over their homework, so the researcher made use of the students' interest in using technological tools both to gather their homework and to assess their work according to what they had done throughout the course and not just in one achievement test called the final exam.

B. Instruments

The Oxford Quick Placement Test (Version 2, 2001), a writing pretest and its parallel post-test, observation and interview were the instruments used to conduct this research and answer the research questions,. The researcher made use of several instruments in order to get to more reliable results. The researcher also employed observation and interview to check students' attitude before, during and after the course.

In order to make sure that all the students were the same level of proficiency, The Oxford Quick Placement Test was given to all the subjects in both control and experimental groups of the students with higher scores were chosen for the experiment. In order to have a homogeneous group of subjects and more reliable results, administering this test was necessary.

The subjects were given a topic related to the first unit's topic and were asked to write one paragraph on that topic. Students' writing papers were corrected afterwards using the Jacob et al.'s ESL Composition Profile (1981) which provided criteria for the researcher to correct writing papers within a certain framework considering the content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and the mechanics of writing.

The students were also given other topics related to what they learned in their books and during receiving the treatment which was using e-portfolios and web-folios instead of the conventional type of data collection. Their papers were corrected using the same criteria. In the control group the learners' homework was collected in the traditional way and the writing post-test showed the students' improvement in that group while in the experimental group all of their writings were corrected and at the end of the course. They took the post-test too so that the researcher could compare the two groups, their improvement and their problems.

The researcher in this study was in charge of teaching the subjects and as a result she was able to observe the subjects, their attitude toward using web-folios and e-portfolios, and even their improvement in writing paragraphs. The researcher also observed the amount of motivation in the experimental group which made the students more active and eventually ended in significantly better paragraphs.

C. Data Collection Procedure

The needed data to do this research were gathered by using pretests, post-tests, observation, and interviews. The researcher employed different types of data collection in order for the results to be more precise. How the students reacted or felt toward a certain procedure mattered a lot in addition to what the numerical results showed with regard to the efficiency and practicality of the procedure.

The data from the pretest and the post-test given to the subjects were analysed statistically to explore the probable effect of the treatment, applying matched t-test. The collected data in this research was analyzed in a way that makes the

results more reliable. In order for the data to be analyzed, the SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science) was employed. The pretest writing paragraphs, written by the learners were corrected two times by two different teachers, and the estimated mean of the two scores divided by two demonstrated the score of the learners so that we found more reliable results. The post tests were also corrected by the same teachers, and were divided by two too. A t-test was administered in order to show the difference between the performance of students, before and after the research. The analysis of data is discussed thoroughly in the next chapter.

IV. RESULTS

The data from the pretest and the post-test given to the subjects were subjected to statistical analyses to explore the probable effect of the treatment, applying matched t-test. The collected data in this research was analyzed in a way that makes the results more reliable. In order for the data to be analyzed, the SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science) was employed. The pretest writing paragraphs, written by the learners were corrected two times by two different teachers, and the estimated mean of the two scores divided by two demonstrated the score of the learners so that the researcher would find more reliable results. The post tests were also corrected by the same teachers, and were divided by two too. A t-test was administered in order to show the difference between the performance of students, before and after the research. The results are all demonstrated in the tables below.

TABLE 1.
RESULTS OF DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR COMPARING PRETEST WRITING ABILITY OF THE LEARNERS
IN THE EXPERIMENTAL GROUP (EG) AND CONTROL GROUP (CG)

	Test Level	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
EG	Pretest	32	72.63	10.78
CG	Pretest	32	72.28	9.44

TABLE 2.
RESULTS OF THE INDEPENDENT-SAMPLES T-TEST FOR COMPARING THE EG AND CG WRITING ABILITY PRETEST SCORES

	p-value	Df	T-test value
Pretest Scores'Comparison	0.893	62	- 0.14

The results from the above table show that Iranian EFL students' writing skill in both control group and experimental group was the same before the experimental group received the treatment which was using electronic portfolios and webfolios. The following table, shows the results of descriptive statistics for comparing post-test writing ability of the learners in the experimental group and control group. From this table it could be concluded that e-portfolio significantly affected the fluency and complexity of the written production of female pre-intermediate Iranian EFL learners.

TABLE 3.
RESULTS OF DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR COMPARING POST-TEST WRITING ABILITY OF THE LEARNERS
IN THE EXPERIMENTAL AND CONTROL GROUPS

	Test Level	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
EG	Post-test	32	85.47	8.01
CG	Post-test	32	80.66	6.89

The table below shows the results of the independent sample t-test for comparing the Experimental group and control group's writing ability post-test.

TABLE 4.
RESULTS OF THE INDEPENDENT-SAMPLE T-TEST FOR COMPARING THE EG AND CG WRITING ABILITY POST-TEST SCORES

	p-value	Df	T-test value
Post-test Scores'Comparison	0.012	62	-2.58

Results from the last table revealed that Iranian EFL students' writing skill in the experimental group significantly outperformed that of the subjects in the control group. The results of this study showed that employing e-portfolios and web-folios can be good technique to gather students' homework and to assess them. Knowing that all the homework is part of the final score, the students try to do their best when doing their homework. E-portfolios and web-folios can be used in different classes. The researcher conducted this study in an intermediate level class in a language institute in which almost all of the students were female teenagers.

V. CONCLUSION

Teaching techniques and methods have developed through years and language teaching has not been an exception. Employing technology in teaching has recently become attractive to language teachers and learners. Portfolios may also affect teaching and learning. Many researchers favor portfolios and believe in the positive effects of employing them on teaching and assessing students, there are teachers who prefer the conventional type of teaching and assessment though. As using portfolios involves collecting students' work which reflects what students have done throughout the course

and not just in one final test, it can be considered as a useful technique, especially for teachers who care about their students' product as well as the process of learning.

Writing is one of the main skills in language learning which is usually overlooked because of students' lack of interest and teachers' unfamiliarity with effective and motivating methods of teaching this skill to their learners. Employing technology can be of good help to both teachers and their learners. Among different technological tools, this study focused on using e-portfolios as a treatment which can be helpful in the process of learning. Using e-portfolios helped the learners use other devices and be more creative and motivated in doing their homework. Although it seems to be hard in the beginning for the teacher to correct homework in electronic files, as the time passed, the teacher found it easier and rewarding to correct electronic homework and give feedback to students' activities in an electronic file rather than in the traditional form of papers.

The results of the study revealed that the students were more satisfied with the new material which was the e-portfolio and also they got better results out of the writing post-test. The teacher also described the treatment as motivating for the learners and rewarding for the teacher. Altogether both learners and the teacher believed that employing e-portfolio had positive effects on the process of language learning.

This study can provide language teachers with the opportunity to apply other tools in language learning process. Teachers should first get to know their learners, their expectations and their interests so that they can make use of e-portfolios in the best way. Teachers who want to employ e-portfolios and web-folios should also be trained before the course. They need to study about the techniques used in classes which are employing e-portfolios and web-folios.

Learning English as a foreign language is very crucial to each and every one because of popularity of this international language and the urge to use it in different settings. The ability to communicate with the world around us is one of the needs of each and every one. Different skills can be used in order for communication to happen, among which writing skill has to be attended more, because of its unique characteristic in linking people to each other from different parts of the world without a word spoken.

Different techniques and methods should be applied to improve the process of language teaching and learning. Despite writing skill has always been overlooked in language classes, it has to be emphasized more these days. Employing e-portfolios and web-folios can be good technique for language teachers to make learners more motivated and to make writing skill more appealing to them.

The results of this study showed that employing e-portfolios and web-folios can be good technique to gather students' homework and to assess them. Knowing that all the homework is part of the final score, the students try to do their best when doing their homework. E-portfolios and web-folios can be used in different classes. The researcher conducted this study in an intermediate level class in a language institute in which almost all of the students were female teenagers.

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Nona Masaeli, born in 1985, Isfahan, Iran. She got her BA degree in English translation, in 2007 and MA degree in TEFL, in 2015 Islamic Azad University, Isfahan (Khorasgan) Branch, Isfahan, Iran.

Azizeh Chalak is an assistant professor of TEFL at the English Department of Islamic Azad University, Isfahan (Khorasgan) Branch, Isfahan, Iran. Her research interests include discourse analysis, sociolinguistics, intercultural communication, computer-mediated communication (CMC), e-mail communications, genre studies, and methods of teaching.

A Study on Chinese EFL Learners' Vocabulary Usage in Writing

Lili Zhai

Foreign Languages School, Shanxi Normal University, Linfen, China

Abstract—Vocabulary acquisition is one of the hottest research fields in English learning, which has aroused researchers' great attention in recent years. However, their focus is on vocabulary size, vocabulary learning strategies and receptive lexical ability, seldom to productive lexical ability. Writing is an important productive ability for EFL learners, and a myriad of writing researches show that inappropriate vocabulary use leads to inferior writing quality. Therefore, research on learners' vocabulary proficiency, especially their vocabulary in English writing is quite profound. 66 subjects from a comprehensive university participating in this study, finished one composition for analyzing their vocabulary usage, i.e. lexical richness which includes lexical sophistication and lexical variation. All the data and writing papers were analyzed with RANGE and SPSS 17.0. The findings of the present study demonstrated that the subjects relied more on the first 1000 word level to express their meanings in productive tasks and the lexical sophistication and lexical variation are not high. Subjects with different writing ability have differences in vocabulary usage, but the two groups only have significant difference in lexical variation and not in lexical sophistication. The present study enriches the research on vocabulary acquisition in SLA and provides helpful implications for vocabulary teaching and learning to improve learners' vocabulary productive ability.

Index Terms—vocabulary usage, English writing, Chinese EFL learners

I. Introduction

Vocabulary, as the information carrier, plays an indispensable role of language. Likely, vocabulary is a significant part in English learning, so vocabulary acquisition becomes one of the hottest research fields. Wilkins (1972) states that without grammar very little can be conveyed; without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed, which shows that vocabulary is of crucial importance to language learners (cited from Chen Hui, 2001). Although the status and importance of vocabulary acquisition has been acknowledged by linguists and language teaching researchers, they have attached more attention to vocabulary size, vocabulary learning strategies and receptive lexical ability, seldom to depth of vocabulary knowledge and productive lexical ability.

Writing is an important productive ability for EFL learners, while it is a relatively ordinary phenomenon in China that university students are apt to use a host of high-frequency words to express their idea in English writing, and if trying to use low-frequency words, usually they use them in a wrong way. It indicates that university students have problems in vocabulary learning and use. Therefore, research on learners' vocabulary proficiency, especially their vocabulary in English writing is quite profound. The present study tries to find the characteristics of the subjects' vocabulary usage in English writing and the relationship between vocabulary usage and writing quality. The research mainly involves 3 questions as follows.

Q1: What are the characteristics of subjects' vocabulary usage in English writing?

Q2: What's the correlation between vocabulary usage and writing quality?

Q3: Does there exist significant difference on vocabulary usage between groups of different writing ability?

II. Literature Review

The assessment of vocabulary knowledge is an important field for Second Language Acquisition (SLA) research, which has aroused researchers' attention (Nation & Laufer, 1995; Read, 1993; Wesche & Paribakht, 1995). Bao Gui (2008) classifies two types of assessment according to the salience of words in the design. One is to design a host of vocabulary tests with target words on different word frequency, which contains receptive and productive vocabulary test. The other is to apply words to a communicative task (oral output or writing a composition), which aims to check learners' lexical usage during the process. The former has wide vocabulary coverage and is easy to design and test, while the latter pays more attention to communicative function of language and puts context into consideration. Researchers usually use 4 indexes, i.e. lexical variation, lexical sophistication, lexical density, lexical originality to describe learners' productive ability, which are called lexical richness in a general term. The present research placed an emphasis on the latter, and tried to find the relationship between vocabulary usage and writing quality.

A. Assessment of Vocabulary Usage

Vocabulary usage is to use vocabulary in productive tasks, and the assessment of vocabulary usage is measured by lexical richness which is calculated by four items, i.e. lexical originality (LO), lexical density (LD), lexical sophistication (LS); and lexical variation (LV).

Before explaining the four items, another two items "token" and "type" need introducing firstly and the two are used to count words in a text. The number of *tokens* is the same as the total number of word forms, which means that individual words occurring more than once in the text are counted each time they are used. On the other hand, the number of *types* is the total number of the different word forms, so that a word which is repeated many times is counted only once (ibid).

Lexical Originality is the percentage of words in one learner's text that were not used by any of the other learners.

LO=   Number of tokens unique to one writer×100%
            Total number of tokens

The lexical origination index measures the number of words unique to one learner in the test group. If the group changes, the index changes too, so it is unreliable (Laufer, 1994).

Lexical Density is defined as the percentage of lexical words in the text, i.e. nouns, full verbs, adjectives, adverbs.

LD=   Number of lexical tokens×100%
            Total number of tokens

Since lexical words are the words which primarily convey information, a text is considered 'dense' if it contains many lexical words relative to the total number of words, i.e. lexical and functional words. Since it depends on the syntactic and cohesive properties of the composition as reflected in the use function word, its validity is questionable (ibid).

Lexical Variation is the type/token ratio, i.e. the ratio in percent between the different words in the text and the total number of words.

LV =   Number of types×100%
            Number of tokens

The type/token ratio is the most widely used measure and LV can show how well a learner can express himself with different vocabulary he knows.

Lexical Sophistication is the percentage of 'advanced' words in the text.

LS=   Number of advanced tokens×100%
            Total number of lexical tokens

Because the definition of 'advanced' depends on the researcher, it is unreliable. Due to the limitation of this measurement, Laufer and Nation (1995) devised a new measure of lexical richness, that is, the Lexical Frequency Profile (LFP) and designed a word frequency program-VocabProfile. It is based on the relative frequency of words in the language and involves simply calculating the percentage of word families in the learner's composition that belong to each of three or four frequency bands. In their original study, Laufer and Nation used a profile that comprised four levels: first 1000 most frequent words, second 1000 most frequent words, words in the University Word List, and any other (less frequent) words. Thus, if a learner wrote an essay containing 200 words family word families in total and these consisted of 150 from the first 1000 list, 20 from the second 1000 list, 20 from the University Word List, 10 other words, the profile would be 75%-10%-10%-5%. The authors' argument is that the LFP provides a more objective and differentiated measure of the learners' vocabulary use than the other statistics, because it draws on a range of established word lists to classify the words into categories (Read, 2000).

Qin Xiaoqing & Wen Qiufang (2007) described the advantages of using LFP to assess lexical sophistication. LFP depends on three word frequency to calculate the percentage of word families, so it has a high maneuverability. In addition, LFP can effectively differentiate the subjects who use the first 1000 most frequent words and second 1000 most frequent words etc. effectively. What's more, it has a high reliability. At last but not least, LFP has a good forecast of language proficiency. Afterwards, Nation and Coxhead increased the function of VocabProfile and renamed RANGE which includes the first 1000 word family, the second 1000 word family, and 570 academic words in 2000.

RANGE is available at http://www.vuw.ac.nz/lals/staff/Paul_Nation. RANGE contains 3 word lists, named BASEWORD1.txt, BASEWORD2.txt, BASEWORD3.txt, representing the first 1000 word family, the second 1000 word family, and 570 academic words. 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. The present study employed RANGE to assess lexical sophistication.

Wolfe-Quintero etc.(1998) summarize a host of literature and find that lexical richness, especially lexical variation, lexical sophistication have a significant relationship with language development (ibid). Furthermore, lexical density and lexical origination have their inherent weakness, so the present research only adopted the two items to analyze learners' vocabulary usage in EFL writing.

B.   Empirical Studies on Vocabulary Usage and Writing

Read (2000) assumed that good writing has the following lexical features.

1. A variety of different words rather than a limited number of words used repeatedly. It is reasonable to expect that more proficient writers have a larger vocabulary size that allow them to avoid repetition by using synonyms,

superordinates and other kinds of related words. This can be reflected in the type-token ratio or lexical variation index.

2. A selection of low-frequency words which are appropriate to the topic and style of the writing, rather than just general, everyday vocabulary. This is actually the lexical sophistication.

3. A relatively high percentage of lexical (content) words, as compared with grammatical (function) words. This is known as lexical density.

4. Few if any lexical errors in the use of words. Thus another measure of writing quality can be the number of lexical errors in the written text.

The above description reflects the relationship between lexical richness and writing. The following part is the empirical studies in detail. Researches on lexical richness are limited, and these researches mainly from two aspects: one is the comparison of lexical richness on different writing abilities and the other is to investigate the relationship between lexical richness and writing quality.

Many researches consider that learners with higher writing ability use less repeated vocabulary than those with lower ability. Linnarud (1986) compares the compositions written by the Swedish English learners and by their native-speaking peers, and finds lexical variation of Swedish English learners is lower than that of native speakers (Bao Gui, 2008). Laufer (1991) finds that there is no difference of lexical variation of learners among different writing ability stages. Among researchers on the relationship between lexical variation and writing quality, Engber (1995) finds their significant relation, while others rarely get their positive correlation. Li Zhixue and Li Jingquan (2005) find Chinese learners with higher English proficiency produce less productive vocabulary than American students in EFL writing.

Linnarud (1986) finds native-speaking students' lexical density is higher than second language learners in writing, while Laufer (1991) and Engber (1995) find no obvious relationship between lexical density and writing quality.

For there are two kinds of definitions of lexical sophistication, there exist two results. Linnarud (1986) defines lexical sophistication is the ratio of sophisticated tokens and total tokens, and finds native speakers use more advanced words. Liu Donghong (2004) adopts LFP to measure lexical sophistication, and he defines words on UWL and not in the lists as sophisticated words. His result shows that there is no significant relationship of lexical sophistication between higher and lower writing groups.

Researches on lexical originality are rare, and the results are contradictory. Linnarud (1986) finds native speakers use more original vocabulary than second language learners, and lexical originality has a positive correlation with writing quality. Laufer (1991) finds no development of original vocabulary between different writing stages.

Recently, Wan Lifang (2012), Wang Haihua & Zhou Xiang (2012), Yang Yingying (2012) and Zhu Huimin & Wang Junju (2013) made researches on lexical richness in EFL writing, which shows that researchers increasingly pay attention to this field. Nonetheless, it is easy to find that researches on vocabulary usage are not enough and some related findings are inconsistent. Therefore, it is necessary to enrich such research. The present research investigates the characteristics of vocabulary usage as well as its correlation with EFL writing quality. This research can make up studies on productive vocabulary ability and give some implications for vocabulary teaching and learning.

In this present research, the vocabulary usage i.e. lexical richness is only assessed from lexical variation and lexical sophistication, and lexical sophistication is measured through RANGE.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Subjects

Subjects of the present study were 66 (35 males and 31 females) sophomores of non-English majors, chosen from two parallel classes of a comprehensive university. They were 19-21 years old and had studied English for more than 8 years. All of them had passed CET4, so they were intermediate learners regarding their English proficiency level.

Engber (1995) states that English language learners who fall within the intermediate range can provide unique insight into the language learning and writing process. For intermediate learners, their interlanguage is unstable, and they are courageous to test hypotheses, so it is reasonable to survey this kind of learners.

B. Instruments

The present study involved a timed composition.

Timed composition was used to analyze characteristics of the subjects' vocabulary usage in English writing from the perspective of lexical sophistication, and lexical variation with the help of the software RANGE. Because RANGE is stable across writing with 200 words or even more (Laufer &Nation, 1995), the subjects were required to write more than 200 words within 40 minutes in class according to the following directions:

All of us would agree that in order to be successful in the present day society, we have to possess certain personal qualities that can enable us to realize our aim. What do you think is the most important personal quality of a successful person?

The topic of composition was chosen considering the criterion that it was fit to the subjects' cognition and familiar to them. They can easily expand the content to 200 words.

C. Data Collection and Processing

Composition writing was conducted during regular class time. The researcher, also the subjects' English teacher,

informed that composition score would be integrated into their final score. Thus the subjects were motivated to finish the composition carefully.

During the process composition writing, dictionaries, peer help were unavailable, and writing should be within 40 minutes. The experiment moved smoothly with the subjects' active cooperation.

All the 66 pieces of writing were typed into computer with 2 copies, one for teachers' scoring rating, and the other for statistical analysis. The subjects' writing was the mean score of 2 college English teachers according to the writing rating scales of CET4 with total score of 15 points (see Appendix).

Finally, SPSS 17.0 was used to do statistical analysis and RANGE for exploring characteristics of vocabulary usage in writing.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. The Description of Vocabulary Usage in Writing

Writing paper is a kind of form to embody how learners use words in communicative tasks. In order to get more information of the subjects' vocabulary knowledge, their writings were analyzed by the software RANGE. Two variables, lexical sophistication and lexical variation were considered to examine the characteristics of their vocabulary usage.

To calculate RANGE, there exist three kinds of data in the form of percentage according to token, type and family. Because writing papers in the present research are small texts (about 200 words) and the concept of type and family are too broad, the research adopts the data in the item of token.

TABLE 4.1
THE DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF VOCABULARY USAGE

		Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
LS	1st 1000	80.20%	98.83%	89.13%	3.79
	2nd 1000	.58%	10.89%	4.96%	2.20
	UWL	.00%	6.28%	1.84%	1.360
	Beyond list	.00%	10.84%	3.91%	2.40
tokens		135.00	342.00	217	38.460
types		76.00	160.00	113.7	18.010
LV		34.62%	64.85%	52.79%	6.21

Note: 1st 1000= the first 1000 vocabulary
2nd 1000= the second vocabulary
Beyond list= vocabulary not in the list
LV= lexical variation

Table 4.1 is the descriptive statistics of vocabulary usage and the two items, lexical sophistication and lexical variation, were described. From this table, it is easy to find the subjects can write enough long words to express their thought, for the mean score is 217, but they rely more on the first 1000 word level to express their meaning (89.13%>4.96%>3.91%>1.84%), and the highest one is 98.83%. There are two reasons to explain this phenomenon. Firstly, the subjects have only mastered limited productive vocabulary, so they have to use repeated words to express the same or similar meaning. Secondly, they may be scared to make mistakes with complicated words which influence their writing quality. The learners avoid using new words consciously, so they depend on the high-frequency words. The avoidance is a serious impediment to the increase of productive vocabulary. Therefore, the subjects should use the other three word levels to product in communicative tasks.

The mean ratio of lexical variation is 52.97%, and it is relatively low, which shows that the subjects lack productive vocabulary. Furthermore, they rely on the 1st 1000 words in writing. Due to these limitations, they are doomed to lack vocabulary to express their meanings but repeat words.

B. The Correlation between Vocabulary Usage and Writing Quality

Vocabulary is the foundation of writing, and vocabulary is one of the most important features that determine writing quality. Vocabulary usage influences writing quality, and lexical richness is one of distinct characters of good writing; however, researches on vocabulary usage and writing are not only limited, but also inconsistent, so the present study made a correlation analysis on vocabulary usage and writing quality and the results were shown in Table 4.2.

TABLE 4.2
THE CORRELATION BETWEEN VOCABULARY USAGE AND WRITING QUALITY

Correlations

	LS						
	1st 1000	2nd 1000	UWL	Beyond lists	tokens	LV	Score
1st 1000	1	-.578**	-.511**	-.736**	-.105	-.582**	-.175
2nd 1000	-.578**	1	.054	.081	.210	.423**	.408*
UWL	-.511**	.054	1	.280*	.208	.409**	.473*
Beyond list	-.736**	.081	.280*	1	-.010	.404*	.545*
Tokens	-.105	.210	.208	-.010	1	-.493**	-.060
LV	-.582**	.423**	.409**	.404**	-.493**	1	.552**
Score	-.175	.408*	.473*	.545*	-.060	.552**	1

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Note: Score= the writing score

Table 4.2 reports the correlation between lexical sophistication, lexical variation, tokens and writing quality. It shows that the use of 1st 1000 words has a highly negative relationship with the use of 2nd 1000 words, the academic words as well as the words not in the lists (-0.578, -0.511, and -0.736). Lexical variation has a negative relationship with the use of 1st 1000 words and tokens (-582,-493), but a highly positive relationship with the 2nd 1000 words, UWL and the words not in the list (0.423, 0.409, 0.404). It indicates that the more 1st 1000 words learners use, the smaller lexical variation is; in reverse, the learners are apt to use the words beyond 1st 1000 words, while the lexical variation is high. Besides, lexical variation has a strong negative relationship with tokens (-493), for it is the ratio of types and tokens. Bao Gui (2008) also considers that the longer learners write, the smaller lexical variation is, for they are apt to repeat words; therefore, length has an influence on lexical variation. In the present study, nearly all the subjects write a little more than 200 words, and the length has no great difference, so the length of writing papers has no great influence on calculation of LV in this way. However, it can not be denied that there exists a disadvantage to calculate LV in this way. Learners who have good command of productive vocabulary knowledge can write longer compositions but their lexical variation are low, so this calculation needs revising.

Writing quality has a negative relationship with the use of 1st 1000 words (-0.175), but a high positive correlation with the use of words beyond 1st 1000 words (0.408, 0.473 and 0.545), which means that when learners use ordinary and high-frequency words to express their meanings, they usually get low marks. Besides, writing quality has a significant positive correlation with lexical variation (0.552). When learners choose different and changeable words to express the same meaning, they can get high marks, for various kinds of expression make their writings interesting and attractive. Ma Guihua and Shi Yongzhen (2006) also find that writing quality has a significant negative correlation with 1st 1000 words, but a positive correlation with words beyond 1st 1000 words. What's more, for learners of lower language proficiency, their writing quality has no significant correlation with lexical variation, while only for learners of the higher language proficiency, their writing quality has a significant correlation with lexical variation. As they mentioned, this is probably because learners of lower language proficiency master limited vocabulary and their lexical variation is pretty low. In their research, language proficiency to some extent influences the correlation between lexical richness and writing quality. In the present study, language proficiency is not considered, but these two studies have got some similar results.

C. T-test of Vocabulary Usage between Groups of Writing Ability

Table 4.2 has shown that writing quality has a certain relationship with lexical sophistication and lexical variation. In detail, writing quality has a negative relationship with the use of 1st 1000 words, but a high positive correlation with the use of words beyond 1st 1000 words and lexical variation. Whether there exist significant differences in vocabulary usage between groups of different writing ability? The current study made a descriptive statistics of vocabulary usage and T-test between groups. The results were presented in Table 4.3 and Table 4.4. The subjects were reordered according to their writing score and divided into three groups. The first 25% was the higher group (Group 1) and the last 25% was the lower group (Group 2).

TABLE 4.3
THE GROUP STATISTICS OF VOCABULARY USAGE

		Group	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
LS	1st 1000	Group 1	87.79	3.98	.913
		Group 2	90.23	3.89	.892
	2nd 1000	Group 1	5.42	1.99	.456
		Group 2	4.74	2.21	.506
	UWL	Group 1	2.16	1.23	.282
		Group 2	1.60	1.53	.351
	Beyond lists	Group 1	4.62	2.60	.596
		Group 2	3.42	2.68	.614
LV		Group 1	56.68	5.37	1.231
		Group 2	50.46	6.24	1.432

Note: Group 1= Group of higher writing ability
Group 2= Group of lower writing ability

Table 4.3 is a descriptive statistics of vocabulary usage between groups. It shows that learners with higher writing ability can use more words on the 2nd 1000 word list, university word level and words not in the lists than the lower group (5.42>4.74; 2.16>1.60; 4.62>3.42), but use less words on the 1st 1000 word list (87.79<90.23). In addition, it also shows that the higher group's lexical variation is higher than the lower group (56.68>50.46). It means that the higher group can use more different words to express their meanings than the lower group. The reasons leading to the above results are that writing quality has a negative relationship with the use of 1st 1000 words, but a high positive correlation with the use of words beyond 1st 1000 words and lexical variation in Table 4.2. Whether there exist significant differences of vocabulary usage between the higher and lower group? T-test was needed. The results of T-test were presented in Table 4.4.

TABLE 4.4
T-TEST OF VOCABULARY USAGE OF TWO GROUPS

		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
LS	1st 1000	-1.914	36	.064	-5.03059	.14533
	2nd 1000	.998	36	.325	-.70234	2.06234
	UWL	1.248	36	.220	-.35138	1.47560
	Beyond lists	1.403	36	.169	-.53523	2.93628
LV		3.291	36	.002	2.38481	10.04572

Table 4.4 shows that there is no significant difference of lexical sophistication between two groups, because the four Sig. (2-tailed) are larger than .05 and 0 is between the 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference. However, it shows that the difference of lexical variation is significant, for the Sig (2-tailed) are smaller than .05 and 0 is excluded in the 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference. Although the two groups have differences in lexical sophistication, but the differences are not significant. The reason is that the subjects lack low-frequency words but rely on 1st 1000 words, so all the subjects need to improve their vocabulary knowledge, especially productive vocabulary. However, learners with different writing ability have a significant difference of lexical variation, so higher lexical variation leads to higher writing scores in this research. Table 4.2 has shown that lexical variation has the highest correlation with writing quality. The two results agree with each other.

V. CONCLUSION

The current research explores the correlation between vocabulary usage and writing quality. The major findings are summarized in the following parts, together with the implications from pedagogical perspectives and the limitations as well as suggestions for further study.

A. Major Findings

The research found that the subjects relied more on the first 1000 word to express their meanings in productive tasks. Although they can write enough long papers, their lexical variation was not high. Besides, it also found that the use of 1st 1000 words had a highly negative relationship with the use of 2nd 1000 words, the academic words as well as the words not in the lists. Lexical variation had a negative relationship with the use of 1st 1000 words and tokens, but a highly positive relationship with the second 1000 words, UWL and the words not in the list.

Writing quality had a negative relationship with the use of 1st 1000 words, but a high positive correlation with the use of words beyond 1st 1000 words as well as lexical variation. Subjects with different writing ability had differences in word use. The higher group used fewer words on the 1st 1000 word level but inclined to the words beyond 1st 1000, and

the difference was not significant. What's more, the higher group used different words to express the same or similar meaning, so that their lexical variation was high. The lower group was in reverse. The two groups had significant difference in lexical variation.

B. Pedagogical Implications

Pedagogically, the findings indicate that L2 vocabulary instructions should pay more attention to productive vocabulary. Teachers should master vocabulary teaching theories systematically and understand the rules of vocabulary development. According to Henriksen (1999), vocabulary development is a continuum, from partial to precise, from receptive to productive and the gradual increase of depth of knowledge. Abided by the rules, teachers should help learners build lexical networks, e.g. the syntagmatic and paradigmatic lexical relations in their minds. Thus, learners can eliminate the anxiety of lacking vocabulary but use different words to express the same or similar meaning. When learners learn new words, teachers should provide more opportunity for them to use the words they have learnt. Teachers can adopt different kinds of activities to motivate learners' interest of vocabulary learning, such as guessing words, making stories with selected words. Moreover, because the class time is limited, teachers can arrange some writing tasks to learners after class. In the writing instruction, teachers can help learners get accustomed to thinking of vocabulary as part of the writing process. Writing is a kind of productive task, and during this process, learners can use words to express their meanings.

Learners take the major responsibility of expanding and deepening vocabulary knowledge, so they should pay attention to the following things. Learners should use the new words boldly, and do not be afraid about lexical errors especially in productive tasks. Lexical errors give some hints of weakness in vocabulary learning. Of course, when learners learn new words, they should master the vocabulary knowledge consciously. They should know its meaning, spelling, pronunciation, collocation and grammatical usage etc. In the present research, the subjects relied more on the 1st 1000 words, and they used easy and simple words to express the same and similar meaning, so that their writings were in low lexical sophistication and lexical variation. Therefore, learners should not repeat the same words and try to use the low-frequency words. Furthermore, they need to master some vocabulary learning strategies. For example, they should actively make word association to build syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations, which is a good way to build lexical networks.

C. Limitations of the Study

Obviously the present study is far from adequate due to the limitations of the author's ability and practical difficulties. There surely exist some problems in the present research.

Firstly, the sample is very small, only 66. If the study covered a larger sample, the results could be more convincing.

Secondly, the current study explores vocabulary usage from two variables, lexical sophistication and lexical variation. Lexical variation is the ratio of type and token, which is influenced by the length of writing papers. Although this calculating method has a good reliability and validity, it needs revising. Besides, the research doesn't take lexical errors into consideration. It also plays an important significance in writing rating and embodies learners' productive ability.

Thirdly, the present research only chooses one writing style of the composition. Different writing styles may influence learners' choice in vocabulary use, so learners' lexical richness can change. For example, learners can use many descriptive words in narrative papers, so lexical variation is high, while learners may be inclined to use explanatory words in argumentative papers, but this kind of papers may have less variation in vocabulary choice. Ni Lan (2000) makes a study on characteristics of vocabulary use frequency in English writing, with sophomores of English majors as the subjects. She finds that there exists a significant difference on vocabulary use frequency between descriptive essays and expository papers. Therefore, writing style is a variable in the research, which needs a certain consideration.

D. Suggestions for Further Study

The present research provides an initial empirical study for further research. Going with limitations, suggestions for further study are mentioned as follows.

Firstly, further investigations can cover a larger sample or involve English majors or postgraduates in the study, so that the results could be more convincing and comprehensive.

Secondly, further studies should take lexical errors into consideration and eliminate the influence of length of writing papers on lexical variation.

Thirdly, further studies should adopt several kinds of writing styles to find the characteristics of lexical richness, and the relationship between vocabulary knowledge and vocabulary usage.

Fourthly, vocabulary learning is a kind of psychological phenomenon, so further studies can use psycholinguistic theory to explain the data, and instruct vocabulary teaching and learning.

Finally, writing is a complex psychological activity, and too many factors may influence vocabulary usage in EFL writing, such as learners' language proficiency, grammatical knowledge and affective factors, so further studies can involve these factors and explore their relationship with vocabulary usage in writing.

APPENDIX.   MARKING CRITERIA FOR CET 4 COMPOSITIONS

The criteria includes 5 ranks: 14 points, 11 points, 8 points, 5 points and 2 points. One point can be added or subtracted considering the paper's quality.

14 points: The content of the article is coherent and complete and is closely correlated with the title. The article is well structured and grammatically correct. The language used is fluent and appropriate while the sentences are variable. There should be some "bright spots" and there should be no language errors.

11 points: The content of the article is coherent and complete and is correlated with the title. The article is well organized and grammatically correct. The language is appropriate with only a few grammatical mistakes.

8 points: The content of the article is relatively coherent and correlated with the title. Some parts of the article can't express thought clearly. There exist some grammatical mistakes, some of which are serious.

5 points: The content of the article is complete and relatively correlated with the title but not coherent. The article can't express thought clearly, and there are many grammatical mistakes.

2 points: The content of the article is neither complete nor correlated with the title. The structure is in a mess and there exist serious mistakes in most sentences.

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Lili Zhai was born in Linfen, Shanxi Province, China in 1984. She received her Master degree in linguistics and applied linguistics from Chongqing University, China in 2010.

She is currently a teacher in the school of Foreign Languages, Shanxi Normal University, Linfen, Shanxi Province, China. Her major research interests are issues of Second Language Acquisition and English Teaching.

Ms Zhai got a reward in English Teaching Contest held by Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press in 2014. She continues her teaching and researching and tries to make more progress at present.

The Investigation of Compliment Response Patterns across Gender and Age among Advanced EFL Learners

Parisa Yazdani Khaneshan
English Department, Islamic Azad University, Urmia Branch, Urmia, Iran

Alireza Bonyadi
English Department, Islamic Azad University, Urmia Branch, Urmia, Iran

Abstract—**Compliment responses (CRs) as manifestations of social-cultural standards and politeness varieties of a certain speech community are prevalent types of speech acts which are vulnerable to be misunderstood and therefore cause communication breakdown. Having this in mind, the recent study aimed at investigating compliment response strategies of Iranian advanced EFL learners across gender and age. The data were collected through application of a Discourse Completion Task (DCT), borrowed from Chen and Yang (2010), with four situational settings (appearance, clothing, ability, and possession) to 50 male and 50 female advanced EFL learners of an English institute in Iran. Based on qualitative data analysis, no difference was shown between the CR strategies employed by male and female participants in terms of frequency. Likewise, it was revealed that the frequency of CR strategies used by teenage and adult groups was very close. However, scrutinizing the emerging themes, besides similarities between the given groups, some subtle differences in the terminology of the employed strategies were detected.**

Index Terms—**compliment response, interlanguage pragmatics, pragmatic competence, speech acts**

I. INTRODUCTION

Discourse, interaction, pragmatics, and successful communication as the main objectives of teaching and learning endeavor have been the center of attention by linguists. Communicative competence, too, has been a topic of interest since Hymes (1972&1973), Munby (1978), and Canale & Swain (1980) presented their work in this matter. Recent trends for communicative competence "have put less emphasis on structural and cognitive characteristics of communication and more on the myriad social, cultural, and pragmatic implications of what it means to communicate in a second language" (Brown, 2007,p.218).

Hymes (1972), the sociolinguists who coined the term communicative competence (CC), argued that Chomsky's (1965) declaration of competence which implies 'knowledge of language is knowledge of rules' was too limited as he proposed a distinction between knowledge about language forms and knowledge that enables a person to communicate functionally and interactively. Later on Canale and Swain (1980), and Bachman (1990), to define CC, presented their own models of CC referring to abilities to control formal structure of language, including grammatical competence and discourse competence, and functional aspect of communication.

Based on discourse analysis, which refers to "the examination of the relationship between forms and functions of language" (Brown, 2007, p.226), it is not possible to analyze a single sentence without taking its context into account. To produce and comprehend language we need to have ability to perceive and process language in use. This definition of discourse analysis implies importance of pragmatics in conveyance and interpretation of meaning.

Pragmatics which deals with "the study of meaning in relation to the context" (Paltridge 2006, p.53) can be studied in three main fields: contrastive pragmatics which is based on comparing linguistic realizations of a particular language that is the object of study to other languages (Riely,1988); cross cultural pragmatics (CCP), which is developed out of the field contrastive pragmatics refers to the idea that people in different countries have different ways of speaking that is subject to different cultural norms; and interlanguage pragmatics(ILP), which has its root in cross cultural pragmatics, concerns itself with the " investigation of NNSs' comprehension of speech acts, and the acquisition of L2-related speech act knowledge"(Kasper & Dahl,1991, P.215). Based on Thomas (1983), ILP pinpoints how learners realize speech acts and indicates that even advanced learners can fail to convey or comprehend intended meanings.

Pragmatic transfer is one of the fields of study in interlanguage pragmatics. According to Kasper and Rose (2001), much of what learners need to advance their pragmatic competence already exist in their pragmatic repertory, that is, positive transfer from L1 to L2 would ease acquisition of the socio-pragmatic knowledge.

'Speech act' is another key issue in the study of interlanguage pragmatic. Ellis (2008) claims that speech acts "constitute attempts by language users to perform specific actions, in particular interpersonal functions such as compliments, requests, or complaints" (p.159).

Compliments and compliment responses are two aspects of speech acts. A compliment is defined by Holmes (as cited in Phoocharoensil 2012) as "a speech act which explicitly or implicitly attributes to someone other than the speaker, usually the person addressed, for some 'good' (possession, characteristic, skill, etc.) which is positively valued by the speaker and the hearer". A compliment response, on the other hand, has been referred to as adjacency pairs by Pomerantz (1978) in which, the compliment constitutes the first pair part and the compliment response constitutes the second pair part. Therefore, the way to respond to the compliments is an important issue and has been categorized based on different classifications like nationality, culture-bound specifications, level of politeness, and so on. In other words, compliment responses can be the demonstration of the social-cultural values and politeness varieties of the speakers.

Compliments as multifunctional speech acts and compliment responses as manifestations of social-cultural standard of a certain speech community which are prevalent types of speech acts are worthy of study and need special attention by the researchers.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Compliment responses have been studied from different perspectives. Early works on compliment response by (Pomerantz, 1978; Holmes, 1988; Herbert, 1986) focusing on different varieties of English revealed different facets of CRs like the common syntactic structures used to respond compliments and the pragmatics of CR strategies used in the English speaking communities. Later on, in other languages, too, research on CRs became a center of attention. While some studies discovered many differences and similarities between the diversity of languages, others compared native and non-native speaker's production for compliments and responses to compliments (jaworski, 1995; Herbert, 1997; Ruhi & Dogan, 2001; Farghal & Haggan, 2006 among others). Contrasting the CR patterns of English language to other languages, it was indicated that acceptance of compliments was widely used by native English speakers (Herbert 1986; Holmes &Brown 1997; Chen 1993) and the speakers of Asian regions like Japan, China, Taiwan and Vietnam were likely to devaluate or reject compliments. (Chen 1993; Baba 1996; Tran 2006)

Moreover, there were also studies comparing compliment response patterns of ESL and EFL learners. For instance, Cheng (2011) explored CRs produced by Chinese ESL and EFL speakers as well as by the native speakers of American. The result of the study depicted that the reason for Chinese ESL participants' strong cultural awareness in responding to compliments in English was their rich exposure to authentic input.

It is essential to mention that the variation of findings in the literature on CRs is determined in light of variety of theoretical orientations such as Leech (1983), Lakoff (1973), and Brown and Levinson's (1987), politeness theories. Furthermore, a range of taxonomies to categorize CR utterances like Pomeranz's, Herbert's, and Holmes' taxonomies were utilized by the researchers (Chen & Yang, 2010, P.1952).

With regard to Persian, one of the main studies was conducted by Sharifian (2005) who explains Persian CRs in terms of cultural schemas. In addition, some cross cultural studies compared Iranian production of CR to that of native English speakers.(Razi 2013; Shahsavari, Alimohammadi & Eslami Rasekh 2014), and some studies were conducted within Persian culture considering various factors such as: profession, cities, educational level and gender. ((Razmjoo, Barabadi & Arfa, 2013; Allami & Montazeri, 2012; Heidari-Shahsavar, Dastjerdi & Marvi, 2011). Surprisingly, however, few studies investigated the CR patterns used by Iranian advanced EFL learners across age and gender; the current study aims at answering the following research questions:

1. How do female and male advanced EFL learners differ regarding compliment response speech act?
2. How do adult and teenage advanced EFL learners differ regarding compliment response speech act?

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Participants

By means of FCE test, a total of 100 advanced Iranian EFL learners of English, that is, 50 females and 50 males with the age range of 16 to 40 were considered to take part in the study in order to yield more significant, and at the same time trustable results. In this study, the data were collected in one of the English institutes called Atlas, in Urmia, Azarbaijan-e-gharbi. The participants all had the experience of learning English for at least 4 years at English institutes.

B. Instruments

Conducting a research study entails utilization of some instruments which help it to smoothly run toward achieving its intended goals. With this in mind, and to put the theoretical aspects of the current study into practice, the following instruments were utilized to pave the way for data collection procedures:
- First Certificate in English (FCE).
- A discourse compliment task (DCT) borrowed from Chen and Yang (2010).
- Holmes' (1988, 1993) framework of CR strategies.

C. Procedure

Before embarking on the study, the researcher made sure that all the participants were homogeneous by reading (part 5 to 7 of the Reading and Use of English section) and writing sections of a FCE test. In other words, more than 100

male and female learners with the age range of 16 to 40 were selected in advanced level to take the reading and writing part of a FCE test which lasted for more than 2 hours. Then, the researcher handed out the discourse completion task (DCT), presented as appendix A, to the learners to answer. Of course, as the number of participants who took the FCE test was more than 100, the researcher managed to choose 50 male and 50 females without considering their age, and 50 teenage and 50 adults without considering their gender. That is, in this study, all females are compared to all males regardless of their age and all teenagers are compared to all adults regardless of their gender. Besides, the reliability of the test scores was considered by applying inter-rater reliability; the students' writing and reading tests were scored by the researcher and one of her collogues and the average score was used to make decision.

It should be mentioned that, 45% of the total mark was assigned for the reading part, which includes part 5, part6, and part 7 of the Reading and Use of English section of the FCE test, and 30% and 25% of the total mark were assigned to the part one of the writing, which was an essay, and part two of the writing, which was a review of the book or an article or an email, respectively. The questionnaires of the students who gained 70 and up in the FCE test were considered as the raw data to analyze and answer the research questions.

Before answering the questionnaire, the participants were informed about the aim and scope of the study and were asked to imagine themselves in the situations and write down the answers they would naturally give in each situation. Participants were given 20 minutes to answer the questionnaire. They were required to mention their gender and age in the specified blanks in the questionnaire as well.

D. Data Analysis

Based on Holmes' (1988, 1993) classification of compliment response patterns (presented as appendix B) which consists of three macro strategies, namely, Accept, Evade, and Reject, and 10 micro strategies which are classified under each macro strategy, the CRs were coded and classified by the researchers and the frequency of each type of compliment responses employed by female and male participants was calculated to address the first research question of this study, and the frequency of CR types used by teenage and adult participants was totalized to answer the second research question. Furthermore, as a typical qualitative research to address the research questions, emerging themes were Written down and examined.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To address the first research question of the study, which concerned with the differences between females and males regarding compliment response speech act, the researcher made an attempt to compare frequencies by which male and female advanced EFL learners applied the 10 CR strategies introduced by Holmes (1988, 1993). Similarly, to address the second research question, which focused on the differences between compliment response patterns employed by adults and teenagers, the frequencies of their responses to the mentioned strategies by Holmes were compared. Emerging themes were also referred to in both cases.

Research question 1: **How do female and male advanced EFL learners differ regarding compliment response speech act?**

The frequency of CR strategies employed by females and males is reported, illustrated and compared by table I which indicates that males and females used Accept: Appreciation Token strategy very often and with very close frequencies, females 39.8% and males 33.3%. The frequencies were even closer in Accept: Agreeing Utterance, 13.4% female utterances and 14.1% male utterances, in Accept: Downgrading Qualifying Utterance, 2.6% female utterances, and 3.8% male utterances, and in Accept: Return Compliment, 19% female utterances and 21.6% male utterances.

Regarding Reject compliment strategy, females used Disagreeing Utterance in .9% of their utterances and males used it with a slight difference, that is, 6.1%. However, regarding Question Accuracy, they were very close, that is, females, .4% and males .5%. A slight difference can be noticed in the realization of Challenging Sincerity strategy, though it was not significant, by both females and males who used in 3.1% and 1.4% of their utterances respectively.

Regarding Evade strategy, Shift Credit was used by females 6.5% compared to 5.2% used by males. Moreover, Informative Comment was 5.2% among females and 7.5% among males. In addition, females used Request Reassurance 8.2% and males used it 6.6%.

TABLE I.
COMPLIMENT RESPONSE STRATEGIES USED BY ALL FEMALES AND MALES

	Compliment Strategies	Gender	
		Female	Male
Accept	Appreciation Token	39.8%	33.3%
	Agreeing Utterance	13.4%	14.1%
	Downgrading Qualifying Utterance	2.6%	3.8%
	Return Compliment	19.0%	21.6%
Reject	Disagreeing Utterance	.9%	6.1%
	Question Accuracy	.4%	.5%
	Challenging Sincerity	3.9%	1.4%
Evade	Shift Credit	6.5%	5.2%
	Informative Comment	5.2%	7.5%
	Request Reassurance	8.2%	6.6%

In sum, males and females do not seem to have a noticeable difference in the type of compliment strategies they choose. However, emerging themes in the qualitative analysis present subtle differences which are well worth to mention.

Although the frequency of the strategies used by all female and all males (regardless of their age) to accept compliments were very close, there were some differences in the terminology used by each group: First, in almost all situations the expression '*Knock on the wood*' was detected in the responses of all female learners. Whereas, what all male learners employed to accept a compliment (e.g. '*thanks man I know you would say that*' and '*yeah buddy I know that*') pinpoints a gender difference in responding compliments. Second, females considered the compliments on their clothes or possessions as offers of solidarity since they mostly addressed the market they bought them at using responses like '*If you want you can buy the same sweater at Ostadan mall.*' While males considered them as praise or admiration since they used expressions like '*I guess you can't find this sweater in Iran*' and '*my other sweaters are even better*'. Third, in the case of compliments on their ability all females tended to use micro strategy of 'Request Reassurance' like '*oh, really?*' more than 'Informative Comment' and 'Shift Credit, to evade the compliment whereas all male learners employed informative comments like '*I tried a lot man*' and '*I worked on it very hard.*'

Research question 2: How do teenage and adult advanced EFL learners differ regarding compliment response speech act?

The frequency of CR strategies employed by teenagers and adults, illustrated and compared in table II, indicates that adults and teenagers used Accept: Appreciation Token strategy the most, that is, adults 37.1% and teenagers 35.5%. Regarding Accept: Agreeing Utterance, adults used 11.3% in their utterances and teenagers used 14.8%; moreover, adults used 3.8% Accept: Downgrading Qualifying Utterance and teenagers 2.8%. In addition, Accept: Return Compliment strategy was used 17.6% in adults' utterances and 24.8% in teenagers' utterances. Regarding Reject compliment strategy, adults used Disagreeing Utterance in 5% of their utterances and teenagers used it with a slight difference, that is, 2.4%. Furthermore, regarding Question Accuracy, adults used it 0% and teenagers .7%. A slight difference can be noticed in the use of Challenging Sincerity strategy, though it was not significant, by adults who used it 5% and teenagers in 1.4% of their utterances respectively. Regarding Evade strategy, Shift Credit was used by adults 6.3% compared to 5.5% used by teenagers. Moreover, Informative Comment was 6.3% among adults and 5.9% among teenagers. In addition, adults used Request Reassurance 7.5% and teenagers used it 6.2%.

TABLE II.
COMPLIMENT RESPONSE STRATEGIES USED BY ALL TEENAGERS AND ADULTS

	Compliment Strategies	Age	
		Adults	Teenagers
Accept	Appreciation Token	37.1%	35.5%
	Agreeing Utterance	11.3%	14.8%
	Downgrading Qualifying Utterance	3.8%	2.8%
	Return Compliment	17.6%	24.8%
Reject	Disagreeing Utterance	5.0%	2.4%
	Question Accuracy	.0%	.7%
	Challenging Sincerity	5.0%	1.4%
Evade	Shift Credit	6.3%	5.5%
	Informative Comment	6.3%	5.9%
	Request Reassurance	7.5%	6.2%

Similar to the result of the study on the differences between females and males' use of CR strategies, the qualitative study depicts little difference between teenagers and adults. However, scrutinizing the learners' responses to the

questionnaire descriptively, the fundamental difference between teenage and adult learners was the sense of humor in teenager's responses which was missed in all adult learners' responses. In other words, teens used kind of language that expressed their playfulness. For instance some of the teenagers' response to the question 4 of the DCT (You are wearing a Rolex watch. A friend of yours sees it and says to you: "what a watch! I wish I had one like that." You reply :) were

T1: *Yes, I'm a rich man.*

T2: *Yes Rolex Company is mine.*

T3: *I stole it, it's a stolen watch.*

And about the compliment on his clothing Teenage 4 using the micro strategy of 'Agreeing Utterance' responded:

T4: *Everything looks good on me*.

To summarize, the qualitative analysis showed no difference between CR patterns of female and male advanced EFL learners in terms of frequency. This result conforms to the findings of Heidari Shahsavar et al., (2011) in a way that they found similarities between female and male Persian speakers regarding the use of macro strategies (Accept, Evade, Reject) although their participants were all teenagers. Correspondingly, Razmjoo et al., (2013), by getting engaged in conversations with different people of different educational levels to compliment them found out that there were no significant differences between females and males compliment response patterns. Likewise, the frequency of the calculated data depicted no significant difference between teenage and adult learners.

Incidentally, as qualitative research is known to be process oriented with categories that emerge, the emerging items were scrutinized. The result depicted some similarities and some differences between the CR patterns of all groups under the study.

A. CR Patterns Commonly Used by All Advanced EFL Learners

One distinction quality implies that all gender and age groups accepted the compliment opting for the micro strategy of appreciation token followed by return compliment in almost all situations.(e.g. '*Thanks, I'm sure your presentation would be better.*', '*Thanks, you look beautiful too.*' This result depicts that the schema of '*Shekaste-nafsi*' glossed as 'modesty' introduced by Sharifian (2008) is rooted in Iranian culture. The second characteristic of the CRs used by all advanced EFL learners was the cultural specific strategy of '*ta'arof*', offering the property (the object of compliment) to the complimenter. Prominence of '*ta'arof*' in the responses of advanced EFL learners testifies pragmatic transfer and attests positive correlation hypothesis introduced by Ellis (2008) that "the more proficient the learners the more likely transfer is to take place" (p.190). This result also attests the importance of politeness strategy in Persian culture and is compatible with the findings of Razmjoo et al. (2013) that "there were no significant differences between males and females' compliment response types, or the degree of modesty or ta'arof" (p.44).

Furthermore, as in almost all situations the responses to compliments (by all gender and age groups) often initiated by "*thank you*", it can be concluded that advance-level learners are willing to adopt target language norms. And additional expressions like '*it's kind of you*', '*I've worked on it very hard*', and '*it was not as good as yours*' used right after saying 'thank you' can indicate that EFL learners feel tension in terms of pragmatic choice while responding to compliments. Comparing this to the findings of Yeong Kim (2014) in an ESL setting in Korea, one can conclude that both EFL and ESL learners feel tension in responding to compliments. "The act of giving compliments did not create much tension for learners in terms of pragmatic choice; however, learners did show tension when responding to compliments" (Yeong Kim, p.96). Albeit, the same finding contradicts the findings of Yeong Kim (2014) in that his findings showed age differences, that is, the response types to compliments differed depending on the ESL learner's age; younger learners often used 'thank you' alone and the older learners (older than 30) included humble expressions like '*you will do much better than me*' after '*thank you*' more often than did younger learners, whereas finding of the recent study shows the same frequency of using expressions of modesty preceded by thank you in the both age groups.

B. The Differences between Male and Female Participants

First, the terminology used by females and males, in almost all situations (appearance, clothing, ability, and possession) to accept compliments indicates a gender difference in responding compliments. For example, the expression like '*Knock on the wood*' used by females, and '*thanks man I know you would say* that', '*yeah buddy I know that*' employed by males pinpoints what Lakoff (1975) stated in her book, Language and women's place, that women's language is different from men's language. And from the expression '*knock on the wood*' which is used by a number of female participants in different situations it comes to mind that females are more superstitious than males. Second, as female learners mostly responded the compliments on their clothing by addressing the market they bought it at, it occurred to the researcher that females consider the compliments as offers of solidarity while males considered them as praise or admiration since utterances like '*This sweater is so hard to find in Iran*' and '*I was in Paris last week*' was salient among their response. This finding goes in line with the findings of Allami and Montazeri (2012).

C. The Differences between Teenage and Adult Participants

The single difference between teenage and adult learners signifies the sense of humor in teenager's responses which is missed in all adult learners' responses.

V. CONCLUSION

Compliment responses which act as adjacency pairs of compliments have been found to be of great significance in the area of pragmatics because they reflect the socio-cultural values and politeness consideration of the speaker. And based on cross-cultural studies, there is no universal model regarding CRs among communities. That is, different nations with varying cultures employ divergent strategies to responses compliments. Hence, responding to compliments without taking the communities cultural conventions and norms into account can cause misunderstanding and communication problems.

On the other hand, to be proficient, learners need to be competent both in grammar and pragmatic of the target language as communication breakdowns are the consequence of lack of socio- cultural knowledge and discourse aspects in different situations dependent on the language they produce. To circumvent this problem, learners of a foreign language need to be exposed to the authentic discourse and be provided with implicit or explicit instruction about pragmatic knowledge of the speech acts of the target language.

Considering potential differences between male and female's CR strategies and neglect of age differences in most of the studies concerning compliment response speech act, the current study made an effort to examine CR strategies used by female and male advanced EFL learners as well as the strategies used by teenage and adult learners. To this end, a discourse completion task (DCT) was employed to elicit compliment response strategies used by the participants who were advanced EFL learners of an institute in Urmia, and Holmes' (1988, 1993) framework of CR strategies was used to categorize the data after coding. The data were analyzed qualitatively and the result revealed no difference between the frequency of employed strategies between females and males. However, analyzing the emerging themes besides the similarities some differences were perceived.

Generally, all female and males differed in the kind of language they use, the consideration of the compliments on their clothes and possessions, and the usage of micro strategies of evade in responding to compliments on their ability. In addition, all females, based on the emergent themes of the qualitative study, appeared to be a bit superstitious. And about the differences between teenagers and adults, although the frequency of the employed strategies by teenage and adult learners implied no significant difference between them, descriptive analysis of the emerging themes characterized the teenagers as cheerful individuals. And dealing with comparability, all advanced EFL learners, regardless of their gender or age, seem to be similar in expressing modesty as in most of the cases they commonly used expressions like '*you're nicer than me*', '*I'm sure you will have a better presentation*' and '*but I struggled a lot*' after appreciation token (thank you) to devalue themselves and raise the status of their friends. Moreover, another CR strategy seen frequently in the responses of all advanced EFL learners from any age or gender was a politeness gesture namely '*ta'arof*' by which Persian culture is characterized. This cultural specific response which usually follows appreciation token in the responses of EFL learners, as it occurs to the researcher, can imply: pragmatic transfer, lack of pragmatic competence in responding compliments, and inner struggle or tension felt by the learners in choosing pragmatic norms.

APPENDIX A

Survey Questionnaire (borrowed from Chen and Yang, 2010).
Male
Female
Age: …………......................
Direction: please respond to the following situations. For each situation, you might find more than one response socially appropriate. In that case please write all of them in the space provide.

1. You meet an acquaintance you haven't seen for some time. After exchange of greeting, s/he says: "you look so nice! Even nicer than when I saw you last." To this you reply:
   A………………………………………………………………………………………
   B………………………………………………………………………………………
   C………………………………………………………………………………………
   D………………………………………………………………………………………

2. You are wearing a sweater. One of your friends meets you and says "what a nice sweater! You look great in it!" You reply:
   A………………………………………………………………………………………
   B………………………………………………………………………………………
   C………………………………………………………………………………………
   D………………………………………………………………………………………

3. You have given a presentation in your biology class. After the presentation one of your classmates comes to you and says: "that was a great presentation. I really enjoyed it." You reply:
   A………………………………………………………………………………………
   B………………………………………………………………………………………
   C………………………………………………………………………………………
   D………………………………………………………………………………………

4. You are wearing a Rolex watch. A friend of yours sees it and says to you: "wow! What a watch! I wish I had one like that." You reply:

A…………………………………………………………………………………………………
B…………………………………………………………………………………………………
C…………………………………………………………………………………………………
D…………………………………………………………………………………………………

APPENDIX B

HOLMES' (1988, 1993) FRAMEWORK OF CR STRATEGIES

Macro level	Micro level
Accept	1) Appreciation token
	2) Agreeing utterance
	3) Downgrading/qualifying utterance
	4) Return compliment
Reject	1) Disagreeing utterance
	2) Question accuracy
	3) Challenging sincerity
Evade	1) Shift credit
	2) Informative comment
	3) Request reassurance

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Parisa Yazdani Khaneshan, was born in Urmia, Iran in 1972. She completed her MA course in English Language Teaching at Islamic Azad University, Urmia, Iran, in 2015. She has been teaching EFL courses in different institutes since 2009. Her current interests in Research are Discourse Analysis, and Language Teaching & Learning.

Alireza Bonyadi, was born in Urmia, Iran, 1964. He earned his PhD in Teaching English as a Second Language from faculty of education university of Malaya, Kualalumpur, Malaysia in 2011. Presently he is the Head of English Department at Science and Research Branch of IAU, Azarbaijan-e-gharbi, Iran.

Intercultural Awareness in Foreign Language Teaching: A Chinese Perspective

Yinghao Li

College of Foreign Languages, Yanbian University, China

Abstract—**The paper discusses the status quo of the English culture teaching and learning in Chinese colleges. In the pedagogical level, most foreign language teachers have very vague idea of what the culture should be and what should be taught in terms of English culture. Lacking in the principled methodology in promoting students' intercultural awareness, teachers either turn deaf to the new trend or frustrated by the communicative approach, somehow falling back to the more traditional but effective grammar-translation approach. The changing scenario of language teaching has constituted new challenges for the English educators in China. The paper proposes that more research should be channeled to the research of the paradigm of the English as an International Language (EIL) through intercultural awareness.**

Index Terms—**intercultural awareness, culture, foreign language teaching, the EIL**

I. INTRODUCTION

It is well tested that cultural competence plays a critical role in successful language learning (Ellis, 1994). In terms of English language teaching and learning, the culture of the English-speaking countries, represented by the American or the British culture, has become an inseparable component in the EFL/ESL context. The fact that the target language learning "would lose substance" (Nazari, A., 2007) without proper understanding of the target culture has become unanimously agreed upon by language educators and cultural linguists. *The place for debate is what and how this culture component should be taught to the learners.* The issue has been complicated by the fast spread of the English, as the ownership of the English language has been called into the question (Widdowson, 1994), and the emergence of the diversity of Englishes worldwide, many of them derived from either the colonization or the national determination into the globalized world. The cultural issue in the EFL/ESL, in turn, has become a delicate matter with fast-evolving social changes, as many new symbols were created and old ones redefined. The sociopolitical and geopolitical power has shown increasing presence in determining the relationship between learners and the language they are learning (Byram, M., 2003). In addition, the strong trend toward the multiculturalism and the increasing respect to the minority cultures have undermined the deep-rooted superiority of some cultures and peoples; instead, the "sub-culture" has emerged into "co-culture" (Samovar, L.A. et al., 2004). Meanwhile, the increasing compartmentalization of culture in an individual society has become intense, leaving many new forms of new cultures. In all, language teaching should reflect itself upon those changes and make some moves to streamline the new needs of learners.

Unlike the EFL/ESL learners in many parts of the non-English-speaking countries/areas, Chinese learners of English have less accessibility to the authentic contact with the culture of the English-speaking countries and/or English-speaking communities[1] worldwide. Presently, English culture teaching at college is restricted within the textbook and limited extracurricular activities. Though great achievements have been attained through elevating the culture teaching in the EFL/ESL context, there remains large room for improvement especially in terms of approaches and content of the cultural component in the English language teaching and learning. With that goal, the paper gives a glimpse of the present status of culture in college English teaching and learning through summarizing some major research findings since the early 80s. The changing scenario of language teaching has constituted new challenges for the English educators in China. The paper proposes that more research should be channeled to the paradigm of the English as an International Language (EIL) or English as a Global Language (EGL).

II. CULTURE TEACHING AND LEARNING AT COLLEGE LEVEL

The voice to incorporating the cultural component in the English language teaching has started to be heard in 1980s and become louder a decade later. Up to now, English educators have fully realized the importance of the culture teaching in the process of language learning.

A. Theoretical Consideration

The full-fledged research into the cultural component in the English language teaching in China has been initiated when the communicative approach was introduced into China, followed by the discussion upon the concept of culture

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[1] By saying English-speaking communities, I mean that the institutions or areas where English is not the native language but the language of communication, even lingua franca.

and the ultimate goal and content of the English culture education. In term of whose culture shall be taught and learnt for English majors, English educators and applied linguists unanimously favored the British and/or the North American culture, with the increasing profile of the Canadian and Australian cultures in recent decade. With the decline of the British presence on the world affairs and economy, American culture, with its characteristic rhotic accent, has usurped the lion's share of the English teaching market in China and sneaked into the classroom in the new millennium, leaving other types of English and the culture affiliated to it as decenterized variant of American English and culture. However, teaching whose English culture utterly depends on teacher's own preference and educational background.

A central academic issue that has been actively discussed in the last decades is how to define culture in term of foreign language teaching. But the definition of "culture" itself and its relationship to language are far from being agreed upon. A somewhat authoritative definition of culture was proposed by Hu and Gao (1997), as mentioned below: "In terms of the FLT we tend to define the term as the life pattern of a target group from the perspective of cultural anthropology. This scope of this definition is rather broad, involving life routines and customs as well as the value orientation implicated in the practices of the customs." (p.8)

Cao Deming (2007)[2], among others, argues that *culture is the essence of language*, and language learning should be placed in the social framework of the target culture.

A different opinion contends that culture can be separated from language when it comes to the foreign culture teaching. This school of thinking, taking a pragmatic and instrumental view, considers culture as the amalgam of idioms, social customs and practices, and other rituals of a target culture, that can be conveyed through language but is not necessarily the language itself (Hu, Gao, 1997). Though researchers adhering to the second idea have yet to develop a coherent definition of culture and its relationship to language, this view implies and possible alternative in foreign language culture teaching and learning. Compared with the native speakers, the foreign language learners have grown out of a totally different social environment; thus it is impossible for college students to acquire the foreign culture or second culture in a short space of time even though they would have opportunity living and studying in an English-speaking country, for cultural learning does not seem to have a positive correlation with the linguistic advancement.

Obviously, the second perspective still cannot hold water. Without knowing about foreign culture, people often encounter communication failure. The next issue is the ultimate goal for cultural teaching in foreign language teaching and learning. Hu and Gao (1997) systematically proposed the paradigm of the foreign culture teaching (mostly English culture) through the cross-cultural perspective: verbal communication, non-verbal communication, communication practices and etiquettes, social structure and interpersonal relationship, and value orientation. An associated issue is the ultimate goal of the English culture teaching. The discussion in this field focuses on the establishment of the intercultural communicative competence (Cao, 1998; Wen, 1999). Wang (2006) suggested that the scope of the intercultural communicative competence is much narrower than the intercultural competence as he claimed to include linguistic competence, social-pragmatic competence, intercultural competence, and social-cultural competence, with the latter ones progressively include the former ones in eccentric circles. Han (2002) specifically pointed out that the intercultural awareness should incorporate the native culture and the alien culture in an organic fashion.

In terms of how to teach English culture, Cao (1998) identified two approaches, culture knowledge and culture understanding approaches. The former emphasizes the teaching of the static cultural knowledge of the target countries, normally the GB and the US, which corresponds cultural rituals proposed by Hu and Gao and the researchers upholding the separation of culture and language. The latter focuses on the cultivation of the English culture through multiple perspectives and aims at the establishment of the cultural awareness. He also argues that the English culture teaching should entail not only those countries with English as the native language but also countries that use the English as a major communicating language. Finally, he argues that the appreciation and interpretation of the English culture lies in the intersection of multiple perspectives, considering the culture as a process rather than the teaching and learning of the cultural stereotypes. Zhao and Zhao (2002) put forward four pragmatic principles in English culture teaching. They argued that most English learners would not have access to or interest in the English culture learning. So learners can only know of the English culture and draw upon some useful experiences of the target culture. They also contended that the comparative principle should be given full play in process the cultural teaching, aiming at looking back the native culture and turn tolerant to the target culture when differences prop up.

B. Cultural Component in the Syllabus and Curriculum Design

The National Syllabus for English Majors, approved by the Ministry of Education in 2000, is an important document that sets the bench mark for the English major education. The curriculum of the English major falls into three modules: language skills, major-related knowledge, and kaleidoscopic knowledge. Culture-related courses, such as literature, social and cultural studies of the Western countries, are included into the second module, competing resources with the linguistics-related courses. The cultural awareness, or "the sensitivity to the cross-cultural differences" (Syllabus, p3), is to be enhanced through the knowledge based courses in senior years. However, the module is open to append courses that suit the needs for the English education. Though the culture teaching is not specifically defined in the Syllabus, it does place different requirements for the new enrollees and English majors above freshmen respectively (Table 1).

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[2] **http://www.jyb.com.cn/cm/jycm/beijing/zgjyb/7b/t20070427_80793.htm**

TABLE 1
CULTURAL COMPETENCE REQUIREMENTS FOR NEW ENROLLEES AND STUDENTS ABOVE FRESHMEN

Freshmen	Students Above Freshmen
• To have a good command of the Chinese culture and language skills • To have a basic understanding of the geography, history and the national situations of the Great Britain and the U.S. • To have basic knowledge of mathematics, physics and chemistry	• To familiarize the Chinese cultural heritage and has abilities to appreciate arts • To know the geography, history, country state, cultural heritage and customs of the English-speaking countries • To acquire as much knowledge of humanism and science and technology • To be competent in oral and written Chinese • To have a strong awareness of innovation

The guiding document has aroused great enthusiasm of implementing the culture teaching in all possible courses in English majors. To name just some examples: the teaching in English newspaper and media, extensive and intensive reading, and rhetoric has streamlined to associate the need of culture teaching and learning (Xiao, 2007). The culture-related courses like English literature and US & GB survey, which are traditionally core courses for English major, have boomed to include cross-cultural communication and Chinese culture into the syllabus. But for non-English major students, culture learning can only be dependent on teachers' style and sense of responsibility.

The new Syllabus takes into consideration of the balancing of the knowledge and the communicative capability and that of the target culture and native culture (Liu, Hu, 2002). This is more or less dialectical response to the contrasting idea of the culture. For one thing, the syllabus emphasizes the importance of communicative appropriacy through culture-related courses, placing the cultural awareness as one of the ultimate objectives. The importance of the native culture is first raised, implying that the fostering of an intercultural sensitivity can only develop with the aid of the native culture. For another, the English language is implied as a tool for further studies or professional domains, representing a utilitarian tendency for quick plunging into the workforce.

The fostering of the intercultural competence is not through knowledge-based lecturing, but a personal experience in authentic situations when conversing with people from different cultural backgrounds, not restricted in the English-speaking countries. The time allocation to the culture-related courses seems disproportionate to the ultimate goals of cultivating an intercultural awareness, which theorists always idealize. For some key universities, the culture-based courses spread out from the second to the last semester; however, for local universities, those courses are crowded from the 5th to 7th semesters and competing time resource that otherwise is given to individual interests.

III. A CRITIQUE FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE EIL PARADIGM

A. The EIL Paradigm

With the fast spread of English as the leading language in science and communication, it has become the one of the imperatives for people who want to get informed by the latest economic, technological and cultural development. The number of people whose second language is English or who receive English education as a foreign language has far surpassed that of English native speakers. The statistics of the British Council shows that around 750 million people are believed to speak English as a foreign language. In this context, it is often very hard to determine the cultural basis in the process of English teaching (McKay, 2003).

McKay (2003) identified two important ways that culture can play in language teaching: linguistic dimension of culture and pedagogical dimension of culture, the former involving semantic, pragmatic and discoursal features and the latter the option of the teaching material and methodology in teaching. The culture-conditioned meaning and textual organization is contingent upon the specific historical, social and cultural development. It is not only true to the English-speaking countries but also the countries who officially uphold English as the important language for communications between different ethnic groups. Regarding the topic and content selection in the English teaching, there are two options: either material related with the English-speaking countries that assert great influence in world economy and culture is selected for teaching; or some national characteristics should be entailed in the textbook development. An example mentioned in McKay's article is the interesting connection between ELT, patriotism and Muslin faith in some provinces of Pakistan. Some topics in English primers in Korea also reflect Korean cultural heritage by using transliteration of Korean names for places and names.

As many EIL experts and educators believe that the status of the international English should be culture-free, or it should be de-nationalized. To grasp the second language does not necessarily mean that the acquisition of the second culture, which might be totally different from the countries as in the case of China or Korea. Meanwhile, the main area for using English language in communication is in the academic and scientific worlds, leaving less space for interpersonal communication. What's more, when encountered situation that deals with content of sensitive or delicate nature, people naturally count on their native tongue, and discreetly use the English to negotiate the meaning between parties from different cultural background. Many cases in pragmatics can prove this point.

B. Conceptual Analysis of Cultural Teaching in China

The first problem concerning the current culture teaching in China's context is that the educators have still be obsessed with the native-speakerism and the idealized culture paragon represented by some major English-speaking

cultures. The promotion of the intercultural competence implies a basic presupposition that Chinese students should at first know the facts of those countries and then compares them with their own native culture, as explicitly identified in the National syllabus and specifically practiced by English teachers. This does not mean to say this approach is wrong. But it puts much more pressure for teachers to become first-handed bicultural or at least accumulate great knowledge of the target culture, which is nonetheless impossible. The fervor of hankering after the American culture brings about serious side effects upon the cultural identity and the role of English learners. Firstly, learners' culture will relegate into the secondary status with the target culture being the model role to follow. This is particular the common problem in the case of developing countries when the American culture is disguised and appears to be total freedom and democracy and idealized way of life. A direct result is the deterioration be native language and cultural awareness (Lu, 1999). Many researchers believe that this is a new form of cultural imperialism and invasion by the superpower that has the intention to control the world. Halliday (2007) has downplayed the native-speakerism, as he insists that focus on the native speaker and native culture in the EFL and ESL context is not justified, or neglecting the basic characteristics of the learning environment. Secondly, learners' experience and former knowledge base will be neglected. Cook (1999) once argues that "L2 users differ from monolingual native speakers in their knowledge of the L2s and L1s and in some of their cognitive processes, they should be considered as speakers in their own right, not as approximations to monolingual native speakers." By following the model role of the idealized speaker/listener of the target culture, learners are misled to assimilate into the "virtual" cultural environment by forgetting all their past history and reshape themselves in the process of learning. As Cook (1999) indicates, the labeling of "native speaker" is itself problematic and diversified in terms of one's bio-developmental characteristics.

The second problem is that there is an observable mismatch between the academic discussion and the practices of culture teaching. The means two things: on the one hand, the academic world does not provide teachers with an operational paradigm of how to carry out culture teaching in the classroom. Thus the culture teaching has become an idiosyncratic practices that characterized by the teacher's own style. On the other hand, due to lacking systematic training and principled methodology in promoting students' intercultural awareness, teachers, either turn deaf to the discussion or frustrated by the communicative approach, somehow fall back to the more traditional but effective grammar-translation approach. From students perspective, it is apparent that current practice that no native language speaking in the classroom is worthy of being revisited. The simple reason lies in the asymmetry of information sharing, students with strong competence of English is reluctant to communicate with the student with poor one. The communication proved ineffective. Many task-based group activities is downplayed as leisure talk or silence, all depending on the students' competence and interest. Educators have attributed this lack of motivation to the insufficient target culture exposure instead of the wrong rationale, temporarily explaining the mesmerized sentiment of the teachers and students. As McKay implies, the importance of culture teaching does not lie in the fact that the target culture dominates the classroom and discourse of the teacher-student communication; instead, the input of teacher's knowledge background and students' personal cultural or life experience should find their appropriate places in the classroom, thus creating a truly communicative environment that both parties can be involved. And this is in line with the Vygostkyan paradigm that asserts culture as a dynamic process, or culture learning accompanies the re-building of a new personality, including tolerance and respect to the other culture, intercultural competence. It is hard to believe that students can enjoy some culture that is thousands miles away without their own having a role in the class organization.

The last issue concerns how the culture is approached and manipulated in the English teaching. Byram and Risager (1999) identify four approaches to culture in foreign language teaching: the foreign-cultural approach, the intercultural approach, the multicultural approach, and the transcultural approach. Generally speaking, most English classes still remain in the stage of first type, with the increasing presence of the intercultural approach. However, without direct exposure to the communities other than student's own cultural community, faculty who have overseas experience, and textbook development that responds to learners' immediate needs and their active participation in classroom, the culture teaching, in whatever form, is doomed to fail. In the paradigm of the EIL, English language only serves as a tool, or lingua franca in the European context, for the fast and ease of communities between people with different native tongues. The European and some other countries' experience in teaching culture has proved that it is possible to teach English in de-nationalized approach, meaning that language teaching can be freed from culture intervention. Then we can say the transcultural approach is more appropriate for culture teaching without undermining the fundamental goal, intercultural competence building. Therefore, the dripping method of culture teaching as exemplified in reading, vocabulary, rhetoric and some culture-related courses should be extended into a wider perspective, with a vista of different cultures, to shape learners' competence in understanding. In a word, the cultural content should be multi-faceted.

IV. CONCLUSION

The paper overviews current culture teaching at college level in China and indicates the significance of intercultural awareness in foreign language teaching. It is found that the academic thinking into the culture issue in English teaching and learning in China has actively responded to the wide spectrum of discussion in the world. But in the pedagogical level, most teachers have just very rough idea of what culture should be and what should be taught in terms of cultural component. Due to lacking systematic training and principled methodology in promoting students' intercultural

awareness, teachers, either turn deaf to the new trend or frustrated by the communicative approach, somehow fall back to the more traditional but effective grammar-translation approach. Finally, for the sake of better English culture teaching and learning in language teaching, the authors would like to suggest that the role of language teachers should change. The task of the language teacher is not to teach cultural contents word by word, but "to facilitate learners' interaction with some small part of another society and its cultures, with the purpose of relativising learners' understanding of their own cultural values and behaviors, and encouraging them to investigate for themselves…" (M. Byram, et al, 2001). The changing scenario of language teaching has constituted new challenges for the English educators in China though it will take a long time to go.

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Yinghao Li, Ph.D. (1973-) was born in Jilin Province, China. He is currently an associate professor in the College of Foreign Languages, Yanbian University. His research interests include linguistics and language education.

Effects of Non-negotiated Pre-modified Input, Negotiation of Input without Output, and Negotiation of Input plus Pushed Output on EFL Learners' Vocabulary Learning

Arash Azizi

Faculty of Foreign Languages, Islamic Azad University, Central Tehran Branch, Tehran, Iran

Abstract—**This experimental study investigated the comparative effects of non-negotiated pre-modified input, negotiation of input without output, and negotiation of input plus pushed output on EFL learners' comprehension and production. Before starting the study, forty-three male and female adult students at intermediate level took the Preliminary English Test (PET) and 30 of the students who scored one standard deviation above and below the mean score in the PET were randomly assigned to three experimental groups. The whole treatment took 10 sessions and, after the treatment, two sets of tests were administered; i.e., one written and the other oral. Analysis of Variance on comprehension test and analysis of nonparametric alternative, i.e., Kruskal-Wallis test, on production test, indicated that (a) negotiation had a positive effect on the comprehension and production of targeted L2 vocabulary items and (b) negotiation of input plus pushed output did not promote production of L2 vocabulary more than negotiation of input without output. The findings of this study provide empirical evidence on the important role of negotiation in facilitating comprehension and production of targeted L2 vocabulary items.**

Index Terms—**pre-modified input, negotiation of input, pushed output, vocabulary learning**

I. INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, vocabulary learning was often left to look after itself and received only incidental attention in many textbooks and language programs. Although the course curriculum was often quite specific about aspects of teaching such as grammar, reading, and writing, little specification was given to the role of vocabulary. However, today, researchers and language teachers are becoming more convinced that vocabulary knowledge constitutes an essential part of competence in a second or foreign language. In recent years, hopefully, a variety of techniques have been suggested and used by teachers to teach vocabulary. Common to these techniques for teaching second language (L2) vocabulary is the proposition that L2 vocabulary items targeted to be taught should be embedded in enriched L2 input so that the input would provide a context from which the learner can make associations between the form of the word and its meaning. This proposition is grounded on the prominent importance that has been given to the role of input in L2 acquisition since 1980s, beginning with the works of Stephen Krashen (1982, 1985). This trend has had very important implications for teaching and learning L2 vocabulary. For example, according to Harmer (2007), the best way of introducing new words for students is to read texts or listen to audio and to see or hear those words in action. This means that L2 vocabulary items should not be taught to language learners in isolation; rather, it should be presented to the learner in an appropriate linguistic context.

II. DIFFERENT TYPES OF INPUT

A. Pre-modified Input

The most debated theory proposed to explain the role of input in the process of L2 acquisition is Krashen's (1982, 1985) 'Input Hypothesis'. According to this hypothesis, if *i* represents previously acquired linguistic competence then *i+1* represents new knowledge or language structure that the language learner should be ready to acquire. According to Krashen, the acquisition of *i+1* happens through understanding the message conveyed by the utterance representing *i+1*. One of the ways to make language input comprehensible is through providing the language learners with pre-modified language input (Johnson, 2003; Kim, 2003). Any spoken or written language input can be simplified or modified for the sake of comprehension through providing less difficult vocabulary items and complex syntactic structures (Carroll, 2001; Krashen, 1985; Loschky, 1994). The native speaker (NS), or the non-native speaker (NNS) with a higher proficiency level, could modify, or adjust his/her input so that the NNS might be able to comprehend the intended message. (e.g., Carroll, 2001; Kim, 2003; VanPatten, 2003)

The advantage of modifying the input through elaboration is that elaborated adjustments have the potential to supply language learners with access to the linguistic items they have not acquired yet in the process of L2 acquisition (Larsen-

Freeman & Long, 1991; VanPatten & Cadierno, 1993). There are some elaborated adjustments to make the input comprehensible for non-native students, including paraphrasing of words or sentences, reducing the complexity of message (simplification and foreigner talk), repeating, etc. A wide range of L2 scholars (e.g., Ellis, 1995; Ellis & He, 1999; Jensen & Vinther, 2003; Loschky, 1994; O'Malley, Chamot, & Kupper, 1989) has researched the role of these elaborated adjustments (i.e., pre-modified input) in the acquisition of different aspects of the L2. The findings of these studies have clearly shown that adjustments made to L2 input would help the learner to better understand the meaning of the intended messages, leading to the improvement of L2 knowledge. (Ellis & He, 1999; Loschky, 1994)

B. Interaction as Input

Gass and Torres (2005) define interaction as language exchange in which there is some indication that an utterance has not been entirely understood. The Interaction Hypothesis (Long, 1980) explains one way in which L2 learners can best succeed at learning a target language. According to the hypothesis, when a learner is attempting to negotiate a conversation in the target language, the gaps in his/her L2 abilities, such as gaps in pronunciation, syntax, grammar and vocabulary, are revealed to him/her and this self-realization brought about by authentic interaction will encourage the learner to produce L2 output to negotiate meaning and seek out the knowledge he/she lacks. According to the Interaction Hypothesis, learners realize the gap in their knowledge by checking with the persons that they are having a conversation with.

'Checks' are the key to the process. There are several types of interaction modification checks that take place during a natural conversation, such as clarification request, confirmation check, comprehension check, etc. These checks provide the learner with opportunities build positive effective feelings of confidence and learning opportunities. Previous literature shows that negotiation of meaning is centered on key elements of a language and the most significant of these key elements is L2 vocabulary (Ellis, 1995; Ellis, Tanaka, & Yamakazi, 1994; Hatch, 1983). According to Long (1996), "negative feedback obtained in negotiation work or elsewhere may be facilitative of SL development at least for vocabulary, morphology and language specific syntax (p. 414). A study by Mackey, Gass, and McDonough (2000) on the types of interactional feedback revealed that most of feedback learners received from NSs was triggered by problems with lexical items and that feedback episodes were perceived to be about lexis most of the time by learners.

C. Pushed Output as Input

The third source of input that can facilitate L2 acquisition is pushed or modified output. According to Swain's Comprehensible Output Hypothesis (1985), learning takes place when the learner encounters a gap in his/her L2 knowledge. By noticing this gap, the learner becomes aware of it and might be able to modify his/her output so that he/she learns something new about the L2. Additionally, the Comprehensible Output Hypothesis is in certain ways connected to vocabulary learning, when it comes to productive vocabulary learning. There are three main arguments to support this proposition. First, vocabulary negotiation is a common feature of interactions between NSs and L2 learners (Gass & Varonis, 1985; Laufer, 1998; Pica, 1992). Second, L2 learner's selective attention is often focused on specific identifiable units, and vocabulary items are the most representative of such units (Gass, 1997). Finally, some of the functions of output appear to be in operation during lexical output production (Swain & Lapkin, 1995). In line with these arguments, Laufer (1998) states, "if not pushed to use [L2] words, they may never be activated; therefore, remain in passive vocabulary only" (p. 267). Ellis et al. (1994) suggest that negotiation may benefit productive acquisition of new words given that the students have the opportunity to use the items they have begun to acquire and to receive feedback from other speakers (p. 483).

III. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The basis of most models of L2 acquisition is the premises that enriched input may yield beneficial effect for L2 acquisition, if effectively attract learners' attention to certain forms contained in the input they receive. In line with this premise, teachers are usually encouraged to attract learners' attention to vocabulary items in order to negotiate meaning, since vocabulary is said to function as a cornerstone without which any language could not exist (see Bogaards & Laufer, 2004; Harmer, 1993). For example, Harmer (1993) states, if language structure makes up the skeleton of language, then it is L2 words that provide the vital organs and flesh.

In most models of vocabulary learning, the act of learning starts from comprehension to production and act of production of vocabulary is considered a more difficult task than a comprehension task. A number of studies have attempted to demonstrate how different types of input could contribute to the comprehension and production of targeted L2 words (e.g., Ellis &He 1999, Macky & Philips, 1998); however, the results of these studies have usually been contradictory and these studies have not compared the effects of different types of L2 input on both L2 comprehension and production. Therefore, the present study is set out to investigate the comparative effects of different types of L2 input on the comprehension and production of targeted L2 words while covering the research gaps of previous studies of the issue.

As mentioned above, this study is an attempt to examine the comparative effects of pre-modified input, negotiation of output and negotiation of input plus pushed output on comprehension and production of targeted L2 words. This study is set out in hope to find a better way to boost the lexical comprehension and production ability of L2 learners.

Therefore, the findings of the study will be beneficial for teachers whose concern is not only comprehension but also production of L2 vocabulary. Based on what was mentioned, the purpose of the present study is to study the comparative effect of non-negotiated pre-modified input (NNPI), negotiation of input without output (NIWO) and negotiation of input and pushed output (NIPO) on EFL leaner's comprehension and production of targeted L2 words. Therefore, this study was conducted to answer these two questions:

RQ1-Is there any significant difference among the effects of NNPI, NIWO, and NIPO on Iranian EFL leaner's comprehension of targeted L2 words?

RQ2-Is there any significant difference among the effects of NNPI, NIWO, and NIPO on Iranian EFL leaner's production of targeted L2 words?

IV. Methodology

A. Participants

This study was conducted in Ghotbeh Ravandi English School for adults in Tehran, Iran. The Preliminary English Test (PET) was administered to 43 students in order to sample the participants who would serve the purposes of the study. Of the 43 learners who took the PET, 30 learners who scored one standard deviation above and below the mean score were chosen as the homogenized participants of the study. The participants of the study aged from 23 to 33 and were at an intermediate level, according to their teachers. The participants were then randomly assigned to three experimental groups; i.e., non-negotiated pre-modified input (NNPI) group, negotiation of input without output (NIWO) group, and negotiation of input plus pushed output (NIPO) group.

B. Instrumentation

Targeted Words

Fifty adjectives were chosen from *Word Skills for Intermediate Students* (Gairns & Redman, 2008) and *504 absolutely essential words* (Bromberg, Lieb, & Traiger, 2005) were taught to the students in the 3 experimental groups. First, a test of the targeted words was designed including 60 items in order to make sure that the sample did not know these words and they had not been exposed to these vocabularies prior to the treatment. For this purpose, the test was piloted with another group of 25 Iranian EFL learners. After conducting the pilot test and doing item analysis, 10 malfunctioning items were removed from the list of the targeted words and, thus, 50-targeted words remained for the study. In addition, 50 pictures corresponding to theses adjectives were used to facilitate learning since, according to Meta Memory Techniques (Wright, 1990); using imagery can facilitate the process of learning and retention of words. The images were used as a facilitative tool in the hope for better comprehension and production of the targeted words.

Posttests

Two sets of tests for measuring the comprehension (recognition) and production of targeted L2 words were designed. One test was conducted in written form and the other test was conducted in oral form. For the comprehension (recognition) test, a multiple choice test format was designed to measure the participants' ability to comprehend (recognize) the meanings of the targeted words. This test included 50 items for the 50-targeted English adjectives. Each item consisted of an incomplete sentence (as the stem) along with four lexical options. The students' duty was to choose the best word that completed each sentence. They were given 40 minutes to complete the comprehension test. As for the production test, an oral test was designed to measure the ability of participants to produce the targeted words (i.e., adjectives). The researcher gave the images of the 50 instructed words to each individual and asked some questions to elicit the answers. They had a total time of 30 minutes to complete the test.

C. Procedure

For the NNPI group, on each session, the instructor wrote five of the targeted words on the board and attached their pictures randomly on the board; then, the instructor presented the definition of each word. The participants could ask the instructor to repeat the definition as much as they wanted within one minute, but they could not ask any questions for confirmation or elaboration. Further, they were not allowed to interact with each other. After giving the definitions of all the five-targeted words, as an activity, the instructor gave a piece of paper to each of the participants and the participant was supposed to match the definitions from column A with the targeted words in column B. In a second activity, the participant was asked to write down each of the targeted words under the appropriate illustrated pictures. At the end, the instructor pointed to the pictures on the board and elicited words from the participants and then the participants repeated the words chorally twice. The treatment took 20 minutes for each session (10 sessions).

For the NIWO group, like the first group, on each session, the instructor wrote five of the targeted words on the board and attached their pictures randomly on the board; then, the instructor presented the definition of each word but, unlike the first group, the participants were allowed in the NIWO to ask questions in order to get the meanings of words, questions such as "Is it related to personality?", "Does it describe things or human being?", "Is it positive or negative?", etc. The instructor helped the participants indirectly by answering their questions to find and indicate the appropriate image. They were also allowed to interact with each other to understand the meanings better. After giving the definition of the five-targeted words and negotiating their meanings with the participants, the instructor showed the pictures to

them and elicited the words from students, and then they repeated words chorally. Like the first group, 20 minutes was allocated to each session (10 sessions).

For the NIPO group, the instruction was the same as the NIWO group; the only difference was that, after indicating the pictures to the participants, they were asked to make a sentence with each of the words. By doing this, the participants were involved in the process of producing the targeted L2 words. Like the first and the second group, 20 minutes were allocated to each session (10 sessions). One week after the end of the treatment sessions, two tests (one written (comprehension test) and the other oral (production test)) were administered to all the participants in the three experimental groups as the posttests.

V. RESULTS

A. Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of the comprehension posttest for the three experimental groups. As you can see from the table, the participnats in the NIWO group gained the highest mean score among the three experimental groups on the comprehension posttest (M = 38.70, SD = 6.30), followed by the participants in the NIPO group who gained the second highet mean score among the three experimental groups on the comprehension posttest (M = 37.60, SD = 3.59). Finally, the participants in the NNPI gained the lowest mean score among the three experimental groups on the comprehension posttest (M = 27.30, SD = 4.29).

TABLE 1.
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR THE COMPREHENSION POSTTEST

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Comprehension NNPI	10	22.00	36.00	27.30	4.29
Comprehension NIWO	10	30.00	49.00	38.70	6.30
Comprehension NIPO	10	30.00	42.00	37.60	3.59

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics of the production posttest for the three experimental groups. As you can see from the table, the participnats in the NIWO group gained the highest mean score among the three experimental groups on the production posttest (M = 30.00, SD = 9.40), followed by the participants in the NIPO group who gained the second highest mean score among the three experimental groups on the production posttest (M = 29.20, SD = 3.45). Finally, the participants in the NNPI gained the lowest mean score among the three experimental groups on the production posttest (M = 17.10, SD = 3.31).

TABLE 2.
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR THE PRODUCTION POSTTEST

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Production NNPI	10	13.00	25.00	17.10	3.31
Production NIWO	10	13.00	47.00	30.00	9.40
Production NIPO	10	25.00	35.00	29.20	3.45

B. Inferential Statistics

The First Research Question

In order to investigate the first research question of the study which aimed to examine if there was any significant difference among the effects of NNPI, NIWO, and NIPO on Iranian EFL leaners' comprehension of targeted L2 words, an Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was to be conducted. The ANOVA results are shown in Table 3 below. As the results of ANOVA show, the significance value came out to be .000<.05, showing that there was a significant difference between the three groups regarding their comprehension (recognition) of the targeted L2 words. Therefore, it can be stated that the three types of L2 input investigated in the present study (i.e., NNPI, NIWO, and NIPO) had differential effects on the participants' comprehension and production of the targeted L2 words.

However, ANOVA only shows that there is significant difference among a set of variables but it does not tell us where the difference stands. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct post-hoc analysis to see where the difference is. Table 4 demonstrates the results of the post-hoc analysis via the Tukey Test for this purpose. As you can see from the table, the difference between the NIWO group and the NNPI group in the comprehension posttest was statistically significant. The difference between the NIPO group and the NNPI group in the comprehension posttest was also statistically significant. The difference in the comprehension posttest between the NIWO group and the NIPO group, however, was not statistically significant.

TABLE 3.
ANOVA RESULTS FOR THE COMPREHENSION POSTTEST

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	792.96	2	396.48	16.766	.000
Within Groups	638.50	27	23.64		
Total	1431.46	29			

TABLE 4.
MULTIPLE COMPARISONS (TUKEY TEST)

Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
11.42* (NIWO, NNPI)	2.12	.000	-16.69	-6.15
10.14* (NIPO, NNPI)	2.23	.000	4.60	15.68
1.28 (NIWO, NIPO)	2.18	.828	-6.70	4.13

*The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

The Second Research Question

In order to investigate the second research question of the study which aimed to examine if there was any significant difference among the effects of NNPI, NIWO, and NIPO on Iranian EFL leaner's production of targeted L2 words, the non-parametric Kruskal Wallis Test was conducted. The non-parametric Kruskal Wallis Test was used, instead of ANOVA, because preliminary analyses indicated that the scores of the participants in the NNPI group on the production posttest were not normally distributed. The results of Kruskal Wallis Test conducted have been shown in Table 5. According to the table, the Significance value equaled .000<.05, showing that there was a significant difference among the three experimental groups in the production posttest.

TABLE 5.
KRUSKAL WALLIS TEST FOR THE PRODUCTION POSTTEST

	Production
Chi-square	15.694
Df	2
Sig.	.000

A post-hoc analysis was conducted to determine where exactly this difference lay. The post hoc analysis was performed implementing the following formula (see McQueen & Knussen, 2006) in which N stands for the number of the participants in each sample group and d stands for the rank total of one group minus the rank total of the other.

$$K = \frac{d - 0.8}{N_x \sqrt{N}}$$

According to the post-hoc analyses, the NIPO group with a mean rank of 21.06 outperformed the NNPI group with a mean rank of 6.60. Further, the analyses also indicated that the NIWO group with a mean rank score of 19.05 outperformed the NNPI group with the mean rank score of 6.60. The post-hoc analyses, however, indicated that the difference between the NIWO and the NIPO was not statistically significant in the production post-test.

VI. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

As for the first research question, the results of the study showed that there were significant differences among the effects of NNPI, NIWO, and NIPO on EFL leaners' comprehension (recognition) of the targeted L2 words. Learners in the NNPI group achieved the lowest level of recognition of the targeted L2 words. On the other hand, the learner's recognition of the targeted L2 words was greater, when they had opportunity to negotiate the meanings of the targeted words than they were exposed to non-negotiated pre-modified input. Further, the results showed that learners in the NIWO group achieved the highest level of recognition of the targeted L2 words. These results support those of previous studies (Ellis et al. 1994; Loscky, 1994; Fuente, 2002) but contradicted the results obtained by Ellis and He (1999) who found no significant difference between the pre-modified input group and interactionally modified input group in the recognition of L2 words.

One possible reason may be that the participants in the NIWO group and NIPO group had the opportunity of controlling the input. Negotiation allowed learners in both the NIWO group and the NIPO group to process the instruction better and to notice the specific words that contribute to the comprehension of utterances (Ellis et al 1994). It can also be argued that in the NIWO and NIPO conditions, the participants were able to repeat the target words when asking for confirmation, clarification, and repetition. In addition, these participants could get different types of information regarding the referents and connotations of the targeted words, while the participants in the NNPI group did not have this chance due to lack of interaction.

As for the second research question, the results of the study showed that there were significant differences among the effects of NNPI, NIWO, and NIPO on the participants' production of the targeted L2 items. The participants in the NNPI group obtained the lowest scores in the production test. In comparison, the participants in the NIWO group and the NIPO group attained higher scores in the test; that is, the participants in these two groups outperformed the participants in the NNPI group in terms of production of the targeted words. The results show that the participants' production of the targeted L2 words was greater, when they had the opportunity to negotiate the meanings of the words than they were not allowed to negotiate the meanings and were only exposed to non –negotiated pre-modified input. These results provide more evidence for Long's Interaction Hypothesis (1980, 1996). It also suggests that cognitive factors, such as attention and noticing, are the key elements to producing L2 vocabulary items. These results are consistent with those of Ellis and He's (1999) study in which the learners who received interactionally modified input

outperformed the learners who received non-negotiated input in the production of the targeted L2 words. However, the result of this study contradicted the results of Fuente (2002) who found significant difference between negotiation of input plus pushed output group and negotiation of input without output group as far as the production of targeted L2 words were concerned.

This study revealed the important role of negotiation on EFL learners' comprehension and production of vocabulary. It suggested that learners who were exposed to negotiation of input outperformed learners who exposed to non-negotiated pre-modified input in terms of both comprehension and production of vocabulary. However, the performance of the participants who had the opportunity to produce target words was higher than the participants who did not have this chance, suggesting that negotiation and pushed output would improve the comprehension and production of L2 words for language learners. On the other hand, there was no significant difference between the performances of learners who were exposed to only negotiation of input and those who exposed to negotiation of input plus pushed output in the production test. In other words, the learners who were not only exposed to negotiation of input but also were pushed to produce the targeted words did not outperform the learners who were allowed to negotiate the meanings of the targeted words.

VII. PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

In line with Long (1980, 1996) and Gass (1997), the findings of this study suggest that cognitive factors such as attention and noticing are significant to processing L2 structures and elements. The results of this study can be beneficial and interesting to those teachers whose concern is not only promoting the comprehension aspects of an L2, but also improving the production aspects in language learners. Teachers can guide learners through negotiation of meaning and help them come with a better understanding of the meanings of new words that would facilitate their learning of the new words. Especially, the learning could be boosted, if teachers use pictures for associating the meaning of a new word with its form. In addition, students can get advantages from negotiation both between themselves and with the teacher through checks such as clarification, confirmation, repetition, etc. in order to get more information regarding the new word and comprehend the word better. In addition, when they are pushed to produce the targeted word immediately and get feedback from the teacher, their production abilities increase largely.

Since this study investigated the acquisition of adjectives, the findings of this study cannot be generalized to other types and aspects of L2 vocabulary learning such as verbs, adverbs, associations, collocations, etc., as the targeted L2 words in this study were deliberately delimited only to adjectives. For example, previous literature has shown that word class is a psycholinguistic factor affecting lexical acquisition. Therefore, there is a clear need for more empirical studies to find out whether the present findings can be generalizable to other aspects of lexical knowledge. Moreover, although some effects on lexical acquisition were found for L2 output, what induced the production of the targeted words and which processes accounted for the conversion of intake into production of the words can only be hypothesized. Clearly, more studies are needed to explore these processes. Furthermore, this study investigated the role of negotiation only on the comprehension and production of the targeted words but not on their retention; there is a need for further research to investigate the role of negotiation on retention of L2 words. In addition, although there were both males and females in the study, the number of females exceeded the number of males. Therefore, gender might have acted as an intervening variable in this study.

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Arash Azizi is an interpreter, translator, and an EFL teacher and researcher. He has taught in several English schools for adults in Tehran. He has also taught in a variety of programs in private high schools and well-established organizations in Iran. He received an MA in Teaching English as a Foreign Language from Islamic Azad University, Central Tehran Branch, and a BA in Translation from Islamic Azad University, South Tehran Branch. His main interest is teaching to adults and young children at different levels and programs.

Peer- and self-assessment: A Case Study to Improve the Students' Learning Ability[*]

Ying Li

School of Foreign Languages, Lanzhou University of Finance and Economics, Gansu, China

Liping Chen

School of Foreign Languages, Yunnan Agricultural University, Yunnan, China

Abstract—**Current assessment practices in college English in China do not develop students' abilities to reflect on their own learning. Peer- and self- assessment, the self-reflection phrase, can be seen as a means to tackle this problem. The purpose of the study was to explore the potential to take Peer and self-assessment as an effective method to change the way of students' learning. An analysis of 60 students from Lanzhou University of Finance and Economics showed that peer and self- assessment can change the way the students' learning. These two forms of assessment are often used in combination with each other. Implementation of these forms of assessment can involve the development of a learning teaching environment and shift the students' learning methods from surface approaches to learning to deep approaches to learning gradually.**

Index Terms—**self-assessment, peer-assessment, surface approaches to learning, deep approaches to learning**

I. INTRODUCTION

As teachers in higher education we need to be clear about what students have to learn, the level of that learning, the methods of learning and teaching to enable that learning, and how to assess what we have asked them to learn. Boud (1981, 2007, 2010) repeatedly placed emphasis on assessments from 1988 until 2010, especially in higher education. He stressed assessment has a major influence on what and how students learn, which is greater than any other single factor and the impact of teaching material. The method of assessment determines the way in which students approach their learning process (Sande and Adarsh, 2014). Biggs (2007, p163) again suggests "What and how students learn depends to a major extent on how they think they will be assessed". Therefore, assessment has great effects on how and what students learn and we should make the right assessment in the teaching.

Carless et al. (2006, p396) states "assessment processes should involve students' activity". Harrison et al. (2015, p76) argues "self- and peer-assessment is a sustainable lifelong learning methodology". In twenty-first century, we believe in lifelong learning, which supports and officially recognizes off-campus learning. Students need experience of self-assessment against criteria. So Assessment should facilitate learning, and at the same time, what the students could do and how to do it in the future study should be concentrated on in assessment. Assessment is the central element in the quality of teaching and learning in higher education. The well-designed assessment involves clear expectations, provides opportunities for students to self-monitor themselves, receive feedback. Along with the changes in learning theory, several instructional innovation and alternative assessment methods found their way into teaching practice.

During the last decade, teachers developed and implemented alternative assessment methods in educational practice, which changed theories in the students' learning. This paper aims to test the use of peer and self-assessment as a new innovation to change the way we assess, then analyze the benefits of peer- and self-assessment, assessment of participation and negotiated assessment, and finally make a conclusion that a number of issues are identified and addressed.

English learning in China is test-oriented learning. The methods for assessing the students in English of our University are exam and coursework. The school gives the mid-term and the final exams. For example, the student got 80 marks in the mid-term examination, namely, he has learned and mastered the content and the main language points well before the mid-term exam. The summative assessment usually includes several parts---10% of mid-term exam; final exam 70%; spoken exam 10%; assignments 10%. It is the most important assessment for the students to get the result of the final overall marker. There is only some limited formative assessment in our teaching. Some students don't get their desirable scores, because they are passive learners, they do not have the motivation and confidence to learn English. The traditional assessment is usually good at evaluation, namely giving the students the result of learning, and often misses some advice and support that students need most in their studies. The examinations provide a reasonable effective means of measuring individual knowledge of the course, but encourage surface learning.

Nowadays some teachers want to change, especially for spoken English exam, we want to give students continuous assessment, we want to use oral presentation subjected to peer and self-assessment.

Use innovatory assessment in some students of Lanzhou University of Finance and Economics in 2012, choosing and using "fit-for purpose" assessment. Introducing peer and self- assessment approaches into English teaching may be beneficial to strengthening the relationship between teacher feedback and students learning, encouraging student to change the way of students learning. Is peer and self-assessment different and better than the traditional assessment methods?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Assessment always defines the actually curriculum, from the students point of view. Kinett & Knight (1996) states that assessment intends to build up each part of the students' learning experience, which often defines what the student takes as important. Assessments are effective in instructing learning, the teacher should provide good feedback to the students, which has deep influence on learning. Therefore, the formative assessment can be helpful. Assessment sends message about the standards and amount of work required. Too much assessment results in superficial approaches and provides fertile ground for deep approaches, in which what has to be learned, and why it has to be learned are taken priorities (Ramsden, 2003). Rust (2006) argues that assessment should be an intrinsic part of the learning process and not something "tacked on" the end of the programme. So the teacher should make every effort to make the criteria for assessment explicit and public rather than hidden and vague.

The goals of assessment in higher education are:
• to lead and introduce effective methods to learning.
• to measure expected learning outcomes validly and reliably.
• to define and protect academic standards.
• to emphasize on what has been achieved by individual learners
• to help students to apply abstract principles to practical contexts
• to motivate students and focus on learning

The study of Orsmond et al., (1997) states that according to criteria a student's ability to mark does not measure, but the self-assessment is a successful and effective formative assessment tool. Peer and self assessment are judged not only simply by from the agreement between students and teacher mark, but also by how much the students develops during such stages of the assessment process. Peer- and self-assessment are student-led assessment practices with the potential to positively affect achievement (Harris & Brown, 2013). Is the student changing the way of learning while carrying out the assessment, or does the student learn from the product of assessment?

A. Approaches to Assessment

"Assessment is often described as being either formative or summative", said Brown & Glasner (2003). Assessment is for learning formative, the results of it are used for feedback during learning. Feedback can improve the learning of individual students and also improve the teaching. The term formative assessment means constructive feedback provided for students in order to improve their learning skills. Therefore, formative assessment means the feedback provided on all assignments and is separate from any (overall) marks that students get (Gallen, A & McCloughry, J 2007).

Assessment is for learning summative, which carried out after the teaching has taken place and the results are used to grade students at the end of a unit or programme. It is largely numerical and concerned mainly with making evaluation judgement, such as an end- of-programme exam, final-year exam.

B. What Effect Does Assessment Have on Learning?

Biggs (2003, p141) stated that teacher's and student's perspective on assessment, in which assessment is the ending of the teaching–learning sequence of event to the teacher, but assessment is the beginning to the students. Biggs concluded them as the following:

Teacher Perspective: objectives→teaching activities→assessment
                                    ↓
Student Perspective: assessment→learning activities →outcomes

Struyven, Dochy and Janssens (2005) reviewed students perceptions of assessment in higher education and found that students study behavior is influenced by the assessment modes in use. They summarized approaches to learning among students groups as surface approaches where the learner does engage significantly with the task but accomplish the learning task; deep approaches to learning where the learner want to understand the study the material and the learning outcomes are of higher quality. Learning is considered a social activity which exists in a specific circumstance where informal learning is more important than the formal. Students can usually learn more from the formal and informal assessments offered by their peers or themselves. Assessment should be part of instruction, telling students about how they are doing and making students believe that they can succeed if they keep studying (Ramsden, 2003; Stiggins & Chappuis, 2012).

III. Self–assessment and Peer-assessment

Fautley and Savage (2008, p51) stated "peer-assessment involves students assessing the work of other students, their peers; while self-assessment involves each individual in a consideration of their own work".

Assessment is a very emotional experience. It is an effective learning tool (Sande and Adarsh, 2014). Even if the same feedback is given to different students, each student will still react in a very different way. A strong student who is full of confidence may regard the feedback as a help, while a weak student who lacks of confidence may draw back and even want to give up. So all of these should be noticed, which needs teachers lead in new assessment to encourage the students to learn.

A. Lead in Innovation

We learned that, while traditionally in English study most of the assessment which takes place is "assessment of learning", a more desirable strategy would be adopt "assessment for learning". To achieve the latter, teachers could incorporate some new formative assessment to our teaching. If we lead in innovation via the self –assessment and peer-assessment in our teaching, we will change the way of students' learning.

All of my students are from different schools: School of Statistics, School of Finance and School of Accounting, who major in several specialties; such as Statistics, International Trade, International Finance, Accounting and so on. Most of their entrance scores are over 100 (the total score is 150). They are class 4(A). Some of them come from villages, towns and cities in very rural parts of Gansu Province. Some of them from other provinces in China are good at English. Most of students don't do well in it, being afraid of doing the exercises in the textbook. They don't like thinking about the reason of the exercises. They feel nervous when they speak in front of the class. They do the exercises not because of their interests, just because of the final overall marks they attach importance to, which leads to the students adopting a surface learning method—surface learners. How can I change the way of students learning? The teaching should be tried to make the students choose deep approaches to learning.

B. Developing Self–assessment and Peer Assessment

Sadler (1989) indicates that a key objective for higher education should change students from depending on assessment from teachers to judging the quality of what they are learning by themselves. Self-assessment includes reflection, which is being used in a variety of ways to assess skills, knowledge and competence (Brown& Glasner, 2003).

Self-assessment involves students, guided by the teacher, who decides what the appropriate assessment criteria are, and then sees how well they have met these criteria. The self-assessment which can be regarded as either a process or an activity involves reflection, but not all reflection is self-assessment, particular is useful for our large class.

Peer assessment involves students making judgment about, or commenting upon each other's work. It is really helpful in provide students formative assessment, perhaps when students are undertaking tasks without marks that count. Group may comment on the work of individuals or groups. Using peer assessment may derive from the desire to reduce the teacher's marking load, or for more pedagogical reasons, such as a belief in ability of peer assessment to develop important skill when students graduate.

For instance, two students comment the other four or five students' compositions and try to find the errors in them; they will give explanations about the error or structures after the assessments. Students assess other students with whom they have been studying, which can be valuable when individuals and groups are assessing the products or performances of each other.

At last I will give more useful in terms of feedback, so that students' learning is enhanced, motivate students to learn. The module we try to use formative feedback and link to deep learning (feed forward). In higher education the concept of peer-assessment are being paid more and more attention to, which can be taken as an educational progress in which students assess the work's quality of their peer students and provide each other with feedback (Berg, Admiraal & Pilot, 2006).

C. The Implementation of Self-assessment and Peer Assessment

We use the following steps to carry out the self-assessment and peer-assessment.

---The first step was to discuss with the students on the appropriate set of criteria and an acceptable procedure.

--- Students selected the topics for the presentation and self-selection of groups which were to give the presentation. Each group had his English name.

---Group prepared the presentation materials.

---Group took presentations and peer assessment of them. When each group performance, the other students were asked to fill in peer-assessment forms, they must assess the performance of the group as a whole and of the individual students of the group.

--- After giving performance, the students were to fill in self-assessment form.

---Finally, the students made individual reflection and group discussions.

1. The Usage of self-assessment

To change the preceding assessment, I first ask my first year students of Class 4(A) to write the short passage by them, and then I give them the two sample writings to modify their composition using self-assessment. The objectives

of the writing are to review the writing structure learned in the unit and to develop the students' writing skills in composition. In particular I want to encourage them to challenge themselves to find the mistakes they made in their writing, familiar with the expressions of English not Chinese-style English, and to learn what valid and valuable structure of this kind of pattern is. For Example, after I taught the College English Unit One, I asked the students do write a composition. The students are given the following instructions:

1. Understand the writing pattern cause –and –effect.

2. Write a 120 word paragraph of this writing pattern

3. Hand in your paragraph to me on time.

This is the structured writing example:

Detailed Outline

Topic: Enjoying Learning English Online

Cause: offer much freedom in time to think out what to say in English/have more chances to talk with native speaks

Effect: understand about almost everything in English/teach me the value of my effort/get insights into a lot of new things

The students will check their paragraphs according to the two different samples. The two samples are both good and bad written work, designed to focus attention on key assessment criteria. After I explain the writing pattern of good and bad, they are asked to read their own paragraphs again and during their reading, they need to make notes in the margin on how well their work meets the sample we have read. I had originally thought that they would be loose on themselves, but on the contrary, their self-assessments are typically sharp and surprisingly honest instead. It is not usual for me to point out the mistakes that haven't been noticed in students' own work. Nevertheless, some of students still don't trust their own judgments and ask me for confirming that their self-assessments are correct. It may be indicates that I still have some ways to go in guiding them to be fully responsible for assessing the quality of what they are learning. Self-assessment is more effective than the teacher feedback. The self-assessment usually refers to the students' assessments on all aspects of their work, including the fields of vocabulary, grammar, originality, style, structure, etc., and critical thinking in producing a written assignment that integrated all aspects being improved in the reflection.

2. The Usage of peer-assessment

Although all students will recognize assessment of knowledge easily, assessment of process is likely to be new. Assessment of process refers to assessment well beginning with making judgments about the effectiveness of each phase of the activity.

I use a varied range of assignments: three-minute oral report, group presentation on the background information, presentation of written assignment, classroom debate. Make use of the chances which can encourage students to engage all the vocabulary achieved to realize the effective outcome; for instance, small group's problem-based activities, telling stories by pictures, guessing games, group-discussion, peering-teaching, etc. I can motivate my students positively.

For example, participation in a study group, group presentation on the background information relating to the text. When the students are going to be asked to peer and self assessment, the students use the table 3 and table 4 in the appendix, which is modified from Roach (2003), to assess the other students or himself / herself presentation. They may give the mark (100 score) according to their presentation. The marks the students awarded themselves were generally higher than I had expected them to be. Table 1 shows the percentages of students in the classes having awarded themselves grades of fail, pass, and good, excellent.

TABLE 1

Grade	Fail	Pass	Good	Excellent
Students' award	0%	20%	45%	35%
My award	2%	45%	38%	15%

(Percentage award of grades awards for the presentation by the students and which would have been awarded for the presentation by me.)

IV. RESULT FROM STUDENT'S QUESTIONNAIRE

The questionnaires were distributed to sixty students, who were required to fill in them after the group discussion and presentation, and were handed in by the end of the experiment. Table 2 shows the results of the questionnaire.

TABLE 2.
STUDENTS RESPONSE TO QUESTIONNAIRES GIVEN OUT AT THE END OF THE ASSESSMENT PRESENTATION

The scheme of self/peer assessment makes you:					
Independent	36	Dependent	16	Neither	18
Think more	48	Not think more	5	Neither	7
Learn more	43	Not learn any more	8	Neither	8
Gain confidence	48	Lack confidence	6	Neither	6
Critical	41	Uncritical	2	Neither	17
Change way of learning	48	not change way of learning	8	Neither	4
The scheme of self/peer assessment is:					
Enjoyable	39	Not enjoyable	12	Neither	9
Easy	18	Hard	30	Neither	12
Time saving	10	Time consuming	45	Neither	5
Beneficial	51	Not beneficial	1	Neither	8
Helpful	48	Not helpful	3	Neither	9
Challenge	42	Not challenge	12	Neither	6

(Modified from Falchikov, 1986)

V. ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS

Figure indicates the number of students' responses. There are 60 students in the class. These show that 88% of students thought that the innovation of self –assessment and peer-assessment had been beneficial to them. 80% of students considered it made them think more, gain confidence and helpful, which had changed the way of their learning. About 70% of the students felt that they had learned more and had become more critical. A similar number of students 70% found the activity full of challenge.

I compare the learning outcome of our class with the other two teachers, the atmosphere in our class is much better than theirs. The approaches of the students learning in some parts change a lot. When they read the text they want to prepare them before the lesson, searching the information relating to the text, discussing the materials in group, it is obvious that the students have active exchange of idea, try to use deep learning, forming the idea of more productive and inspired research. They were building on the material that was their own, not material given to them. According the result of questionnaires we can know that the benefits of self –assessment and peer-assessment.

• Feedback is faster, and it can be clearer than the teacher assessment.

• Students are very active recipient of knowledge, but play a more active role in identifying where they need to improve and monitoring their own progress.

• Students are encouraged to critically think what standards and criteria are, what's the differences between contents and contexts.

• Students assess the other students who can touch areas they would not normally reach.

• The teacher can associate with the process of learning rather than just the outcome.

• It provided valuable practice in presenting and leading to increase confidence by assessing.

• Doing the presentation helped the students reflect on what they want to present,

• Change the way of learning from the surface approach to deep approach, searching the material through internet, analyzing the contents.

• To add variety to students' learning experience.

• To put the students in the overall class.

The self-assessment and peer-assessment are therefore process-oriented rather than outcome-oriented. These assessments may encourage students to take responsibility for their own learning. They would also encourage students to assess the extent of their effort and the quality of their outcome. The students would consider how effectively they finished group work and examine reflexively their own behavior as members of group. And what's more, peer and self-assessment practices contribute to strengthening students' learning including the improvement of life-long skills, metacognitive competencies or affective abilities (Brew 1999; Topping 2003).

Brew (2003) argues that involving students in their own assessment is increasing, whether self-assessment or peer assessment, and leads the students to develop the skills of independent, autonomous judgment. So after their assessment they find doing exercise is more interesting, meaningful, worthwhile, and easier to understand and therefore they are likely to spend time on them. Students using a deep approach appear more able to demonstrate their understanding. By the time the students have the intrinsically motivation, they will become more confident and have a positive attitude towards their study, which can enhance their study value (Chen&Jaswinker, 2012). They can learn from their mistakes or difficulties, comparing their achievements with those of their peers'. They can get a great deal of feedback from each other, which is more than the teacher can give. They can be encouraged to make judgments to get into a better position.

VI. LIMIT AND FURTHER STUDY

The most obvious limitation of self-assessment and peer-assessment is the difficulty of implementing it with a large group of students; it will take too much time for the students to finish the assessment.

Another limitation is the weaker students in the group usually need the support of the teacher. They need the teacher to deal with their grammatical inaccuracies, in order to solve their problems. So it is necessary to address linguistic issues, therefore they reap benefits from the peer assessment exercise. The use of peer and self-assessment in group work situation for evaluating student contributes to group work, a various kinds of activates.

In the future teaching, we will pay attention to the following issues:

1. It's better for the group size to be small, not too large.

2. Students need to be conscious of the standards used for self and peer assessment.

3. Students have to be skillful in carrying out peer assessment.

Brown and Knight (1994) state that students, who take part in peer assessment for the first time, need the tutor to provide them with the performance criteria on which they can assess their peers. When students have mastered this skill, they are able to assess their peers in a correct way.

All students are different but the assessment for every student tends to be the same. The marks students gave tended to raise, not to lower them. They gave the result of being assessment group the same mark. The teacher can give some advice to students making presentation. When we design assessment, we should pay attention to the principles of assessment. Race et al.(2005) propose some suggestions for assessment design:

1) Assessment should be valid.

2) Assessment should be reliable.

3) Assessment should be transparent.

4) Assessment should be authentic.

5) Assessment should motivate students learning.

6) Assessment should promote deep learning. Students should not be driven toward surface learning.

7) Assessment should be fair.

8) Assessment should be timely.

9) Assessment should be incremental.

10) Assessment should be formative.

11) Assessment should be efficient and manageable.

If the students study effectively and work very hard, a good assessment system should allow them, who are regarded as being capable of undertaking their course, to have an opportunity of success on the assessment. The procession of peer- and self-assessment is the vital part for fulfilling the subject, however, it is not necessary for the good outcome, but it is the effective way to develop the students' skill and confidence in using these method -- for both teachers and students. In our future research, we think the teacher should try to make some shy students to be full of confidence in their presentation. Each equal opportunity should be given to every student to show the degree to which they have learned intentionally. The question which is given by the teacher should be clear and easy to understand and relevant to the currently learning content, particularly for the students who are from different cultural backgrounds and learn English as the second language. We should make sure that the vocabulary used in assessment items can be universally understood. We should explore the variety of situations where peer and self-assessment can be used as alternative source of assessment.

On the one hand, assessment can reflect students' outcomes from a narrow aspect, on the other hand, it can make both students and teachers pursue the comprehensive understanding, good communication and promote competency in writing (Brew 1995).

VII. CONCLUSION

Burner's (1966) states that learning is naturally an active process in which learners understand and build up new ideas and concept on the basis of their current/past knowledge. Often we are learning just from what we are doing and listening, but not with this new knowledge. Students do not like actively thinking and higher level of thinking does not take place. By Peer and self-assessment we encourage the students to do higher levels of thinking and learning and we lead them to using this new knowledge in a meaningful way. Peer and self-assessment can explicitly and effectively pursues deep learning, working with others, moving beyond dependence and independence to interdependence this criterion should be met, and students have put forwards questions about the contradictions in using assessment. A learning process of working together is to help each other, while an assessment process is to pit one person against another implicitly or explicitly. Language teaching is kind of interaction between teachers and students. Peer comments are systematically sought with respect to criteria identified either by the group or the learner with the teacher's help. Peer and self-assessment is a potential authentic tool, and it is the available assessment which can be acknowledged by the teachers. The key factor is the ability of the students' usage of this assessment and the degree of teachers' and students' acceptance.

APPENDIX

TABLE 3
STUDENTS' SELF-ASSESSMENT

Self-assessment	
Team work	**10 8 6 4 2**
Cooperation with Team	good □ □ □ □ □ poor
Individual Contribution	
gathering information	a lot □□ □ □ □ little
presentation	a lot □□ □ □ □ little
clarity of speech	clear □□□□□ unclear
visual aids	a lot □□ □ □ □ little
structuring the talk	a lot □□ □ □ □ little
Voice	
Clarity	good □ □ □ □ □ bad
Intonation	good □ □ □ □ □ bad
Non-verbal communication	
Eye contact	sufficient □ □ □ □ □ too many
Gestures	sufficient □ □ □ □ □too many
Name: Group: Mark:	

TABLE 4
STUDENTS' PEER-ASSESSMENT

Assessing group	
Presentation Information	10 8 6 4 2
Variety	sufficient □□□□□ too few
Handouts	
Content	relative □□□□□ irrelevant
Blackboard	
clarity	clear □□□□□ unclear
visual aids	
clarity	sufficient □□□□□ too few
Content of presentation	
Vocabulary	broad □□□□□ narrow
interesting	very □□□□□ dull
detail	relevant □□□□□ irrelevant
Topic Knowledge	sufficient □□□□□ insufficient
Teamwork	
Coordination	good □□□□□ bad
Workload	equal □□□□□ unequal
Group: Mark:	

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Ying Li was born in Gansu, China in 1980. She received her M.A. degree in linguistics from Northwest Normal University, China in 2013. She is currently an associate professor in the School of Foreign Languages, Lanzhou University of Finance and Economics, Gansu, China. Her research interests include English language teaching, linguistics and business English. Now she is a visiting scholar, supported by China Scholarship Council, in university of Wolverhampton for 1 year.

Liping Chen was born in Yunnan, China in 1965. She received her degree of Master of Arts in Higher Education from University of Wolverhampton, Britain in 2011. She is currently an professor in the School of Foreign Languages, Yunnan Agricultural University, Kunming, China. Her research interests include English language teaching, English teaching methodology and English-Chinese translation. Now she is a visiting scholar, supported by China Scholarship Council, in university of Wolverhampton for 1 year.

An Investigation into the Effect of Graphic Organizers and Marginal Glossing on Recalling of Collocations among Iranian EFL Learners with Different Proficiency Levels

Malahat Shabani Minaabad

Department of Linguistics and English Language Teaching, Payame Noor University, PO BOX 19395-3697 Tehran, Iran

Abstract—There has been an upsurge of research in vocabulary teaching and learning since 1980s, part of the hidden motivation being due to technology of concordance giving birth to some new areas of inquiry such as corpus linguistics. As one category of vocabulary is collocations (Nation, 1990) its learning will be required to sound fluent in the language of our focus i.e., English. The present study investigates the effect of graphic organizers (GO) and marginal glossing (MG) on recalling of collocations among Iranian EFL learners with different proficiency levels. To accomplish the task, Quick Placement Test was administered to 270 EFL learners in order to determine their proficiency levels (elementary, intermediate and advanced levels). Then learners of each level were randomly assigned to one control and two experimental groups. Experimental and control groups received the collocation instruction differently. After seven session treatments, results of paired-sample revealed that all of the groups made gains from pre-test to post-test but it was significant for groups that received graphic organizers strategy. Furthermore, results of one-way ANOVA indicated that advanced group outperformed intermediate group, and intermediate group was better than elementary group.

Index Terms—collocations, graphic organizers, marginal glossing

I. INTRODUCTION

It is felt that teachers and researchers have a paucity of vocabulary knowledge considered as one of the major hindrances making their progress insurmountable especially in the receptive skills of listening and reading (Thornbury, 2002). Some researcher states, experienced teachers of ESL know very well how significant vocabulary is, and that they must learn thousands of words that writers and speakers of English use. By learning new words, students can increase their listening, speaking, writing, especially reading skills and can improve comprehension and production in L2.

As such, it is bound up with learner autonomy movement in language teaching arenas in recent years (Kumaravadiveu, 2003, 2006), and in line with strategy training trend. Some scholars (Brown, 2007; Ellis, 2004; Oxford, 1990) believe that direct teaching of language learning strategies would benefit the learners.

As such learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) have great difficulty dealing with word combinations and in most cases they don't have the required explicit knowledge and strategy repertoire of dealing with such dilemmas (Chung & Nation, 2004). Therefore, in this study, the researcher's purpose will be to make an attempt to explore the effect of graphic organizers and marginal glossing strategies instruction on recalling collocations among Iranian EFL learners at different proficiency levels to see the impact of such instruction if there is any. Knowles (1997), states that one of the main aim of education and language teaching is to help students to understand the importance of learning in a lifetime process and put into consider the existence of appropriate skills and strategies in learning a language as an autonomous learner

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

No matter which vocabulary acquisition approach is chosen, the question unanswered is that why some learners, even advanced ones, have at least some problems in learning vocabulary? One reason for this is that learners try to make a separation between meaning and the relation that exist between words. (Zarei & Kosha, 2003). On the other hand, Carter (1988) states "knowing a word means knowing (among other things) the network of relations it forms with other words, either collocationally, or in terms of semantic fields or collocationality" (as cited in Zarei & Kosha, 2003, p. 138). McCarthy and O'Dell (2005) states that collocation refers to the strings of words that can be used together. He argued that understanding these combinations seem to be easy to the native speakers, but since guessing the meaning of these collocations can be more difficult for students of English, they may face with some problems (p. 6).

A. Classification of Collocations

Generally, collocations have been divided into two sub-categories of grammatical and lexical. According to Benson, Benson, and Ilson (1997), two categories of grammatical collocation are dominant words and a proposition of grammatical structure. They defined eight types of grammatical collocations. Lexical collocations, in contrast to grammatical collocations, normally do not have a preposition, infinitive, or clause. Lexical collocations normally consist of noun, adjective, verbs, and adverbs. Many lexical collocations in English consist of a verb and a noun. In contrast to idioms, collocations are more flexible

Lewis (2000, p. 1) states that "collocations might be described as the words that are placed or found together in predictable patterns". Collocations can appear in different ways. Some of them can be fixed and strong, i.e they may occur just with the special words for example take a photo, where some other collocations are more open, i.e. they may occur with so many words with the same meaning (McCarthy & O'Dell, 2005).

B. Origin and Different Kinds of Graphic Organizers (GO)

GOs, which were primarily initiated by Richard Barron (Barron, 1969) have their root in Ausubel's work. Ausubel (1960) states that by the usage of advance organizers, learners can overcome unfamiliar words. He assumed that there is close relationship between the new information and learners' already existing cognitive structure. Therefore, in order to make new material more meaningful and familiar, the mentioned organizers can activate students' prior knowledge and relate the new material to the previously stored information (Ausubel, 1960), which is consistent with the schema theory (Anderson & Pearson, 1984). Schema theory refers to the cognitive structures of knowledge, known as prior or background knowledge.

There are some differences between advance organizers and graphic organizers a GO represents, both written and visual information, they can be teacher- created, student- created or teacher and student - created, and they can be presented as a pre-reading or post- reading activity.

In general as Jiang and Grabe (2007) state GOs can be divided into two groups: the first group is GOs, that allow students by means of visual aids understand or comprehend text through discourse structures. The other groups are those that do not represent the discourse structures of a text: These GOs typically present information as a semantic web or as an outline of main ideas in a text. These kind of GO pay more attention to specific discourse structure of texts.

The five groups of rhetorical relations that Meyer (1975) and Armbruster (1984) refer to them are: first one is listing: in this part material are listed randomly, so that there is not any significant order between them. The second one is comparison/contrast: a description of similarities or differences between two things. The third one is a sequential relationship that may exist between ideas or events. The fourth one is the contrast that may exist between two or more ideas, so that one side can be consider as a cause and the other side as an effect. The fifth one is problem-solution: in spite of the previous one, one factor acts as problem and the next one as solution to that problem.

C. Definition of Gloss

Glosses, by definition, are any notes written in L1 or a simpler form in L2 to facilitate learners' reading comprehension (Lin & Huang, 2008). On the other hand, Nation (2001) states that in order to facilitate second language learners' reading ability, glosses can be used as notes in first language or as simple forms in second language. Thus, whenever a language learner uses glosses in different parts of a text as a mean for finding unfamiliar words, he also become more encourage continuing reading without referring to dictionary as a consular. Traditionally, the textbooks used by EFL learners were of the single gloss type, a direct definition of the new, unknown words was given in the margin, bottom, or end of a lesson. It is believed that students could learn vocabularies from the glosses of new words; however, many EFL students still had problems in vocabulary learning. On the other hand, reading was another good way to gain vocabularies, but most of the words (95%-98%) in a reading text should be known by the reader (Nation, 2001). Then, learning new vocabularies through reading could be successful. The major difficulty that EFL students had in the English reading was the lack of sight words or acquired vocabularies. It is known that the key to reading well is to have adequate vocabulary knowledge.

Effectiveness of glosses

For many researchers, L2 teachers, and learners, gaining word knowledge during reading is a good way to build up L2 learners' word banks. For example, Rott, Williams and Cameron (2002) argued that "much of second language vocabulary was acquired during reading for meaning." However, word gaining and reading comprehension were hard to achieve during the same reading process because students couldn't pay full attention to the two tasks at the same time (Rott, 1997). However, some researchers argued that a learner still could learn new vocabulary during a reading if they attempt to make sense of unfamiliar words (Huckin & Coady, 1999; Hulstijn, Hollander, & Greidanus, 1996). This implies that gaining words through reading is an incidental rather than intentional consequence of the reader's attempts to read for meaning. Furthermore, the incidental vocabulary acquisition was slow and incremental; it was considered efficient for word gaining of L2 learners (Rott, Williams & Cameron, 2002) because these learners had little chance, to learn L2 vocabularies except in classroom learning experiences. Contrarily, reading research had also consistently confirmed that vocabulary knowledge played a central role in the comprehension of written texts (Huckin & Coady, 1999; Laufer, 1997). It means that having enough content words helped students comprehend their reading task.

Laufer (2003) claimed that the lexical threshold for text comprehension was about 3000 word families. It was not so difficult for the native language learners to gain 3000 word families before they began to read. However, for most L2

learners, especially for the beginners or the L2 low-proficiency learners, having enough words to comprehend a reading text was really difficult for them. Having few words to comprehend a reading text resulted in failure to gain word knowledge because they couldn't infer and remember the meanings of unfamiliar words. Obviously, the relationship between reading comprehension and lexical learning is obscure for researchers and L2 teachers to distinguish in learners. Is the word learning continuous when students lack the acquired words for reading comprehension? If not, what can a teacher do when his or her students lack the words to comprehend the reading text and gaining new words?

III. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

It is generally accepted that the graphic organizers and marginal glosses are facilitative for learners' incidental vocabulary learning and reading comprehension while reading. The meaning-providing of unknown words helps students comprehend a text, infer or guess the meaning of other important words and then, remember them after these processing procedures.

Based on the problem stated and the purpose of the study the following research questions will be formulated:

Q1: Does graphic organizers and marginal glossing have any effect on recalling of collocations among elementary-level EFL learners?

Q2: Does graphic organizers and marginal glossing have any effect on recalling of collocations among intermediate-level EFL learners?

Q3: Does graphic organizers and marginal glossing have any effect on recalling of collocations among advanced-level EFL learners?

Q4: At which proficiency levels do graphic organizers, marginal glossing and recalling of collocations have the most effective role?

According to above-mentioned questions, the following hypotheses will be presented:

H1: Graphic organizers have more significant effect on recalling of collocations among elementary-level EFL learners than marginal glossing.

H2: Graphic organizers have more significant effect on recalling of collocations among intermediate-level EFL learners than marginal glossing.

H3: Graphic organizers have more significant effect on recalling of collocations among advanced-level EFL learners than marginal glossing

H4: Graphic organizers, marginal glossing and recalling of collocations have the same effective role on different proficiency levels.

IV. METHOD

A. Participants

The participants of the study comprised 270 EFL learners, both male and female (with the age range of 16 to 28), took part in English classes in Pishgaman and Shadi Language Institutes in Ardabil, Iran. They received Quick Placement Test based on which they were divided into three elementary, intermediate, and advanced levels. As far as this study is concerned, the participants were randomly assigned to nine experimental and control groups. In each level, there were two experimental groups namely graphic organizers (GO) and marginal glossing groups (MG) and one control groups who did not received any explicit teaching in terms of mentioned strategies.

B. Materials

Tests used as the instruments of the study were Proficiency test, pre and post tests. The first version of Quick Placement Test (QPT) developed by Fischer (2001) was administered to make sure the participants were of the same level of proficiency. The test consisted of three sections: structure, vocabulary from easy to difficult and from elementary to advance and reading comprehension tests. A series of Collocation tests, each of them were consisting of 40 multiple-choice items were developed by the researcher for the three different levels of learners. The reliability of the test was estimated using KR-21.

C. Procedure

This study composed of 10 sessions. In order to achieve the purpose of the study and to collect the requisite data, several stages were followed.

To begin with, Quick Placement Test (OPT) was administered to determine proficiency level of 300 participants. Consequently, the 270 homogenous subjects in elementary, intermediate and advance level were selected to take part in the next stage. In the second session, the researcher administered the pretest to measure and compares the learners' knowledge of collocations in mentioned nine groups in three levels before the treatment. It was a series of Collocation tests, which each of them were consisting of 40 multiple-choice items based on English Collocation in Use by Michael McCarthy (2005). The reliability of these tests were calculated as 0.94, 0.91 and 0.97 for elementary, intermediate and advanced levels tests respectively based on KR-21 formula which are acceptable reliability levels and their content validity was confirmed by a professional teacher at Ph. D level.

The groups in each level have been divided in two experimental (Group A (GO) and Group B (MG)) and one control groups.

In the third session, participants were informed about the advantages usage of collocations in language learning process. In group A (GO) they were given instruction on how to use GOs. As Chinn (2006) states there are three stages in constructing a new learning strategy, with *Modeling* as the first stage; the teacher first showed the students how a strategy is employed and why it is worth learning. After introducing the collocation, the instructor drew a graphic organizer special for mentioned collocations on the board showing different parts and relevant information in order to have organized and visual knowledge about them. In the second stage -guided practice- students were asked to share suggestions for what to add to each section and explain how and when to use them. Then the instructor asked them to organize the collocations in groups under the guidance of the teacher. In the end, they were asked to apply GO strategy individually (independent application). This cycle continued in the seven coming sessions.

In group B (MG) the teacher provided an extensive introduction to the type of glosses, how they help students in comprehension, save their time in the process of reading and incidental vocabulary learning. Like group A, the necessary steps were taken to use new marginal strategy in this class. The teacher gave definition and synonyms of collocations then inform them on how to use the information in the side and bottom margins of the texts as tool for enhancing their reading comprehension. After introducing collocations, they were asked, to answer the questions using glossed words. In the next stage the teacher asked them to practice this strategy with their partners while monitoring them. At the end the researcher asked them to apply this strategy individually.

The instruction in control groups of each level was in traditional way, which was conducted by another teacher. The teacher in this group read the collocations loudly and students repeated each of them after the instructor. The collocations was then translated into (Persian) and the students started to answer the following questions.

Following treatment sessions, the posttest was administered as a means for finding out whether there is any significant difference between the groups regarding their recalling of collocations.

D. Data Analysis and Discussion

As mentioned earlier, in order to examine the homogeneity of the participants in terms of proficiency level, Quick Placement Test was administered. A group of 300 students took a proficiency test. Based on them 270 subjects were selected to participate in the main study.

Two kinds of data analyses were done throughout the study with respect to the research questions, the list of which goes as follows:

1. Comparing the effect of two mentioned strategies on recalling of collocations between experimental and control groups for each level of proficiency through T-test method for three first research hypotheses.

2. Comparing different proficiency levels in order to see the differences between them with regard to mentioned strategies and recalling of collocations through One-way ANOVA for the fourth research hypothesis.

The result of pre-test and post-test for participants of each level with regard to research hypotheses can be represented as follow:

H1: Graphic organizers have more significant effect on recalling of collocations among EFL elementary-level learners than marginal glossing

TABLE 1
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR ELEMENTARY LEVEL GROUPS

Group	pre-test				post-test			
	M	SD	HS	LS	M	S	HS	LS
Group A (GO)	11.7	.851	12	10	15.83	1.899	20	15
Group B (MG)	12.1	.811	13	10	15.1	1.213	19	14
Control	12.50	.759	14	10	13.50	.88	14	11

It can be understood from Table 1 that, mean scores of three participating groups in pre-test are almost close to each other and, accordingly, groups can be considered homogenous in terms of pre-test. But the result, presented in second part of Table 1 revealed a statistically significant difference between three groups in terms of their performance on posttest (sig. =0.00). It showed that both experimental groups acted differently in posttest, i.e. both of them performed significantly better than control group but with small effective size. Thus the first alternative hypothesis as, Graphic organizers have significant effect on EFL elementary-level learners than marginal glossing is confirmed.(Table 2)

TABLE 2
PAIRED-SAMPLES T-TEST PRE-TEST AND POST-TEST OF COLLOCATIONS

Paired Differences					T	Df	Sig.(1-tailed)
Mean Deviation	Std. Error	Std. Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
			Lower	Upper			
1.865	1.478	.263	1.158	2.438	5.40	29	.000

H2: Graphic organizers have more significant effect on recalling of collocations among EFL intermediate-level learners than marginal glossing.

TABLE 3
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR INTERMEDIATE LEVEL GROUPS

Group	Pre-test				Post-test			
	M	SD	HS	LS	M	SD	HS	LS
Group A (GO)	11.95	1.099	13	9	16.651	.872	20	15
Group B (MG)	11.85	1.002	13	9	15.025	.866	18	13
Control	12.15	.98	14	9	13.90	.85224	14	11

According to the Table 3, it becomes clear that there is a significant difference between pre- and post test. The results of the paired-sample t-test (t (29) = 6.243, P = .000 < .05; R = .83 indicate that there is a significant difference between Go group's means on the pre-test and post-test (Table 4). On the other hand, both of the experimental groups performed significantly better than control group. Thus the second hypothesis that Graphic organizers have more significant effect on recalling of collocations among intermediate-level EFL learners than marginal glossing **is confirmed**.

TABLE 4
PAIRED-SAMPLES T-TEST PRE-TEST AND POST-TEST OF COLLOCATION

Paired Differences					T	Df	Sig.(1-tailed)
Mean Deviation	Std. Error	Std. Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
			Lower	Upper			
1.6.98	1.421	.272	1.105	2.201	6.243	29	.000

H3: Graphic organizers have more significant effect on recalling of collocations among advanced-level EFL learners than marginal glossing

TABLE 5
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR ADVANCED LEVEL GROUPS

	Pre-test				Post-test			
Group	M	SD	HS	LS	M	SD	HS	LS
Group A (GO)	11.50	1.43	12	9	18.25	1.997	20	14
Group B (MG)	11.60	1.13	12	10	17.02	1.88	19	13
Control	11.65	1.15	14	10	13.8	1.15	14	10

As the result shown in Table 5, it seems that considering descriptive statistics for the test on collocation, both experimental groups performed better in pre and post tests. The results of the paired-sample t-test (t (29) = 5.768, P = .000 < .05; R = .89 indicate that there is a significant difference between GO group's means on the pre-test and post-test (Table 6). Thus the third hypothesis as Graphic organizers have more significant effect on recalling of collocations among advanced-level EFL learners than marginal glossing **is confirmed**.

TABLE 6
PAIRED-SAMPLES T-TEST PRE-TEST AND POST-TEST OF COLLOCATION

Paired Differences					T	Df	Sig.(1-tailed)
Mean Deviation	Std. Error	Std. Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
			Lower	Upper			
1.828	1.202	.2228	1.107	2.887	5.768	29	.000

H4: Graphic organizers, marginal glossing and recalling of collocations have the same effective role on different proficiency levels.

Although the F-value of 302.53 indicated significant differences between the means of the elementary, intermediate and advanced groups on the GO and MG strategies, the post-hoc Scheffe's tests should be run to compare the groups two by two in each strategy.

TABLE 7
ONE-WAY ANOVA; GRAPHIC ORGANIZERS STRATEGY BY PROFICIENCY LEVEL

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	130800.372	2	65400.186	302.53	.000
Within Groups	33845.388	154	143.273		
Total	1763583.753	149			

TABLE 8
ONE-WAY ANOVA; MARGINAL GLASSING STRATEGY BY PROFICIENCY LEVEL

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	120864.362	2	61500.170	300.537	.000
Within Groups	31777.348	147	216.173		
Total	162577.760	149			

TABLE 9
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS; GRAPHIC ORGANIZING STRATEGIES BY PROFICIENCY LEVEL

	N	Mean	Std.Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	
					Lower	Upper
Elementary	30	30.44	6.75	1.012	7.96	31.80
Intermediate	30	57.65	9.061	1.515	53.59	61.71
Advanced	30	65.67	3.750	1.002	62.39	67.44
Total	90	45.74	16.032	1.697	43.71	47.37

TABLE 10
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS; MARGINAL GLASSING STRATEGIES BY PROFICIENCY LEVEL

	N	Mean	Std.Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	
					Lower	Upper
Elementary	30	29.88	6.158	1.001	23.56	27.70
Intermediate	30	55.45	8.961	1.301	49.59	59.71
Advanced	30	61.77	3.470	1.012	60.29	61.94
Total	90	40.04	13.122	1.597	40.31	41.38

TABLE 11
POST-HOC SCHEFFE'S TESTS; GRAPHIC ORGANIZING STRATEGIES BY PROFICIENCY LEVELS

(I) Proficiency Level	(J) Proficiency Level	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Intermediate	Elementary	52. 765[*]	2.732	.000	46.26	59.27
Advanced	Elementary	70.783[*]	3.384	.000	62.17	81.40
	Intermediate	21.018[*]	3.578	.000	11.17	28.86

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

TABLE 12
POST-HOC SCHEFFE'S TESTS; MARGINAL GLASSING STRATEGIES BY PROFICIENCY LEVELS

(I) Proficiency Level	(J) Proficiency Level	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Intermediate	Elementary	49. 765[*]	2.632	.000	47.26	59.37
Advanced	Elementary	69.783[*]	3.284	.000	61.12	79.40
	Intermediate	21.028[*]	3.178	.000	12.17	28.96

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

Based on the results displayed in above Tables, it can be concluded that;

A: There was a significant difference between intermediate and elementary groups on both Graphic organizing and Marginal glassing strategies.

B: There was a significant difference between intermediate and advanced groups on the Graphic organizing and Marginal glassing strategies.

C: There was a significant difference between advanced and elementary groups on the Graphic organizing and Marginal glassing strategies. So, with respect to the results the forth hypothesis as graphic organizers, marginal glossing and recalling of collocations have the same effective role on different proficiency levels **is rejected**.

V. CONCLUSION

The findings in this study confirm some of the previous findings such as a research conducted by Chinn (2006) showed that first the student-generated graphic organizer strategy had positive impact on students' reading comprehension. Secondly, whenever students tried to follow graphic organizers in groups through a text, they can overcome the problems that may occur during reading comprehension. Secondly, a research conducted by Jiang and Grabe (2007) also improved that by using DSGO instruction in discourse comprehension there was significant improvement in the general reading ability. The difference of the present study with the above research was not only on the kind of graphic organizer, but also on the age and number of the participants.

The main purpose of this study was to measure the effect of using two strategies namely GO and MG on EFL students' recalling of collocation. As results showed, students who used GO outperformed those who received MG.

It can be concluded that GOs are more suitable learning tools; students learn how to make relationship among different ideas in the text. Furthermore, they let the students be aware of their thinking process and gain insight into their analytical and synthesis skills. Using GOs give them an opportunity to express their ideas individually and in group and also provide visual data for them, which was a chance for many of them to be visually creative.

The result of the current study showed that there were statistically significant differences between the control group and experimental group one (GO) on recalling collocation. It is worth mentioning that due to relative superiority of MG group over TI it would be logical to give priority to MG as a better choice. Nevertheless, group B (MG) was placed somewhere in the middle among these three groups.

Several pedagogical implications can emerge from this study. The result of this study will be of importance for EFL learners, teachers, instructional designers, and course developers who are interested in including graphic organizers and marginal glossing strategies in EFL teaching, in that it will provide them clear explanation of how GO strategy can

affect students' comprehension by (a) activating their schemata, (b) organizing and connecting previously learned information to the newly learned material, (c) leading students to notice the input and relationships between ideas and raising their awareness, and (d) providing visual, comprehensible and meaningful input

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Malahat Shabani Minaabad is assistant professor of Applied Linguistics at Payame Noor University, Iran. She got her PhD in Applied Linguistics from Baku state University of Azerbayjan in 2010, and MA in TEFL from Khatam University of Tehran, IRAN in 2001. Since then she has been involved in teaching MA and PhD students and enjoys from supervising MA and PhD dissertations.

Since Malahat Shabani has been more interested in the field of linguistics and teaching, she has published so many articles in the mentioned fields.

Positive Discourse Analysis of Xi Jinping's Speech at the National University of Singapore under Appraisal Theory

Ting Su

Foreign Languages School, Shanxi Normal University, Linfen, China

Abstract—Positive discourse analysis on leaders' speeches has gained much attention from many scholars at home and abroad. However, the author finds that there is few related research on Chinese leaders' speech. Therefore, the paper chooses President Xi Jinping's speech, delivered at the National University of Singapore on November 7th, 2015, as the research subject and conducts the positive discourse analysis from three aspects: attitude system, engagement system and graduation system. After the analysis, the author comes to find that there are more positive resources in Mr. Xi's speech in order to construct a harmonious relationship with his listeners; Mr. Xi is careful to introduce other voices in terms of the engagement system; he adopts more up-scaling force than the down-scaling force, more sharpened force than softened force in terms of the graduation system. The present paper is significant in applying positive discourse analysis to Chinese leader's speech, thus expanding its application scope; in enriching the research content of appraisal theory; and in opening up a new angle for future study.

Index Terms—positive discourse analysis, appraisal theory, President Xi's speech

I. INTRODUCTION

Leaders' speech has been an important research topic for discourse analysis, especially from the perspective of critical discourse analysis (CDA). J. R. Martin has put forward a new angle for discourse analysis, that is, positive discourse analysis (PDA) and appraisal theory serves as its theoretical basis. Due to its gentle, constructive and harmonious way of analysis, PDA has gained great interest from scholars at home and abroad. However, there are few research studying Chinese leaders' speech nowadays. Therefore, the author chooses President Xi's speech delivered at the National University of Singapore on November 7th, 2015 as the research subject and conduct the PDA of it on the basis of appraisal theory. It needs to be pointed out that the author chooses to analyze the English version of Xi's speech, since his audience understands him through the version of English translation. Thus, it is meaningful to explore how the speech of English version achieves interpersonal negotiation between the speaker and his listeners. The author will first introduce the previous studies on PDA and then explain its theoretical framework appraisal system. After that, Xi's speech will be analyzed from three aspects respectively, that is, attitude system, engagement system and graduation system. Finally, the author will present the major findings of this study and its limitations at the end of the paper.

II. POSITIVE DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

As a new perspective for discourse analysis, PDA, put forward by J. R. Martin, emphasizes the function of discourse construction and wants to build a better world. It is of great significance in the development of discourse analysis from CDA to PDA. Discourse analysis changes from being deconstructive to being constructive. PDA is not a complete denial of CDA in terms of the theoretical basis and analytic methods but a supplement and development to it. Since its recommendation, it has attracted many domestic and foreign researchers.

J. R. Martin recommended PDA in his paper titled *Positive Discourse Analysis: Solidarity and Change* at the international seminar in Birmingham. He claims that the object of linguistic analysis should not only contain unequal bad news, but also welcome peaceful good news.

The research on PDA started relatively late in China but it has been studied within different genres, such as public speeches, news, etc. Zhu Yongsheng (2006) explains that PDA advocates a positive attitude to the solution of social contradictions and expects to build a harmonious community by discourse analysis. Yuan Lijuan and Zhang Faxiang (2011) conduct an analysis of Obama's speech on the end of combat mission in Iraq from the perspective of PDA.

Nowadays, the theoretical exploration of PDA is still under development and it needs further improvement and perfection. Since PDA is characterized with gentle appraisal attitude, positive and constructive analysis, it will necessarily raise interest from more and more scholars.

III. APPRAISAL THEORY

Appraisal theory is the theoretical framework of PDA. Martin (2004) defined appraisal theory as evaluation,

negotiations of attitude, intensity of emotion and alliance with readers. Readers should not only pay attention to literal meaning but also focus more on deeper meaning of the discourse. Evaluation is also a system of interpersonal meaning. People use evaluative resources to negotiate social relations with other people by telling listeners and readers their feelings and viewpoints towards other people and things (Liu, 2010). Therefore, evaluation is firstly involved with someone's attitude towards events, other people's actions and the surrounding objects. And then it is concerned with the source of attitude, which may not be the speaker himself, but narrated by others. Thirdly, it relates to the degree of intensity of attitudes, which is high, medium or low. The three aspects are named attitude, engagement and graduation respectively.

A. Attitude System

Attitude is the core of appraisal system, which refers to the inter-subjective evaluation of participants and process by reference to a value system with emotional reaction and cultural restriction. In attitude system, language resources explain the emotion of language users towards behavior, text and phenomenon and make use of lexical resources to judge behavior and appreciate the value of things. Therefore, attitude can be divided into affect, judgment and appreciation, which belong to the category of psychology, ethics and aesthetics.

Affect refers to various emotions of language users toward certain people or things according to the standard of individual preference. It is concerned with positive or negative feelings of people: un/happiness, in/security, and dis/satisfaction. It is usually realized by mental process or attributive relational process, and judgment and appreciation derive from affect system.

Judgment refers to the opinions of language users on the basis of social norms, which is concerned with people's attitude to behavior, such as admire/criticize, praise/condemn, etc. In judgment system, adverbs usually act as the circumstance of manner, adjectives as epithet or attribute, and some nouns and verbs containing attitudinal meaning also express the meaning of judgment. In the sub-system of judgment, there are social esteem and social sanction. Social esteem judges people's character or behavior from the perspective of normality, capacity, and tenacity. It is concerned with compliment and criticism, generally without legal sense. Social sanction judges people from the perspective of veracity and propriety, that is to say, whether a person is honest or his/her behavior is appropriate. It is involved in commendation and condemnation, usually with legal sense.

Appreciation refers to views of language users toward certain people, things and behavior according to aesthetic standards, which is an assessment of phenomenon. Different from judgment, appreciation focuses on inanimate objects, mainly for product and process. White defined appreciation as the affirmative or negative evaluation of material, artwork, process, and the state of affairs, not the assessment of people's behavior. It can be divided into three subsystems: reaction (whether they catch our attention or please us), composition (balance and complexity), and valuation (how innovative, authentic, timely). Respectively, reaction corresponds to affection, composition to perception, and valuation to cognition, which is equivalent to the interpersonal meaning, textual meaning, and conceptual meaning.

B. Engagement System

Engagement is the language resource indicating voices of the author and texts, which is divided into monogloss and heterogloss. Monogloss states the author's thoughts, opinions and attitudes, which seems to provide only one standpoint and does not admit the possibilities of other voices in public. Heterogolss intends to make use of others' voices to express their own views indirectly, showing that there may exist other opinions. Heterogolss can be divided into two categories. If the words restrict and keep away from the existence of another position and voice, it belongs to dialogic contraction. If not, it is the dialogue expansion and it provides space for the difference of speaker's viewpoints and standpoints.

Dialogic contraction consists of disclaim and proclaim. Disclaim is a direct refusal or substitution of a comment, while proclaim is to query, refute, subvert or reject an opinion by altering, emphasizing or intervening. Disclaim is composed of deny and counter. Deny is a method to lead positive views into dialogue, which is not a simple negation of affirmation in logical relations. Sometimes when the author indicates that he holds different opinions with the third party, the denial expressions point to the relationship beyond the speaker and reader. In fact, the author aims to draw the readers to his/her side, align with him/her as well as oppose the third party. Sometimes, deny points to the assumed reader, especially when the speaker or writer postulates that this kind of thought may have an impact on a portion of audience. Counter is intended to use one proposition to replace or oppose another, which may probably occur in this place. Proclaim is composed of concur, pronounce and endorsement. Concur is the speaker showing his agreement with opinions of his conversational partner publicly. When someone emphasizes, intervenes or alters certain ideas obviously, it is the pronounce. When speakers describe some outside opinions as correct, effective, undeniable or entirely valid, this kind of proclaim is endorsement. Entertain and attribute belong to dialogic expansion. Entertain indicates that the relevant standpoint is a possible standpoint, usually expressed by modal auxiliaries. There are two subclasses of attribute, acknowledge and distance. Acknowledge is a neutral attribute, which doesn't demonstrate the views of the speaker on certain proposition overtly. Distance makes it clear that there is a distance between the speaker and the quotative proposition and he distinguishes himself from the proposition distinctly.

C. Graduation System

Graduation runs through the entire attitude system and has a place in engagement system as well, which shows different levels of evaluation meaning. The most significant character of attitudinal meaning is gradability. Affect, judgment and appreciation are all concerned with affirmation and negation with varying degrees. Graduation has two axis, intensification or quantification as well as typicality or definiteness. The former is called the force and the latter is the focus. Force involves two aspects, intensity and quantity, which was defined respectively as intensification and quantification by Martin. Intensification is the judgment for intensity, which mainly concerns quality and process. While quantity, namely quantification, is applied to entity. Proceeding from mode, three kinds of intensification are distinguished, isolation, infusion and repetition. Quantification is concerned with entity, which includes both concrete and abstract ones. Quantified system is the imprecise evaluation of lexical resources in number, mass and extent. Extent includes time and space, which can be evaluated from two aspects, distance and span. Based on the moving direction of graduation, focus can be divided into two categories, sharpen and soften. Sharpen indicates that the author intends to maximize the value position, whether it is positive or negative, so as to draw the reader to his side, and regard them as his allies. Effect of soften depends on the words of focus. If the word is negative, its function is to soften the value position of the speaker or author, which is a placatory method so that it can bring into correspondence with readers holding different opinions. If the word is positive, its effect is difficult to determine. Generally speaking, the positive evaluation has a potential destructive role in writer or reader, so that is why soften is needed.

By analyzing Xi's speech in National University of Singapore from the perspective of PDA under the guideline of appraisal theory, the present paper aims to discover how our chairman Xi comes to achieve his goal of making foreigners know better about China and encouraging them to contribute to the peaceful development of Asia.

IV. POSITIVE DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF XI'S SPEECH

The author has introduced the PDA and its theoretical basis appraisal theory above. In this part, Xi's speech will be analyzed from the perspective of PDA under the guide of appraisal theory. In Xi's speech, he intends to create a harmonious and peaceful environment for the development of both China and all its neighbors, and promote deeper relation between China and Singapore. Therefore, there will be lots of positive discourse resources in his speech. In all, there are 186 appraisal resources in Xi's speech delivered in the National University of Singapore. The general distribution of appraisal resources is presented in the following figure.

TABLE 1
APPRAISAL RESOURCES IN XI'S SPEECH

	Attitude	Engagement	Graduation
Number	112	37	37
Percentage	60.2%	19.9%	19.9%

As it is shown in the above figure, attitude resources are the most, accounting for 60.2%, while engagement and graduate resources are of the same proportion for 19.9%. Therefore, attitude system is the core of appraisal system, and Xi uses lots of attitude resources to express his affect, judgment and appreciation so as to build a close relation with his listeners. Engagement system is concerned with the source of attitude and graduation system relates to the degree of intensity of attitudes. The two systems go through all the attitude system to achieve the speaker's interpersonal meaning. Then the paper will analyze Xi's speech from attitude, engagement and graduation system respectively.

A. PDA of Xi's Speech in Attitude System

After statistics and analysis, there are 112 attitude resources, the distribution of which is shown in table 2. In his speech, Mr. Xi employs various attitude resources to express his emotion, achieve his interpersonal meaning, and construct a positive relation with his listeners.

TABLE 2
ATTITUDE RESOURCES IN XI'S SPEECH

	Affect	Judgment	Appreciation
Number	14	46	52
Percentage	12.5%	41.1%	46.4%

There are 14 affect resources, accounting for the least proportion of 12.5%. Mr. Xi uses many affect resources at the beginning of his speech to express his happiness to be there as well as his thanks to his listeners and try to create a close relation with his listeners. Besides, it finds that Mr. Xi tends to use positive and direct words or expressions to show his emotion. There are some examples below.

(1) I am **delighted** (affect+) to come to the National University of Singapore and talk to you as a guest speaker of Singapore Lecture.

(2) It gives me great **pleasure** (affect+) to pay a state visit to the garden state of Singapore at the invitation of President Tan Keng Yam.

(3) We would like to express our **sincere congratulations** (affect+) to the Singaporean people on their success

There are 46 judgment resources in the speech, accounting for 41.1%. Specifically, there are more social esteem resources than social sanction resources. Social sanction resources are mainly used when Mr. Xi talks about serious issues, such as China's attitude on the South China Sea. Social sanction is of legal sense and is more serious. Therefore, it is used cautiously in the speech. On the other hand, Mr. Xi uses some social esteem resources to praise Singaporean people for their capacity and tenacity. Also, he uses some resources to demonstrate China has gone through a lot suffering and finally succeeds in making great achievements. Although judgment resources are usually used to describe people, it can be used to judge what a nation has done in author's opinion, because to some extent a nation can be viewed as Mother of its people. The author finds that nearly all of judgment resources are positive in Xi's speech, no matter it is social sanction resources or social esteem resources. Mr. Xi successfully achieves his interpersonal meaning, constructs a positive relation between himself and his listeners, and tries to inspire the listeners to devote themselves to the cause of building a peaceful and prosperous Asia through these judgment resources. Below are some examples of judgment resources.

(4) Indeed, NUS has produced a galaxy of talents and **outstanding** (judgment: capacity) public leaders for Singapore.

(5) In the last 50 years, the **hard-working** (judgment: tenacity) and **visionary** (judgment: capacity) people of Singapore have **endured** (judgment: tenacity) hardships and **succeeded** (judgment: tenacity) in building Singapore into one of the most advanced countries in Asia.

(6) It is the **bounden duty** (judgment: propriety) of the Chinese government to uphold China's **territorial sovereignty** (judgment: propriety) and **legitimate maritime rights and interests** (judgment: propriety).

There are 52 appreciation resources in Xi's speech, accounting for the biggest proportion of 46.4%. Appreciation refers to views of language users toward certain people, things and behavior according to aesthetic standards. With these appreciation resources, Mr. Xi expresses his views about Singapore, the National University of Singapore, the relation between China and Singapore, etc. At the outset he compliments NUS and the achievement made by Singapore. Later he appreciates China's close bond with Singapore and ASEAN from former history until today. Mr. Xi employs many active words to define China's relation with Singapore, such as friendly, fruitful, harmonious, cooperative, shared, common, and so on. Mr. Xi aims to tell Singaporean youths of our friendly relationship since 25 years ago and call for them to continue this close relation in the future. In addition, some appreciation resources are used when Mr. Xi introduces his initiative of building the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road. By doing so, he hopes to make his listeners know better about the initiative and attract Singapore to join in it. As it can be seen, appreciation resources can be employed to achieve the speaker's interpersonal meaning and achieve constructive meaning. Here are some examples of appreciation resources.

(7) This year marks the **25th anniversary** (appreciation) of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Singapore, and it gives me great pleasure to pay a state visit to the **garden state** (appreciation) of Singapore at the invitation of President Tan Keng Yam.

(8) With a history of **110 years** (appreciation), the National University of Singapore is **renowned** (appreciation) both in Asia and internationally.

(9) China and Singapore are **friendly** (appreciation) neighbors across the sea with **a long history** (appreciation) of **amicable exchanges** (appreciation).

(10) The Belt and Road Initiative, as it is now called, is about **openness** (appreciation), **development** (appreciation) and **cooperation** (appreciation).

B. PDA of Xi's Speech in Engagement System

In engagement system, there are a few monogloss resources in the speech which are used to express the speaker's voice. Because of its subjectivity, the speaker uses less of it. Besides, the speaker tends to use "we" to get close with his audiences and make alliance with them. However, there are more heterogloss resources in the speech with its abundant interpersonal meanings, which would give enlightenment of constructing the text. The speaker employs dialogic contraction and expansion alternatively in order to bring in other voices to make his opinions objective and achieve inter-subjective negotiation. The analysis of the speech finds that the resources of dialogue contraction are a little richer than dialogue expansion, for the speaker restricts other voices and standpoints and he intends to persuade his audiences and provide his voices with authority by dialogic contraction. The statistical result of engagement resources is presented in table 3.

TABLE 3
ENGAGEMENT RESOURCES IN XI'S SPEECH

	Monogloss	Heterogloss	
		Contract	Expand
Number	3	19	15
Percentage	8.1%	51.4%	40.5%

There are some examples here to show the engagement resources in the speech.

(11) **This saying vividly reflects** (contract: endorse) the spirit of Singapore, and we would like to express our sincere congratulations to the Singaporean people on their success.

(12) Efforts to reach this goal should **naturally** (contract: concur) start in its neighborhood.

(13) **There has never been** any problem with the freedom of navigation and overflight; **nor will there** ever be any in the future. (contract: deny)

(14) **Yet** (contract: counter), the region also faces a host of intricate security issues, particularly the rising non-traditional challenges...

(15) **As a Chinese saying goes** (expand: attribute), a single line of silk doesn't make a thread, and one hand cannot clap.

(16) **We should** form synergy between our respective development strategies. (monogloss)

C.   PDA of Xi's Speech in Graduation System

As it is shown in the following figure, the force resources are in the majority among the graduation system and all of them are up-scalding. Among the less focus resources, sharpened focus is richer than softened focus.

TABLE 4
GRADUATION RESOURCES IN XI'S SPEECH

	Force		Focus	
	Raise	Lower	Sharpen	Soften
Number	26	0	7	4
Percentage	70.3%	0	18.9%	10.8%

In his speech, Mr. Xi adopts raising force and sharpened focus to highlight his attitude and proper engagement. Mr. Xi employs intensifiers, attitudinal lexis, metaphor, and repetition to raise his force of attitude. He also uses a plenty of number resources to show the objectivity of his speech. Below are some examples of graduation resources in the speech.

(17) **Indeed**, NUS has produced **a galaxy of** talents and outstanding public leaders for Singapore. (force: raise)\

(18) China is now Singapore's **biggest** trading partner, and Singapore is the **biggest** source of foreign investment and an important investment destination for China. (force: raise)

(19)China has the **unshirkable** responsibility to ensure peace. (force: raise)

(20) China shares close cultural bonds with **all countries** in Southeast Asia. (focus: sharpen)

(21)At present, the most important task facing **all Asian governments** is to ensure robust and sustained development. (focus: sharpen)

(22)For **nearly** half a century, the Southeast Asian countries have addressed instability and underdevelopment and achieved stability and development... (focus: soften)

V.   CONCLUSION

It is believed that PDA can do better in advocating positive social ideology and improving the social life for it aims at the active construction and peaceful solution to the problems. After the positive analysis of Xi's speech, the author can draw the following conclusions.

Firstly, there are more positive and direct resources than the negative and implicit ones in the attitude system. In the speech, Mr. Xi employs lots of positive and direct affects, judgments, and appreciations to express his excitement for being there, judge Singaporean achievements and efforts, and appreciate their relation. From the perspective of PDA, all of these can easily seize the hearts of the youth and evoke their emotional resonance.

Secondly, in the engagement system, Mr. Xi is also careful to introduce the other voices and stances, establishing the dialogue with his audience, thus effectively expanding or contracting the dialogic space. The speaker tends to limit the dialogue in order to convey to the audience an authoritative and inarguable tone of Chinese Government and its people, that's "peace" and "development".

Thirdly, in the graduation system, the speaker adopts more up-scaling force than the down-scaling force, more sharpened focus than softened focus. In the speech, Mr. Xi employs the raising or sharpened resources to highlight his strong attitude. From the perspective of PDA, this kind of feature of graduation indicates his wish to lay a solid foundation for the comprehensive and profound cooperation. The finding suggests that the addresser makes good use of graduation resources to amplify the value position and hence strongly align the addressees into that value position.

Finally, it can be seen that President Xi devotes to promoting China's cooperation with Singapore. He is ready to handle the dispute and conflict, based on mutual respect and the spirit of seeking common ground while reserving difference, continuously enriching the strategic partnership and paving a win-win road of the equality and mutual trust. The speech conveys the positive signals, such as friendship, respect, cooperation as well as peaceful development, which benefits the people of all the countries.

This paper is just a tentative application of appraisal theory. Due to her limited knowledge of appraisal theory and PDA, the author is aware that there exists much weakness in her paper and she welcomes suggestions and corrections. Besides, the author just conducts an overall appraisal analysis of the speech due to the limited space. It can be continued from deeper aspects. For example, the distribution of appraisal resources can be analyzed from the beginning, body and closing part of the speech, and we can discuss their functions in each part.

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Ting Su was born in Lvliang, China in 1990. She is studying linguistics in Shanxi Normal University for her master degree, where she received her bachelor degree in 2010. Her research interests include applied linguistics, second language acquisition and sociolinguistics.

Critical Thinking and Reading Comprehension among Postgraduate Students: The Case of Gender and Language Proficiency Level

Soraya Yousefi

ELT Department, Roudehen Branch, Islamic Azad University, Roudehen, Iran

Mojtaba Mohammadi

ELT Department, Roudehen Branch, Islamic Azad University, Roudehen, Iran

Abstract—**Critical thinking is believed to have significant contributions to learners' academic context in the era of technology and explosion of information (Kealey, Holland & Watson, 2005; Oliver & Utermohlen, 1995; Yeh, 2004). The need to think critically is felt more prominently for the postgraduate students with their intense exposure to more readings. This paper aims at probing the role of critical thinking skills in EFL learners' reading comprehension. In so doing, four hundred and forty-three male and female Iranian EFL postgraduate students in the fields of translation studies and English language teaching at Islamic Azad University, South Tehran and Science and Research branches participated in this study were selected. These students were selected based on their general English proficiency score in MA entrance examination in Iran. Considering the normal distribution of the subjects' scores, we chose those scores one standard deviation above and below the mean to be in the sample of the study. Consequently, four hundred and forty-three of them were patterned as homogenous and selected for the purpose of this research. Watson-Glaser critical thinking questionnaire and Longman's TOEFL were used to collect data. The Pearson Correlation Coefficient was run to analyze the data. The findings of present study demonstrated that there was a significant relationship between critical thinking and reading comprehension. Also, gender and level of proficiency could not make a statistically significant difference in this respect.**

Index Terms—**critical thinking, reading comprehension, gender, language proficiency, postgraduate students**

I. INTRODUCTION

In a brief history of the idea of critical thinking, Paul, Elder, and Bartell (1997) maintained that the genesis of the concept dates back to the pedagogical perspectives of Socrates 2500 years ago when he "discovered by a method of probing questioning that people could not rationally justify their confident claims to knowledge…. Socrates established the importance of asking deep questions that probe profoundly into thinking before we accept ideas as worthy of belief" (p. 2). Paul, Elder and Bartell (1997) asserted that the present concept of critical thinking in pedagogy is the equivalence of "Socratic Questioning". This disciplined and systematic method of questioning is used to quest after thought in various purposes "to explore complex ideas, to get to the truth of things, to open up issues and problems, to uncover assumption, to analyze concept, to distinguish what we know from what we don't know, and to follow out logical implications of though" (p. 2). The concept of critical thinking was also followed by other Greek thinkers like Plato and Aristotle with the emphasis on the core idea that "only the trained mind is prepared to see through the way things look to us on the surface to the way they really are beneath the surface" (p. 3).

In recent years the concept of critical thinking has been widely dealt with in education. In the 8th Annual International Conference on Critical Thinking and Education Reform, Scriven and Paul (as cited in Condon & Kelly-Riley, 2004, p. 64) defined critical thinking as "the intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information gathered from, or generated by observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication as a rubric to belief and action". Critical thinking, according to Scriven and Paul, "entails the examination of those structures or elements of thought implicit in all reasoning: purpose, problem, or question-at-issue, assumptions, concepts, empirical grounding; reasoning leading to conclusions, implications and consequences, objections from alternative viewpoints, and frame of reference" (as cited in Condon & Kelly-Riley, 2004, p. 64). Halpern (2014) also defined critical thinking as "the use of those cognitive skills or strategies that increase the probability of a desirable outcome" (p. 54). It is purposeful, reasonable, and goal directed. Yeh and Chen (2005) put forth "that to produce a critical thinker, dispositions toward critical thinking and cognitive skills of critical thinking must be thought and nurtured as early as possible" (p. 334). Dispositions toward critical thinking have been proved to be highly correlated with the use of critical thinking skills. The critical thinking skills are (1) reasoning, (2) comprehension, application, analysis, and synthesis, (3) interpretation, (4) judgment, and (5) evaluation. Adopting a cognitive perspective to critical thing and in an attempt to revise Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives,

Krathwohl (2002) divided the cognitive domain into two dimensions: the knowledge dimension comprising of factual, conceptual, procedural, and metacognitive knowledge and the Cognitive Process dimension comprising of remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating.

Underlying the core purpose of critical thinkers, Paul and Elder (2002) stated that they "perceive explicit command of the thinking process as the key to command of behavior" (p. 122). They further applied the implications in learning process and claimed that critical thinkers:

see reading, writing, speaking, and listening as modes of skilled thinking. When they read, they see the text as a verbal representation of the thinking of the author. They strive to enter the writer's point of view. They strive to reconstruct the author's thinking in their own mind. (p. 122)

Todays, there is no doubt how language and thought are related. Language is used to represent thought in any individual's mind. This can be investigated in skills where the major concern is comprehension such as reading and listening comprehension. Reading comprehension, as Nunan (1999) claimed, is not, unlike speaking skill, a skill every one learns to do. Elder and Paul (2004) pointed out that "to learn well, one must read well" (p. 37). Regarding reading comprehension skill as a basic skill in language learning, Chastain (1988) L2 "learners need to learn to read for communication and to read … more easily than they can acquire any other skill, and they can use reading materials as a primary source of comprehensible input as they learn the language" (p. 216).

As Paris and Jacobs (1984) stated, "skilled readers often engage in deliberate activities that require helpful thinking, flexible strategies, and periodic self-monitoring… [while] novice readers often seem oblivious to these strategies and the need to use them" (p. 2083). Bowen, Madsen, and Hilferty (1985, p. 243) analyzed that reading critically presupposes basic skills in understanding and interpreting meaning: 1) Understanding meanings, 2) Paraphrasing the content, 3) Getting the main thought and the details, 4) Distinguishing among fact, inference, and opinion, 5) Seeing relationships, 6) Predicting outcomes, 7) Drawing conclusions, 8) Making generalizations, 9) Understanding figurative language, and 10) Recognizing propaganda.

If critical thinking is necessary for any student, it is a must for a university student. Paul (1990) found it a problem with university students' reading comprehension skill when "they cannot identify the evidence an author needs to justify the implications that follow from what the author said" (p. 50). In an attempt to ameliorate the lack of this academic cognitive skill, he maintained that instead of approaching "written material as a collection of sentences," a university student should try out "various interpretations until one fits all of the work, rather than ignoring or distorting statements that don't fit their interpretation" (p. 335). Among university students, the critical thinking skills are not restricted to looking for the main idea or criticizing it, or even accepting the contents you are reading but, according to Paul and Elder (2014), entails developing the map of knowledge and reading to understand systems of thought. They asserted that "knowledge exists in systems of meanings with interrelated primary ideas, secondary ideas, and peripheral ideas" (p. 2). Having gained the understanding of these layers of ideas, the reader could think within the system. Besides, through "taking command of the structures that are the basis of all thought", the reader can identify the purpose of the academic text "actively engaging a dialogue with the writer" (p. 18) and evaluating it.

Reading comprehension, besides its role as a language-based skill (Frost, 1998; Vellutino, Fletcher, Snowling & Scanlon, 2004), is considered to be a cognitive process (Ehri, 1995). Guo (2008) claimed that reading comprehension skill is a cognitive enterprise that involves the interaction of reader, text, and activity (Snow & Sweet, 2001). Also, underlining the psychometric process in reading comprehension skill, Sheorey and Mokhtari (2001) asserted that "reading is not a linear process but one in which readers constantly form hypotheses, test predictions, and use their knowledge of the world and of the language to construct meaning" (p. 432). On the same token, as Paris and Jacobs (1984) stated, "skilled readers often engage in deliberate activities that require helpful thinking, flexible strategies, and periodic self-monitoring… [while] novice readers often seem oblivious to these strategies and the need to use them" (p. 2083). Bowen, Madsen, and Hilferty (1985, p. 243) also analyzed that reading critically presupposes basic skills in understanding and interpreting meaning: 1) Understanding meanings, 2) Paraphrasing the content, 3)Getting the main thought and the details, 4) Distinguishing among fact, inference, and opinion, 5) Seeing relationships, 6) Predicting outcomes, 7) Drawing conclusions, 8) Making generalizations, 9) Understanding figurative language, and 10) Recognizing propaganda.

Aside from the theory-wise studies, there are a few studies with practical orientation. A few correlational studies supported the relationship between critical thinking ability and reading comprehension skills (e.g., Bakhshipour Khodaie, 2012; Eftekhary & Besharati Kalayeh, 2014; Fahim, Bagherkazemi, & Alemi, 2010; Hassani, Rahmany, & Babaei, 2013; Hawkins, 2012; Heydari, 2011) or reading strategies used by students (e.g., Nourmohammadi, Heidari, & Dehghan Niry, 2012). The studies investigating gender difference regarding the correlation between critical thinking ability and reading comprehension skill reported no significant difference (e.g., Eftekhary & Besharati Kalayeh, 2014; Hawkins, 2012; Heydari, 2011) except few (e.g., Nourmohammadi, Heidari, & Dehghan Niry, 2012) which claimed that male outperformed female in this regard. The majority of the studies investigated school children and only few (Bakhshipour Khodaie, 2012; Hawkins, 2012) had selected participants from university who were all undergraduate students.

One of the major problems in the Iranian context is that the educational system in general and the tertiary level in specific is still enchanted with the traditional mindset where the primacy of rote learning is clearly observed.

Consequently, according to Fahim and Ahmadian (2012), developing students' evaluative and reflective skills are not well-regarded. Moreover, as Jalilifar (2010) pointed out, "despite the growing interest in learning English as a foreign language in Iran, students at college level seem rarely proficient enough to read and comprehend English language texts" (p. 98). Despite the results of Iranian learners, the role of critical thinking skills in fostering basic academic language skills such as reading and writing requires due attention.

To this end, the present study aimed at investigating the relationship between the critical thinking skills and reading comprehension among postgraduate university students. The role of gender and language proficiency were also considered for any possible difference among them.

Concerning the objectives of the study, following research questions were propounded:

1. Is there any statistically significant relationship between critical thinking ability of EFL learners and their performance on reading comprehension?

2. Is there any significant difference between males and females regarding the relationship between critical thinking and reading comprehension skill?

3. Is there any significant difference between students with high, mid, and low language proficiency regarding the relationship between critical thinking and reading comprehension skill?

II. METHODOLOGY

A. Participants

Six hundred and thirty MA graduate students in translation studies and English language teaching at Islamic Azad University, South Tehran and Science and Research branches participated in this study. As the first step, these students who were from both sexes were selected based on their general English proficiency score in MA entrance examination in Iran. Through considering the normal distribution of the subjects' scores, those scores which were one standard deviation above and below the mean were decided to be in the sample of the study. Consequently, four hundred and forty-three of them were patterned as homogenous and selected for the purpose of this research.

B. Instruments

The main purpose of the study was to find out the relationship between critical thinking and reading comprehension of Iranian postgraduate university students. In this regard, two instruments were selected to collect data. Since the participants were all postgraduate students in English language teaching or translation studies, the reading comprehension test was taken from Longman's Preparation Course for TOEFL (Phillips, 2001). The test consisted of five texts and fifty items and the participants had 55 minutes to answer. Watson-Glaser (1980) Critical Thinking Appraisal- Form A (WGCTA) – was also administered to measures some of the important abilities involved in critical thinking. Since Watson-Glaser (1980) Critical Thinking Appraisal - Form A was designed for native speakers, to avoid any misunderstanding in part of cultural differences and lack of vocabulary and grammar knowledge, the researchers used the translated version of this test which was prepared by Yari (as cited in Faravani, 2006). According to Faravani (2006), its Farsi version is culturally adapted to be suitable for use in Iran. It comprises 80 items which is designed to measure level of ability not an individual's rate of performance. As Jodeiri (2005) stated, this form is deemed appropriate in terms of reading difficulty for use with subjects who have the equivalent of a ninth-grade education. This test consists of 5 subtests as follows:

Test 1. Inference: Discriminating among degrees of truth or falsity of inferences drawn from given data.

Test 2. Recognizing Unstated Assumptions: Recognizing Unstated Assumptions or presupposition in given statements or assertions.

Test 3. Deduction: Determining whether certain conclusions necessarily follow from information in given statement or premises.

Test 4. Interpretation: Weighing evidence and deciding if generalizations or conclusions based on the given data are warranted.

Test 5. Evaluation of Arguments: Distinguishing between arguments that are strong and relevant and those that are weak or relevant to a particular question at issue.

The survey is a reliably standardized instrument since it has been administered to students of different education levels in different parts of the world (Jodeiri, 2005). Reliability of this test was determined in two ways: Estimates of stability of the test scores over time and the correlation between scores on alternate forms. Testing stability over time, by administrating the test to the same group with an interval difference, indicated an acceptable level of stability (0.73). The overall reliability estimates were sufficiently high to warrant the use of the test for group administration and research studies. Hunt and London as cited in Dam and Volman (2004) pointed out that "the Watson-Glaser test measures the ability of persons to follow the 'rules' involved in various forms of reasoning. As Jodeiri stated "the norms for raw scores for high school students ranged from 42.6 for nine-grade students to 48.5 for twelve-grade students out of the total score of 80" (p. 89). Differences in mean scores among the high school and college groups are in the expected direction. The higher the grade of the students, the higher their average scores on the CTA.

C. Procedure

In order to accomplish the data analyses in this research, the following steps were carried out. First, retrieving the data of the students attending and passing the national entrance examination of Islamic Azad University (IAU) from the IAU Testing Center, six hundred and thirty M.A postgraduate freshmen majoring in translation studies and English language teaching were selected based on their General English score in Islamic Azad University MA entrance examination. After calculating the mean and standard deviation of the test, four hundred and forty-three of them who were between the cut-off scores were selected as the participants of the study. Second, the reading comprehension section of the Longman TOEFL was administered. It consisted of five passages and fifty items. The time allocated to the reading tests was 55 minutes. Then, the students were divided into low, mid, and high based on their level of proficiency. Finally the data from the test, their level of proficiency and their gender were used to analyze and test the hypotheses.

III. RESULTS

Having tested the preliminary assumptions such as test of normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity, the Pearson correlation coefficient was adopted to answer the first question which investigated if there is any statistically significant relationship between critical thinking ability of postgraduate university students and their performance on reading comprehension. Based on the results (r (441) = .76, $p < .05$, representing a large effect size) displayed in Table 1, it can be concluded that there was a significant relationship between their critical thinking and reading comprehension.

TABLE 1
PEARSON CORRELATION; CRITICAL THINKING AND READING COMPREHENSION

	Critical Thinking
Pearson Correlation	.767**
Reading Comprehension Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
N	443

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Then came the second question which was an attempt to study the possible difference between male and female regarding the relationship between critical thinking and reading comprehension skill of the postgraduate university students. Based on the results displayed in Table 2, it can be concluded that there were significant relationships between critical thinking and reading comprehension for male (r (194) = .76, $p < .05$, representing a large effect size) and female subjects (r (441) = .76, $p < .05$, representing a large effect size). The results of Z-transformation ($Z = .05$, $p > .05$) indicated that there was not any significant difference between male and female regarding the relationship between critical thinking and reading comprehension skill of the postgraduate university students.

TABLE 2
PEARSON CORRELATION; CRITICAL THINKING AND READING COMPREHENSION BY GENDER

		Critical Thinking		
		Male	Female	Z-Transformation
Reading Comprehension	Pearson Correlation	.768**	.766**	Z = .05
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	P = .480
	N	196	247	

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The third research question was to verify the role of language proficiency level of the postgraduate students in this relationship. Based on the results displayed in Table 3, it can be concluded that there were significant relationships between critical thinking and reading comprehension for low (r (144) = .61, $p < .05$, representing a large effect size), mid (r (177) = .498, $p < .05$, representing a large effect size) and high language proficiency groups (r (117) = .841, $p < .05$, representing a large effect size). The results of Z-transformation indicated that there were not any significant differences between low and mid group ($Z = 1.57$, $p > .05$), low and high group ($Z = .61$, $p > .05$), and mid and high groups ($Z = .49$, $p > .05$) regarding the relationship between critical thinking and reading comprehension skill of the postgraduate students.

TABLE 3
PEARSON CORRELATION; CRITICAL THINKING AND READING COMPREHENSION BY PROFICIENCY LEVEL

		Critical Thinking			
		Low	Mid	High	Z-Transformation
Reading Comprehension	Pearson Correlation	.619**	.498**	.541**	Low vs. Mid (Z = 1.57, p > .05)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	Low vs. High (Z = .61, p > .05) Mid vs. High (Z = .14, p > .05)
	N	146	179	119	

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

IV. DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSION

The present study was carried out to identify the relationship between critical thinking and reading comprehensions among Iranian post-graduate students majoring in English Language Teaching and Translation Studies programs. The results of the present study was supported by a large number of the studies previously conducted (e.g., Bakhshipour Khodaie, 2012; Eftekhary & Besharati Kalayeh, 2014; Fahim, Bagherkazemi, & Alemi, 2010; Hassani, Rahmany, & Babaei, 2013; Hawkins, 2012; Heydari, 2011). This is in spite of the fact that none of them were conducted among the postgraduate participants. This can add valuable contribution to the previous literature as barely no scholar has ever dealt with. The result of this study revealed that male and female postgraduate students are not significantly different in this regard which is in line with a few studies (e.g., Eftekhary & Besharati Kalayeh, 2014; Hawkins, 2012; Heydari, 2011) but does not support the finding of few studies (e.g., Nourmohammadi, Heidari, & Dehghan Niry, 2012). The results, further, indicated that English language proficiency has no role in the relationship between critical thinking ability and reading comprehension skill as the results did not differ among students with high, mid, and low levels of language proficiency.

Nowadays, there has been an increased emphasis on properties and outcomes of critical thinking, as one of the key academic skills, in the process of learning. The most significant purpose of modern education, according to Ku (2009), is to teach critical thinking, "as it equips students with the competency necessary to reason about social affairs in a rapidly changing world" (p. 71). Critical thinking is a technique to reflect and evaluate what is read, so it helps students make a sound judgment and shape their beliefs. Critical thinking "involves reflecting on the validity of what we have read in light of our prior knowledge and understanding of the world" (Kurland, 2000). In this regard, students need to encourage critical thinking skills and incorporate it into their academic studies, "to the complex problems that they will face, and to the critical choices they will be forced to make as a result of the information explosion and other rapid technological changes" (Oliver & Utermohlen, 1995, p. 1). Hence, the results of the study suggest that university professors be attentive to integrating critical thinking skills into their teaching, syllabi, reading lists, and the assessing procedure so that post-graduate students are directly or indirectly exposed to such skill and learn to use them in the professional career opportunities to encounter after graduation.

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Soraya Yousefi has recently received her master's degree in TEFL in the ELT Department at Islamic Azad University, Roudehen Branch in Tehran, Iran. She has been working in the Test Center of the Islamic Azad University, Science and Research Branch in Tehran since 2008. Her research interests include psychology of language learners, critical thinking, and sociocultural theory.

Mojtaba Mohammadi is assistant professor of TEFL in the ELT department at Islamic Azad University, Roudehen Branch in Tehran, Iran and is currently the dean of the faculty of Persian Literature and Foreign Languages there. He has been teaching English for more than 20 years in English language Institutes and universities. He has attended and presented at a number of international conferences and has published research papers in scholarly journals in the field in and out of Iran. His areas of interest include technology-mediated language learning, psychology of language learners, language testing and assessment.

Underachievement and Its Causes in EFL Learning in China's Non-government Universities[*]

Fei Ma
Zhejiang Wanli University, Ningbo, China;
University of Nottingham Ningbo China, China

Abstract—The paper first introduced the origin of academic underachievement and the underachieving phenomenon in China's non-government HEIs. After a discussion of the concept of underachievement, a definition for underachievement in EFL learning is given. Then the paper reviews the relevant theories interpreting the phenomenon of underachievement. At last, the key factors giving rise to students' underachievement in EFL learning are explored under the context of non-government HEIs in mainland China. It is assumed that prior attainment, learning motivation, educational strategy and peers' effect are the four key factors that give rise to students' underachievement in English learning.

Index Terms—underachievement, non-government HEIs, EFL, prior attainment, motivation, peers effect, educational strategy

I. INTRODUCTION

A. The Problem and Its Origin

In 1957 during the Cold War, Soviets launched the first satellite Sputnik into space, which astonished American. It left American the impression that their technology was left behind and this made them reflect on their education. It was realized that American's brightest children were not well educated and they were not performing to their potential. This has brought the terminology underachievement into prominence (McCall, 1994; Whitmore, 1980), with research focus on the 'gifted underachievers'. This is viewed as the starting point of underachievement research. The emphasis at that time was to identify the underachieved talents and improve training for the elite. The students as a whole did not benefit and the general education quality did not see much improvement (Ravitch, 1995).

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 outlawed discrimination and ended racial segregation in schools. This has directed the researchers to pay special attention to the underachieving students of ethnic groups, mainly African Americans and Latino Americans. The causing factors and intervention strategies were explored. However the problem of underachieving is a 'hard nut to crack'. Between 1967 and 1982, the gap of SAT scores between the black and white students amounted to one whole standard deviation (Smith, 2005). In the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), achievement gap between African American students and white backgrounds students was still apparent, ranging from 0.6 to over 1.2 standard deviations in some US states (Kane & Staiger, 2003). The problem of underachieving ethnic students remains under researched and unsolved.

No Child Left Behind Act published in 2001 by US Department of Education states that schools should pay due regard to the underachievers, including those from ethnic minority backgrounds, those from economically disadvantaged families, those having limited English proficiency, and those who need special education needs. This Act has guided the research focus from a specific group of children to including all students with underachieving problem regardless of their backgrounds.

In the UK, underachievement has been researched in two facets: the underachieving schools and underachieving individuals. It has been condemned that UK's schools are failing their students. The document 'Worlds Apart?' indicated that schools in England contained a large portion of underachieving pupils, particular in mathematics (Reynolds & Farrell, 1996). Moreover, UK's performance in international comparative tests[1] has been dogged by a 'long tail of underachievement' despite its performance improvement of the more able students (Johnson, 2002). The worst part is that, according to International Adult Literacy survey, 22% of Britons could not read and understand a newspaper article and 23% could not calculate the potential savings offered by a newspaper sale advertisement (Abrams, 2000). As a result, Britain has been criticized for its 'two-track' education system, where the top 10% students perform

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[1] International comparative tests such as the Third International Maths and Science Study (TIMSS) and the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) enable nations to look critically at the achievement of their students in the international arena.

relatively well however the less able underachieve (Reynolds & Farrell, 1996). The research on underachieving schools focuses on reflecting on the pedagogy, education system, education equality and quality, and school effectiveness.

The study on the UK's underachieving individuals has some similarities with the USA in the aspect of ethnic minorities. Students from ethnic groups are more likely to become underachievers. For examples, comparing to their white counterparts, students from black Caribbean backgrounds are almost three times more likely to be excluded from schools in Britain (Crozier, 2005; Smith, 2005); The medical students from ethnic minority backgrounds significantly underachieve in assessments with their white peers (Woolf, Cave, Greenhalgh, & Dacre, 2008; Woolf, Haq, McManus, Higham, & Dacre, 2008). Another perspective on underachievers is the study of gender difference. Considerable evidence shows that boys are underachieving compared with girls (Butt, Weeden, & Wood, 2004; Callanan et al., 2009; Mahony, 1997).

The literature about USA and UK shows that academic underachievement is intensively researched from three perspectives:

First, how can underachievers be identified? Underachievers must be correctly identified in order to give the right students the right intervention. It is best that no underachievers be left out so that every underachiever can receive proper intervention, at the same time non-underachievers mustn't be wrongly included in case wrong intervention be given to wrong students. This involves developing scientific methods to correctly measure underachievement. Underachievers are often identified more in a quantitative way. A student's actual achievement (e.g. school grades) is compared to his/her potential ability (e.g. IQ). If the student's actual achievement is greatly left behind his/her potential ability, the student is identified as an underachiever. This identification is often coupled with teachers' or parents' evaluation.

Second, what are the factors causing underachievement? The causes of underachievement have been researched widely. It may include:
•Lack of motivation;
•Negative peers influence;
•Lack of adequate family support;
•Lack of adequate academic and spiritual support;
•The failing education system/models;
•The stereotype towards certain groups of students;
•Lack of effective learning strategies;
•Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD).

Third, what interventions can be given to reverse underachievement? Educators have designed various intervention strategies in their particular fields. Many of them are effective in combating underachievement. These mainly include
•Reforming the improper education system, curriculum and pedagogy;
•Counselling service;
•Academic support service;
•Parents involved intervention;
•Peer-teaching model;
•Clinical practice methods;
•Intervention based on Neurophysiology and psychology;

However it must be noted that generalizability must be dealt with care. A successful strategy may not be successful when applied to somewhere else or on someone else since the underachievers, disciplines and the causing factors may differ substantially. Therefore it is very necessary to reconsider this problem as far as English learning in Chinese non-government universities is concerned.

B.   Non-government HEIs and Its Underachieving Students

On the global arena, plenty of research on underachievement has been done with the focus on primary and secondary school. Under the context of mass higher education in mainland China, the underachievement in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) has become a problem demanding researchers' attention.

In 1998 Dr Min Tang, an economist submitted the central government a proposal entitled '*An Effective Way to Revitalize the Chinese Economy: Double Enrolment in Higher Education*', which alleges that the HEIs should largely expand their enrolment and charge full education fees from students. This proposal received instant response from the central government in that it could help ease the government's predicament then by 'hitting three birds with one stone'. First, because of the reform of state-owned enterprises during 1992 to 1998, many workers were laid off. Unemployment was a very serious social problem then. Expansion of enrolment would reduce unemployment rate. Second, the Asian Financial Crisis in 1997 brought China's economy into stagnation. Education as a commodity could stimulate consumption and vitalize the economy. Last, by widening higher education (HE) participation, it could enhance the education level of Chinese citizens and accumulate human capital for the country's future development. As a result, The Ministry of Education (MoE) issued the document '*Action Plan to Vitalize Education in the 21st Century*' in 1999. This document proclaims that the HEIs would recruit 6.6 million students and the gross enrolment ratio (GER) would reach 11% in 2000. Comparatively, the GER was 9.76% in 1998 just before mass HE was practiced and 1.55% in 1978 when Gaokao was resumed (Bi & Zhang, 2014). Meanwhile the document also stipulates that various 'social

forces' are encouraged to participate in running HEIs so as to establish an education system of co-existence and co-development of public HEIs and non-government ones. Thereafter on one hand, the public HEIs have increased their recruitment substantially. On the other, the non-government HEIs have witnessed a rapid development. In 2013, there have been 718 non-government HEIs with an entrants of 1,601,879 and an total enrolment of 5,575,218 students (MoE, 2013). The total entrants' number of all HEIs is 6,860,000 in 2013 (YGGK, 2014), which means 23.3% entrants go to non-government HEIs in that year. Non-government HEIs have become an indispensable part of China's higher education.

Non-government HEIs are institutions run by social organizations or individuals other than by government agencies with non-governmental funds (NPC, 2002). Non-government HEIs are not as competitive as its public counterparts in attracting outstanding students. First, they generally have a shorter history and do not have a high profile, so it is assumed that their education quality is not as good as the public ones. Second, they receive no funding from government and they cannot mobilize as much educational resources as their public counterparts, e.g. laboratory building, research projects. Third, because they have to be responsible for their own revenue and expenditure, they charge higher fees, usually as much as three times higher than their public counterparts. As a result, non-government HEIs are usually a second option of students when they fail to meet the requirement of public HEIs.

The statistics indicate that roughly 23% entrants are admitted to non-government HEIs (YGGK, 2014). This ratio roughly represents the bottom 23% entrants in terms of Gaokao score. This indicates that there is a substantial previous academic achievement gap between non-government HEIs entrants and public ones. It is not surprising that underachievement is a much more serious problem at non-government HEIs.

Underachievement is a problem in all disciplines. The current research focuses on the underachievement in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning. Under the background of economic globalization and internationalization of higher education, English proficiency has become a basic skill for college students if they want to compete for a job in the international talent market or further their study in foreign universities. EFL education, i.e. College English has always been an important subject in China's higher education. However, according to the researcher's class observation, informal interview of colleagues and investigation of students' English scores, it is assumed that underachievement in EFL learning has become a serious problem that perplexes both the students and teachers.

What are the key factors causing these students' underachievement in EFL learning? If the factors can be identified, corresponding interventions can be designed to reverse the situation.

II. Defining Underachievement

A. The Key Concepts

The term underachievement could be used to describe an individual student, a school or a nation's whole education system. The current research restricts the connotation within the students with failing academic performance.

Thorndike defines underachievement as 'achievement falling below what would be forecast from our most informed and accurate prediction, based on a team of predicting variables' (1963, p. 19). In Thorndike's definition, the variables mainly refer to parents' education, family background, socio-economic status and gender. This definition is accurate and inclusive. Meanwhile, it is a complex definition with too many variables, which makes measuring underachievement an impossible task. In addition, the variables such as parents' education, family background, socio-economic status and gender are the causes of underachievement, not the underachievement per se. Therefore those variables are often excluded from the definition. Hence the definition for underachievement generally includes two variables, the potential ability and actual achievement. For examples:

Underachievement is usually defined as a discrepancy between potential ability and actual achievement (Dowdall & Colangelo, 1982; Whitmore, 1980).

Underachievers are the students who perform more poorly in school, typically as school grade worse than predicted mental or educational ability. The ability is usually measured by IQ, aptitude, or educational achievement tests (McCall, 1994).

Underachievement is a discrepancy between a child's school performance and some index of the child's ability (Rimm, 1997, p. 18).

Underachievers refer to those who display a strong discrepancy between expected achievement and actual achievement. The expected achievement is usually measured by cognitive or intellectual ability assessments or standardized achievement test, while the actual achievement is often measured by school grades and teacher evaluations (Reis & McCoach, 2000).

These two dimensional potential/achievement definitions clearly describe the phenomenon of underachievement, which give guidance to measuring and identifying underachievers quantitatively. The arising problem is the validity of potential and achievement tests. Since no test is perfect, some students may be wrongly counted as underachievers when they are actually not. Still others may be left out when they actually are underachievers. If a third dimension, teacher's evaluation is included, the students who are statistically wrongly counted in or out could be avoided to a large extent.

The concepts *underachievement* and *low achievement* are often used interchangeably, however it is necessary to distinguish between the students who could have achieved more (*underachievers*) and those who have worked hard to fulfil their potential but have been unable to achieve high academic results (*low achievers*) (Smith, 2005, p. 142). These

students who work hard but are still lagged behind in academic achievement are low achievers, rather than underachievers, because they have used up their potential. As for those students who have the potential to be the best but only get moderate achievement, they are underachievers but not low achievers because their achievement could have been better. Therefore there are generally two kinds of underachievers. Although both have the potential to do better, one kind get moderate achievement and the other kind get very low achievement.

Underachievement has been a widely used terminology in educational discourse, usually referring to a failure to achieve potential. The term also meets its critique. Gillies (2008) argues that underachievement contains a conceptual problem with the concepts of 'achievement' and 'potential'. For one reason, it is difficult to set criteria for these two concepts and the criteria are under constant contest. For another, the connotation of underachievement is problematic. Achievement is a broader concept than attainment in terms of the whole person and the full breadth of his/her life. The connotation of achievement is far beyond school grades. For example, is underachievement a proper label for a student who struggles academically but who is a keen committed musician? Since concerns about underachievement are based on examination grades, Gillies (2008) suggests *low academic attainment* might be a better terminology since attainment is usually limited to the level of academic performance.

As another alternative terminology, *underperformance* is sometimes conflated with underachievement in the education discourse. Actually underperformance is a much bigger concept, which is more often used in the workplace. An employer is labelled as underperformance when he/she fails to fulfil his/her duty or perform it to the required standard.

The current research sticks to the terminology *underachievement*. Underachievement is a well established and widely used term, for one reason. For another, what really matters is not about choice of term, but about how to define the term. As the key concept of current inquiry, the underachievement demands a working definition. An *underachiever in EFL learning* is the student who has a very low actual academic achievement in EFL learning, but has the potential to do better.

B. Identifying Underachievers

Underachievers must be identified correctly before any intervention is given. It is a 'torture' for the students who are wrongly counted in as underachievers, and it is a 'dereliction of duty' of educators if real underachievers are counted out.

A teacher or parent may form an opinion regarding a child's potential ability by observation and then roughly compare their informal assessment with the child's school grades (Shaughnessy, 1990). They might subjectively feel the child could 'do better'. This *nomination method* is the very preliminary way of identifying underachievers. This method is easily influenced by individual bias. Some more rigorous and reliable methods need to be developed to identify the underachievers. Three other statistical methods have been reported in literature to identify underachievers.

Absolute split method is a way to identify underachievers who score higher than a certain minimum (e.g. top 5%) on a measure of mental potential, but score lower than a certain maximum (e.g. bottom 5%) on a measure of academic achievement (Lau & Chan, 2001, p. 188). This method is often used in identifying the gifted underachievers because the students with average mental potential are excluded in the process of selection.

As another alternative, *simple difference score method* can be explained by an equation: the difference score = standardized potential score − standardized achievement score. If a student's difference score is above a certain value (usually one), the student is identified as an underachiever (Carr, Borkowski, & Maxwell, 1991; Lau & Chan, 2001; Nurmi & et al., 1995). Different from absolute split method that focuses only on gifted underachievers, this method can be used to identify underachievers of all kinds.

One function of regression analysis is to explore the relationships between dependent variable and independent variables. Therefore regression analysis can be used to explore the relationship between actual achievement and potential ability. Generally regression of the achievement score on the potential score is calculated, and then the deviation of a specific student's score from the regression line is calculated. The student with marked negative deviation (usually larger than one standard error) will be labelled as an underachiever (Mccall, Evahn, & Kratzer, 1992; Smith, 2005; Thorndike, 1963). This is the third statistical method to identifying underachievers, i.e. *regression method.* This method also covers the underachievers of all kinds, and it has better reliability than single difference method. The weakness of this method is that, by identifying underachievers as those who fall one standard error below the regression line, it will always generate a portion of students as underachievers in any sample(Mccall et al., 1992).

Both the nomination method and the three statistical methods have their strength and limitations. The nomination method is often biased and arbitrary. As for statistical methods, one problem still under contest is the validity of the assessment tools to test potential ability, e.g. IQ. Another problem is the cut-off point for underachievement, which is usually arbitrary.

Underachievement is a multidimensional construct that cannot be assessed by a unidimensional tool (Ford, 1996), so it is suggested that statistical methods and nomination method can be combined to provide a more comprehensive identification approach.

As far as underachievers at universities are concerned, they with no doubt have at least normal intelligence. These underachievers generally have the potential to perform better in their academic achievement. Test their potential abilities will become unnecessary. When identifying underachievers, quantitative methods could be coupled with the teacher's professional evaluation. That is to say, two variables can be used to identify the underachievers, the exam scores and the teacher's assessment.

III. INTERPRETING UNDERACHIEVEMENT

The causes of underachievement are presumably associate with society, culture, family, school and the individual per se. Theories from relevant disciplines are used to interpret this phenomenon.

A. Theories from the Angle of Sociology

Capital Deficiency

Underachievement is constantly explored from the angle of family backgrounds. As the embodiment of family backgrounds, capital presents itself in three dimensions: economic capital, cultural capital and social capital (Bourdieu, 1986). Economic capital is directly linked to money and is convertible to two other forms of capital. Cultural capital is the accumulated cultural knowledge (e.g. education, skills, qualifications, etc.) that confers power and status. The children who get hereditary transmission of better cultural capital from their family members have better understanding of education; therefore they are more likely to succeed in their education. Social capital is the aggregate of the actual or potential resources that a person possesses. It is a network of social connections. These three forms of capital are mutually convertible. Having possession of or deficiency of the capital may bring great difference in a person's education in terms of access to better education resources and life planning. Capital deficiency is one important cause resulting in a student's underachievement.

Stereotype Threat

Stereotype is a person's set of thoughts about a social group's characteristics, i.e. traits, behaviours, and roles (McGarty, Yzerbyt, & Spears, 2002; "Stereotypes," 2008). These thoughts may or may not correctly reflect reality. Stereotype threat is a predicament where people are aware of a negative stereotype of their social group and experience anxiety that they may confirm the negative stereotype (Quinn, Kallen, & Spencer, 2010). The experiment by Steele and Aronson proves that stereotype threat can impair the academic achievement of students who belong to negatively stereotyped groups (Steele, 1997; Steele & Aronson, 1995). Their experiment shows that stereotype threat can reduce the performance of African-American student taking SAT reasoning test just because of the stereotype that African-Americans are not as intelligent as their white counterparts.

B. Theories from the Angle of Psychology

Peers effect

Peers effect exists when a person's behaviour is affected by his/her interaction with one or more his/her peers (Winston & Zimmerman, 2003). In the education discourse, the relationship between peers effect and academic achievement has been explored profoundly. Students' academic achievement could be influenced by their peers in a negative or a positive way (Burke & Sass, 2013; Gottfried, 2014). Research shows that students who are exposed to unusually low achieving cohorts tend to score lower themselves (Carrell & Hoekstra, 2010; Figlio, 2007; Gorman, 2015; Winston & Zimmerman, 2003). Similarly students who are exposed to high academic achievers tend to perform better academically (Evans & Oswalt, 1968; Hoxby, 2000; Vardardottir, 2013). Nevertheless, the existence of peer effects is doubted because there are huge empirical difficulties to measure it.

Achievement motivation

In the context of education, motivation has great effect on students' learning behaviour. Ormrod (2007, pp. 384-386) identifies the effect of motivation from six aspects:
• Direct behaviour toward particular goals;
• Lead to increased effort and energy;
• Increase initiation and persistence in activities;
• Affect cognitive processes;
• Determine which consequences are reinforcing and punishing;
• Enhance performance.

With no doubt, motivation is directly related to academic achievement. The theory of achievement motivation developed by McClelland, denotes that people are motivated by their needs for achievement, power and affiliation, and the theory can be used to predict behaviour and performance (Lussier & Achua, 2007; McClelland, 1958, 1961). Abundant literature has shown that achievement motivation has a strong positive correlation with students' academic achievement, which actually indicates low motivation will predict low academic achievement.

C. Theories from the angle of Linguistics

Affective Filter Hypothesis

Affective Filter Hypothesis denotes that some negative emotions, such as, anxiety, low motivation, lack of confidence can become an impediment in second language acquisition. These attitudinal factors show strong relationship with second language achievement. Those students whose attitudes are not optimal for second language acquisition will have a stronger affective filter which is the barrier to language learning. Therefore an effective pedagogy should encourage a low filter (Krashen, 1982). This hypothesis has been explored widely in the context of language education in China. China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) shows that 146 master theses and 50 papers in key journals have researched this theory's application in language education.

Comprehensible Input Hypothesis

Of Krashen's five hypotheses, Comprehensible Input Hypothesis is the most influential one. This hypothesis claims that a language learner makes progress when the language input is slightly beyond his current language level (1982), i.e. the new knowledge is comprehensible to the learner. According to the hypothesis, if *i* represents current stage of language competence, a learner moves from stage *i* to stage *i+1* by understanding the input containing *i+1*. *+1* represents the new language knowledge. This hypothesis is widely used as the theoretical basis for textbook compilation, teaching material selection and stratification education, etc.

Based on these two hypotheses, an effective language education pedagogy should provide comprehensible input in a low anxiety situation (Krashen, 1982). Many students attend university with very low English proficiency, which is particular true at non-government HEIs in mainland China. The current teaching syllabus and teaching materials are far beyond their reach and this make them more frustrated. Teaching reform based on these two theories are possible ways to address this problem.

IV. Underachievement in English Learning in China

The study of underachievement started in 1980s in China. The first paper on underachievement was published in 1982 by Gao(1982), who introduced Babansky's theory on underachievement. Babansky analyzed underachievement from the perspectives of biology, psychology and education. Babansky and his colleagues explored the causing factors of 3000 underachieving students in Rostov State. Their findings indicated that the factors such as family and health constituted 22% causes of underachievement, and the key factor contributing to underachievement was the defect of education process (Babansky, 2007).

The terminology for underachievement in China is x*ueye buliang*, and x*ueye di chengjiu* is used alternatively. Searching x*ueye buliang/ xueye di chengjiu* for literature from 2012 to 2014 in China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI), 89 results are found, including 32 theses and 57 articles of academic journals.

The underachievement research in recent three years in China have taking on the following trends:

• A number of literature still works on clarifying and defining the key concepts, e.g. underachievement, low achievement, low attainment.

• Research on underachievement's causes and intervention strategies remains hot.

• The research foci have been changed from primary and secondary school students to secondary school and university students.

• The study of underachievement in a specific subject becomes a new trend, e.g. mathematics, Mandarin, English, chemistry, physics.

• Attribution theory is used by many scholars to explore underachievement.

However, if the boundary is narrowed down to the college students' underachievement in EFL learning, not much literature is found. When extended the cut-off year to 2006, seven search results are found, including 5 theses and 2 journal articles.

The literature shows that *attribution theory* is used as an important tool to explore the phenomenon of EFL achievement/underachievement by Chinese scholars. Five of the seven research adopt this theory. Attribution theory is concerned about how people explain the causes of a certain event or behaviour, e.g. what a student attributes his success or failure of a specific subject to. As the founder of attribution theory, Heider (1958) assumes that people are inclined to attribute their behaviour either to personal force (i.e. motivation and ability) or environmental force (i.e. task difficulty and luck) as shown in Figure 1. Based on Heider's work, Weiner designs his own attribution model (Figure 2). Weiner (1974; 1980) argues that causal attribution determines affective reaction to success and failure, and the theory is used to explain the motivation difference between low and high achievers. A high achiever tends to attribute success to ability and effort, and failure to bad luck or poor testing; on the other hand, a low achiever is inclined to doubt own ability and attribute success to luck or other factors beyond control. Both Heider and Weiner believe four factors (i.e. motivation/effort, ability, task difficulty and luck) contribute to achievement/underachievement.
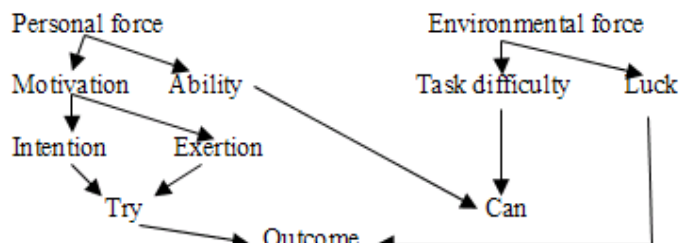
Figure 1, Heider's model of attribution process (1958)

three dimensions	internal		external	
	stable	unstable	stable	unstable
	uncontrollable	controllable	uncontrollable	uncontrollable
four factors	*aptitude*	*effort*	*Task difficulty*	*luck*

Figure 2 Weiner's attribution model (1974, 2010)

Cui (2007) explores the relationship between the attribution profiles of college students and their EFL academic achievement. The subjects are 124 English majors from a university in Zhengzhou China. They are divided into three groups by TEM-4 scores, i.e. Good Group, Pass Group and Fail Group. The result indicates that effort is the most important factor towards success or failure, and ability is the second. The subjects tend to ascribe both success and failure to effort, which is slightly different from Weiner's findings.

Wang (2009) explores the relationships between self-efficacy, self-attribution and English achievement. Her sample includes 233 students from a Vocational and Technical College in Heilongjiang China. Her results indicate that
•Both high achievers and low achiever attribute success to ability and effort.
•The low achievers have lower self-efficacy.

Ou (2012) studies the influence of achievement motivation and attribution beliefs upon EFL learning. Ou's subjects include 459 college non-English majors from five universities in Xi'an China. The subjects are divided into Strong Learners Group and Poor Learners Group by their CET-4 scores. The results show that
•The Strong Learners has a higher achievement motivation than the Poor Learners.
•Four factors result in Poor Learners' failure in EFL learning, ranked as: effort>ability>situation>luck.

Yuan (2008) studies the causes of male underachievers and the corresponding intervention strategies. This is a case study in a secondary normal school in Suzhou China. The research finds eight factors affecting male underachievement. Ranked according to influence, they are: state of mind, learning environment, interest, goal, effort, study habit, emotion, and learning strategy.

Li (2011) studies the attribution tendencies of EFL learning underachievers. The subjects are 256 non-English majors from a university in Beihai, Guangxi China. The results indicate that the underachievers ascribe their failure in English learning to effort, situation, ability and luck, ranked according to importance.

These empirical research shows that Chinese students generally tend to attribute success/failure to effort and ability no matter they are high or low achievers, which contradicts Weiner's findings. This has further implication that generalization must be dealt with care and it is worthwhile to research a specific group of subjects at a specific context.

The above five research all adopts attribution theory as an important approach to study achievement/underachievement in EFL learning. The following two research studies this problem from other perspectives.

Jia (2008) studies the correlation between goal orientation, learning autonomy and EFL learning achievement. The subjects are 500 non-English majors from two universities in Jinan China. CET4 scores are used as the achievement criterion. The findings indicate that
•A significant positive correlation exists between learning goal orientation and EFL learning achievement.
•A significant positive correlation exists between learning autonomy and EFL learning achievement.

Ma researched (2010) 221 non-English major sophomores from a university in Guangdong. Her result shows that attitude, motivation and learning involvement have a significant positive influence on English academic achievement and learning involvement is the most powerful predictor.

The empirical works both home and abroad have identified numerous factors that may contribute to underachievement in EFL learning. These factors can be categorized into three groups in terms of school education, environmental influence and individual features:

School education: teaching model, teaching contents, teacher's quality, teaching aim, special assistance, learning resources, learning autonomy.

Environment influence: family backgrounds, peer effects, trauma, luck, learning atmosphere, social guidance.

Individual features: prior attainment, learning motivation, interest, learning strategies, perseverance, drive, will, temperament, needs, attitude, emotion, conviction, health, aptitude, effort, being disciplined, gender difference.

Under the context of EFL learning at non-government HEIs in mainland China, the causing factors of underachievement are different from other contexts. With such a large number of factors associate with underachievement, it is impossible to take all the factors into consideration when intervention design is concerned. It is

highly necessary to identify the *key factors* so that it has practical implications for intervention design. Meanwhile, underachieving is a multifaceted phenomenon which cannot be explained with one theory within one discipline. The current inquiry assumes that four factors have exerted great influence upon students' underachievement, i.e., prior attainment, L2 motivation, peer effects and education strategy.

V. FACTORS CAUSING UNDERACHIEVEMENT IN EFL LEARNING

Prior attainment

Students' prior attainment is a significant predictor of their future academic achievement (Broecke, 2008; Engerman & Bailey, 2006; Loretta, Steve, & Stephen, 2009). This indicates that the undergraduates' prior school attainment has a positive correlation to their current academic achievement. The lower high school attainment will predict lower university academic achievement. Prior attainment of English language is no doubt an important factor to consider when researching EFL learning underachievers.

The public universities in mainland China enjoy better reputation and education resources, and charge lower education fees. The key universities of Project 211 and Project 985 all belong to this group. The students with higher Gaokao score generally go to the public universities. Non-government HEIs have to accept the students with lower Gaokao score. It is not surprising that underachievement in non-government HEIs has become a phenomenon which demands special attention. Though the phenomenon of underachievement exists in all subjects, the current research focus on EFL education, which is an important compulsory course for all non-English majors and the problem is observed even worse in this subject. For example, at one non-government university in Zhejiang province, among the 4834 entrants in 2014, the average English score of Gaokao is 97 while the total score is 150. There are 1465 students' (30%) whose English score is under 90 and 176 students' (4%) whose score is under 60. This can predict a large number of low achieving students at this university.

Learning motivation

Abundant literature has shown learning motivation has a significant impact upon L2 achievement/underachievement (Dornyei, 1994; Dörnyei, 2011; R. C. Gardner, 1968; R. C. Gardner, Lalonde, & Moorcroft, 1985; Robert C. Gardner & Lambert, 1972; Guilloteaux & Dornyei, 2008; Weiner, 1974; Weiner, 1980, 1985). Among these scholars, Dornyei grounded his motivation framework in the discourse of L2 learning, which stands as a good reference for researching students' motivation in EFL learning in China. Dornyei (1994) absorbed the motivation theories of Gardner and Schmidt and developed a three level framework of L2 motivation, i.e. *the language level*, *the learner level*, and *the learning situation level*.

The language level consists of integrative motive and instrumental motive. Integrative motive concerns a positive disposition toward the L2 language community and the desire to interact with and even be like valued members of the community, while instrumental motive is utilitarian in language learning, for example, to get a better job or to pass a test. At non-government universities in China, students' desire to melt into a community of foreign language and culture, that is, the integrative motive is extremely low. The instrumental motive to learn English, such as to pass CET4 or make one more competitive in job market, is comparatively higher.

The learner level includes the learner's achievement need and self-confidence. The researcher's ten-year observation shows that many underachievers have lost confidence in EFL learning, as a result, they do not bother to try and make efforts to learn. They do have achievement need, but the self-construct of a loser in English learning and this stereotype has pushed them to give up achieving something in this subject.

The learning situation level is made up of course-specific, teacher-specific and group-specific motivational components. Under the context of higher education's massification, students' English proficiency differs greatly even in the same class. The phenomenon of underachievement does exist in each class. However these underachievers have to learn the same materials and be assessed by the same criterion. The materials are designed for the general students, even in favour of top students. The teaching materials are beyond the reach of underachieving students. For various reasons, the teachers can only give very limited special assistance to underachievers. It is no denying that the learning atmosphere at non-government HEIs is not as favourable as their public counterparts. Generally this group of students tend to lose motivation and give themselves up.

Peers effect

In education settings, peers effect refers to that a student's attitudes, values, or behaviours might be affected by interactions with one's peers (Winston & Zimmerman, 2003), therefore the student's academic achievement might be changed as well. Students' achievement is strongly related to the aspirations of the other students in the school. Students of same prior attainment, when put in surroundings of different students' composition, will achieve at quite different levels(Coleman, Campbell, Hobson, & et al. , 1966). College student's academic achievement might be influenced positively or negatively by his peers (Zhang, Yang, Zhang, & Zhu, 2011).

Family plays an important role in primary and secondary school students. Children go to school and back to home on daily basis, so parents influence their children to a larger extent. When stepping into university, students live at campus which is usually far away from their homes. The family's influence begins to decrease and the peers' influence begins to increase since they interact with each other every day. Generally students at non-government universities are not as motivated in learning as their counterparts in key universities, so the negative influence of peers effect is more obvious.

Because of affinity effect, the underachievers in English language learning tend to form a group and develop intimacy with each other. Therefore they could influence each other in a negative way.

    EFL educational strategy

    The fourth factor concerns the EFL education per se, including the teaching content and pedagogy. The students have learned English since grade three in primary school and it is continued throughout junior and senior high schools. The teaching content is mainly English for General Purpose (EGP). In the university level, especially under the context of economical globalization and internationalization of higher education, the EGP-based language education can't meet the needs of students and arouse their interest. English For specific Purposes (ESP) might be an orientation for teaching reform.

    Meanwhile students with different English proficiency are taught in a same class with same textbooks and with same requirements. It is an impossible task for the underachieving students to catch up without receiving special assistance. That is to say, the current EFL education strategy cannot meet the various needs of college students. Both Krashen's Comprehensible Input Hypothesis and Vygotsky's ZPD theory indicate that students make more rapid progress when the input is compatible to the students' current language proficiency and the teacher's scaffolding support is given. This has implication that differentiated language education is another way to deal with the underachieving problem.

    Numerous factors may contribute to students' academic underachievement in EFL learning. Under the context of non-government universities in mainland China, these four factors are assumed to be the most critical ones, which have valuable implications for intervention design. It must be noted that these four factors are not isolated but interrelated to each other. The underachievers' poor prior attainment demands reform of current EFL education model, and it to some extend incurs negative peers effect. Meanwhile, the current inappropriate EFL education model may give rise to stronger negative peers effect, and reversely negative peers effect points at the weakness of current education model. Prior attainment, EFL education model and peers effect all directly influence L2 motivation, and vice versa. These four factors, intertwined together, have caused students' underachievement in EFL learning at non-government universities in mainland China.

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Fei Ma was born in Xi'an, China in 1977. He is currently an Ed.D candidate at the University of Nottingham Ningbo China. He is a lecturer in the College English Section of Zhejiang Wanli University, Ningbo, China. His research interests focus on EFL education.

Call for Papers and Special Issue Proposals

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Journal of Language Teaching and Research (JLTR) is a scholarly peer-reviewed international scientific journal published bimonthly, focusing on theories, methods, and materials in language teaching, study and research. It provides a high profile, leading edge forum for academics, professionals, consultants, educators, practitioners and students in the field to contribute and disseminate innovative new work on language teaching and research.

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- Teacher education and professional development
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Special issues feature specifically aimed and targeted topics of interest contributed by authors responding to a particular Call for Papers or by invitation, edited by guest editor(s). We encourage you to submit proposals for creating special issues in areas that are of interest to the Journal. Preference will be given to proposals that cover some unique aspect of the technology and ones that include subjects that are timely and useful to the readers of the Journal. A Special Issue is typically made of 15 to 30 papers, with each paper 8 to 12 pages of length.

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