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Research Practices in Cohesive Devices' Studies: Benefiting from Chaos

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***Abstract*—This study has as its main goal exploring the possibility of benefiting from the chaotic status that permeates discourse analysis research done on cohesive devices since their inception by Halliday and Hasan (1976). These research studies have been categorised based on the foci of the research questions and the genres to which the analysed texts belong. The research practices of the reviewed papers have been analysed, compared and contrasted, and evaluated apropos the research design, methodology, literature review and findings. The analysis of the research practices found that the dominant feature of the reviewed studies is incompatibility. On a cautious note, while it is acknowledged that variance is imbued with research purposes, variance can be the product of certain flaws in the research design. This paper seeks to serve three purposes: 1) To critically survey the empirical studies conducted on cohesive devices, 2) to identify the problematic practices that led to the chaotic status, and 3) to propose a host of practices that can be followed in future research done on cohesive devices. Concomitant with this review a brief account of the cohesive devices model that was espoused by the majority of the studies addressed in this paper.**

***Index Terms*—cohesive devices, cohesion, research practices**

I. Introduction

Since its inception by Halliday and Hasan (1976), the cohesive devices model that classifies the linguistic items involved in textual ties into grammatical and lexical devices has been employed as an instrument of discourse analysis in an ample body of research (e.g. Abu Ayyash, 2013; Ali, 2016; Bahaziq, 2016; Crossley, Salsbury & McNamara, 2010; Granger & Tyson, 1996; Leo, 2012; Na, 2011). The reason behind adopting the 1976 model is that it has been considered the most comprehensive account of cohesive devices so far (Moreno, 2003; Xi, 2010), and that it is "the best known and most detailed model of cohesion available" (Baker, 1992, p. 180). Acknowledging the seminal contribution of the 1976 model to discourse analysis studies, it does not seem much to suggest that after 40 decades since it was first introduced, time is probably ripe to consider building on it and expanding its categories to accommodate the upheavals that occur within discourses and text types. Although this call for updating the model is in order here, the main focus of the present paper is the empirical studies that used this model, and the chaotic status that engulfs them. In essence, the current study is set in service of three purposes:

- To critically survey the empirical studies conducted on cohesive devices to highlight the various research practices espoused by the researchers.
- To identify the problematic practices that led to the chaotic status.
- To propose a host of practices that can be followed in future research done on cohesive devices.

Before embarking on the review of the papers done on cohesive devices, a brief account of Halliday and Hasan's (1976) model is in order here as the majority of the studies have used it as the instrument of the linguistic/textual analysis they have conducted. Table 1.1 lists the main categories of cohesive devices and the types of ties usually involved in their usage. The linguistic items involved in creating cohesive ties are boldfaced.

TABLE 1.1
EXAMPLES OF COHESIVE DEVICES

Main Categories	Type of tie	Example
Grammatical cohesion	Reference	Clifton achieved the highest grade in the test. **He** must have studied well.
	Substitution	I bought the red blouse. My sister preferred the red **one**.
	Ellipsis	A: Are the guests coming soon? B: Yes, they are (**coming**).
	Conjunctions	Mark failed to meet the assignment's deadline. **Therefore**, he failed the module.
Lexical cohesion	Repetition	They were lost in the **woods** for three days. The **woods** were really frightening.
	Collocation	Let's **go swimming** this evening.
	Hyponymy	I bought a number of **electronic devices** last month. I got an **iPhone**, an **iPad** and an **iPod**.
	Synonymy	I **left** my house last year. Actually, I **departed** the whole area.
	Antonymy	My friend lives in a **small** villa. It is located in a **huge** compound.
	Meronymy	My **car** broke last night. There was something wrong with its **engine**.

The reason behind the classification of cohesive devices into grammatical and lexical is that "cohesion is expressed partly through the grammar and partly through the vocabulary" (Halliday & Hasan, 1976, p. 5). Grammatical cohesion is subdivided into four textual ties, which are reference, substitution, ellipsis and conjunctions, whereas lexical cohesion involves vocabulary ties, such as repetition/reiteration, collocation, hyponymy, synonymy, antonymy and meronymy. Quite understandably, the choice of cohesive devices as a linguistic analysis tool to investigate certain types of texts lends itself to the fact that it is cohesive devices that make a text a text (Halliday & Hasan, 1976) and therefore can be used as a tool to determine whether a sequence of sentences can or cannot be described as a text (Cook, 1989; Hatch, 1992; Thornbury, 2005). Accordingly, an in-depth analysis of the research practices imbricated within the studies that used cohesive devices as instruments of analysis is expected to inform future research apropos the practices conducive to effective investigation of discourses employing these pivotal linguistic tools.

1. Practices in Research on Cohesive Devices

This section of the paper reviews the research practices of the studies conducted on cohesive devices and is divided into sub-sections based on the genres, or, more loosely, text types, to which the anlaysed texts belong. The majority of the studies belong to the 'monster' genre of academic texts; in this paper, the studies that address university and school students' pieces of writing have been included within the first sub-section 2.1 pertaining to academic texts. Studies that analysed the use of cohesive devices in non-academic text types are reviewed in terms of the research practices in 2.2.

2.1 Academic-Text Studies of Cohesive Devices

A considerable number of the studies that conducted textual analysis of cohesive devices in academic texts have focused on whether there is a relationship between the employment of cohesive devices in students' written compositions and essays and the quality of the produced piece of writing. Based on the findings of these studies, there is no definitive answer, or so it seems to me, as to whether or not the employment of cohesive devices leads to high-quality texts (Ghasemi, 2013). This part introduces a review of the research practices utilised in different studies that have come up with incompatible results, and, therefore, a quandary about the role and the impact of cohesive devices on written academic discourse.

Both Liu and Braine (2005) and Yang and Sun (2012) analyse the correlation between cohesive devices and the quality of argumentative essays written by college students. While Liu and Braine (2005) analyse a random sample of 50 argumentative compositions of Chinese non-English majors, Yang and Sun (2012) use a random sample of 30 second year, male and female and 30 fourth year, male and female university students. Both studies have established a significant link between cohesive devices and the quality of argumentative writing. Although both studies are quantitative designs, Yang and Sun's (2012) results seem more reliable as they utilise *t*-tests, which indicate that the observed difference between the two sample groups is statistically significant and is not due to chance (Johnson & Christensen, 2008), and Pearson correlation analysis "…to observe the association between the (correct) use of cohesive devices and the writing quality" (Yang & Sun, 2012, p. 36).

In harmony with the above findings, Mohamed and Mudawi (2015) have found that using cohesive devices in writing leads to writing quality improvement. However, this paper clearly falls short of meeting the conditions of both validity and reliability of quantitative designs. Firstly, the questionnaire has been distributed to a number of teachers who work in different universities whereas the study is conducted on 100 students who come from only one university in Sudan. Undoubtedly, teachers' responses to the questionnaire reflect their own students' status, which challenges the claims that teachers' responses can be taken as a basis for the study being conducted on a group from one university. Secondly, the questionnaire's items presented in the study are too general to come up with decisive conclusions regarding cohesive devices. For example, how can the question 'Handwriting inside the class affects positively the student writing skill' (p. 3486) lead to a conclusion that is relevant to the students' status as far as cohesive devices usage is concerned? In fact, hardly can the majority of the questionnaire items measure what they have been claimed to be measuring, which lays much doubt on the tool's validity. Thirdly, the pre-test and post-test design of the study does not specify the test items and does not refer to the kind of intervention conducted on the control and experimental groups. Finally, there is no clear indication what cohesive devices have been introduced, how they were presented and how they have been marked or rated. Accordingly, with all these shortfalls in the design, hardly can the findings be considered valid and reliable.

The role of cohesion has been found more patent in compositions in the study of Jafarpur (1991). What is different about this study is that it has investigated whether having cohesive ties and types as *the basis* for scoring compositions has any correlation with holistic rating or not. The sample of the study consists of thirty-eight compositions written by EFL learners and rated by four instructors. What adds authenticity to this research is that the learners belong to different proficiency levels, which means that the quality of the use of cohesive devices has varied from one learner to another. The results of the study are harmonious with those of Liu and Braine (2005) and Yang and Sun (2012) in that the cohesive-type-based scoring has shown significant correlation with the holistic rating of the compositions. Similarly, cohesive devices have been found as determiners of the quality of descriptive writing of college students across proficiency levels (Abdul Rahman, 2013).

Bae (2001) takes children narrative written essays as the text type to explore the relationship between cohesion and writing quality. In addition to the quantitative tools, such as percentages, correlations and multiple regression, the study also employs qualitative analysis to further validate the findings. Although the findings of Bae (2001) are to a great extent harmonious with those that have established a correlation between cohesive devices and writing quality, it has maintained that not all cohesive types have held this kind of correlation. By way of elaboration, the study has found that lexical cohesive devices are significant predictors of coherence and an index of the overall writing quality, yet it has also found that this correlation does not entirely apply to grammatical cohesive devices, excluding reference. That is to say, ellipsis and substitution have been found to have weak correlation with the overall writing quality, which contradicts the finding that substitution can be taken as a tool for improving the writing quality instead of resorting to repetition alone (Bahaziq, 2016). A strong point, though, about (Bae, 2001) is that the study does not rely on quantitative measures alone because these fall short of identifying the inaccurate use of cohesive devices, which has been investigated by the qualitative analysis, which has found, for example, that reference has been used inaccurately in several occasions. Establishing a correlation between cohesive ties and quality in children's writing can also be found in an earlier study (Cox, Shanahan & Sulzby, 1990), which maintains that cohesive ties positively correlate with ratings of quality of Grade 3 and Grade 5 children's expository texts.

Linking children's writings with ratings has been also approached by Struthers, Lapadat and MacMillan (2013) yet from a different perspective. The authors link the knowledge about the role of cohesion in children's writing to assessment by developing a checklist for marking cohesion. The method applied in this paper is literature survey since it relies heavily on the converging findings of previous research papers on cohesive devices. It should be noted that developing this assessment tool of cohesion has been built on informed and well-established methodology that has integrated the findings of previous literature, initial item development that has taken into account accuracy, distance and variety of cohesive devices, collecting materials for piloting the initial checklist and finally a large-scale checklist evaluation. It can be rightly argued that this study has overcome several shortcomings found in other research papers, such as the focus on the literature review section, which has led to a clear situation of the article and has provided the rationale behind espousing the final checklist format. In fact, the scanty account of the previous literature is manifested in a considerable number of studies on cohesion (e.g. Ali, 2016). In addition to the paucity in the studies within the literature review section, other relevant problems have been also identified, such as mere listing of the cited studies without critiquing them (e.g. Rostami, gholami & Piri, 2016) and discussing the concepts only in the literature without referring to empirical studies (e.g. Bahaziq, 2016).

The results of these studies combined, however, have been challenged by Green (2012), who concludes that cohesive devices have not been found as markers of various proficiency levels, a finding that is particularly at odds with Abdul Rahman's (2013) and Jafarpur's (1991) findings. The study has utilised an automated analysis tool, which is the Coh-Metrix to investigate whether cohesive types can be an indication of various proficiency levels. In order to come up with valid results, the study uses three corpora that represent three different proficiency levels. As far as the study's instrument is concerned, Coh-Metrix is acknowledged to provide accurate indices for the characteristics of texts on multiple levels of analysis, one of which is sentence and discourse relationships (McNamara, Crossley & Roscoe, 2013), which are the types of associations analysed in the study. Nevertheless, the validity of this automated tool lends itself to the purpose and the design of the paper. One shortcoming of this tool, for example, is that "it does not provide a qualitative analysis of spelling errors" (Puranik et al., 2012, p. 265), which can be much relevant to the study at hand. With the corpus representing the low-proficiency level in the study, this issue can be of considerable significance since spelling mistakes are expected to occur within the cohesive devices used in the writings present in the sample corpus. That it is to say, it is hard to take the automated analysis of this particular corpus as valid without being accompanied by a qualitative analysis of potential spelling mistakes.

Zhao (2014) also employed the Coh-Metrix but that has incompatible findings with Green (2012). Investigating the use of lexical cohesive devices in the Chinese corpus English for Academic Purposes (EAP), the study has found that the employment of these devices is less than their employment in the British corpus BAWE. Although the findings of Zhao (2014) accords with the findings of studies conducted in other contexts, such as the context of Vietnamese learners (Hung & Thu, 2014), whether this result is reliable or not is rightly questionable. Zhao (2014) puts the average words produced by a Chinese writer in the EAP corpus at 150 words, whereas the average is 250 words in the BAWE corpus. Having this enormous difference in the number of words might impact the indices produced by Coh-Metrix. Therefore, while a purely quantitative design is highly indicative as far as numerals of the tested corpora are concerned, it might not similarly be an index to language proficiency, which is one of the four purposes set for the paper.

Castro (2004) explores whether or not the employment of grammatical and lexical cohesive devices affects the rating of essays written by Filipino, first-year college students. Castro contends that, "the results of the cohesion analysis indicated no significant difference in the number and types of grammatical or lexical cohesive devices in the low, mid and highly rated essays" (2004, p. 222). The results of Castro (2004) accord with the findings of a number of studies that have investigated the impact of cohesive devices on academic writing (e.g. Chen, 2008).

Chen (2008) has addressed four questions, one of which is related to whether or not there is a correlation between the number of cohesive devices and text quality by investigating two types of essays, which are definition essays and opinion essays written by 23 EFL college students who belong to the same language proficiency level. The study uses Halliday and Hasan's (1976) taxonomy, but excludes ellipsis and substitution from the analysis. This exclusion has some backgrounding since these two devices have been found to be either rarely occurring in academic texts (Liu & Braine, 2005) or, if present, having weak correlation with text quality (Bae, 2001). Using Pearson's correlation, Chen (2008) finds no correlation between cohesion and text quality in this type of text. Likewise, from the Arabic context, Khalil (1990) uses Halliday and Hasan's (1976) model to anlayse the correlation between text cohesion and coherence in 20 compositions written by Arab freshman EFL learners. The study has used holistic rating of the twenty compositions and descriptive statistics to count the number of cohesive devices employed in them. With a coefficient correlation of $r = 0.18$, the author concludes that there is a very weak correlation between the number of cohesive ties and coherence. This finding has been at odds with the results reported by Aidinlou and Pandian (2011), yet supported by a number of studies that found no relationship between the number of cohesive devices and the quality of students' writing (e.g. Johnson, 1992; Neuner, 1987). Therefore, the majority of the studies that approached cohesive devices quantitatively by looking at the number of cohesive devices in certain types of texts, mostly academic ones, have found that cohesive devices are not a determiner of text quality.

In an enlightening study about the reader's role, Klebanov and Shamir (2007) conducted a research to find lexical cohesive patterns in 10 texts that belong to three text types, which are news articles, journalistic writing and fiction given to 22 students to annotate whatever lexical patterns they can find in the ten texts. The study has revealed much diversity in the readers' responses although all of them were provided with clear explanation of lexical cohesive devices ahead of the study, thus emphasising the role of the reader in interpreting the patterns of cohesive devices that exist in a text, a finding supported by a number of authors who emphasised the role of the reader in text interpretation regardless to cohesive devices (e.g. Carell, 1982; Hoey, 2001; McNamara, 2013). Taking a milder stand, Wang and Guo (2014) and Ebrahimpourtaher and Eissaei (2013) maintain that coherence involves the cooperation between the text producer and its reader, and involves linguistic and nonlinguistic factors. The following sub-section reviews the research practices in studies that employed cohesive devices in, loosely speaking, non-academic text types.

2.2 Cohesive Devices in Different Text Types

Within the context of literature, Jabeen, Mehmood & Iqbal (2013) attempt to explore how cohesive devices, particularly reference, substitution and ellipsis, contribute to meaning in Chekhov's *The Bear*. The paper touches on major concepts in textual analysis, such as cohesion, coherence and stylistics and provides a rather brief account of the three cohesive devices that are used as the instrument of analysis. Providing barely any examples on reference, substitution and ellipsis is a major drawback since these three compose the model used for analysing the selected literary work. The purpose of the study, which is to establish the links between cohesive devices and coherence, is hardly achieved. The study merely explains the selected texts from the play, identifies instances of cohesive devices, yet fails to create the link between the meaning of the text and the use of the cohesive devices. For example, the paper claims that the instances of clausal substitution used in the play indicate lack of respect, without providing any backgrounding, social or textual, to support their claims, which makes them subjective ones.

By the same token, Kaur (2015) analyses cohesive devices in Keats's "Ode to Autumn", basically using the model of Halliday and Hasan (1976). The study sets its aim as to show how cohesive devices link the various parts of the text together, which is what cohesive devices have for long been acknowledged to do. In fact, the absence of a literature review section that addresses the previous studies of cohesive devices in pieces of literature makes it hard to recognise the contribution of this paper. In addition, the claims made in the conclusion that "the analysis…reveals that cohesion ties contribute to the stability, economy and efficiency of the text" can hardly be accepted because the analysis does not refer to stability and efficiency, while referring only once to economy in the part that looks at the role of reference. In essence, both Jabeen, Mehmood and Iqbal (2013) and Kaur (2015) have not gone beyond the surface level and can be considered as attempts to merely list what cohesive devices exist in the selected literary texts.

In an earlier study, Yeibo (2012) attempts to investigate the role of cohesive devices, particularly *reference*, *ellipsis* and *conjunction* in the poems of J.P. Clark-Bekederemo. A plus of the study is that it provides a detailed account of the three devices that it has employed to analyse the selected poems. However, the study does not go beyond the mainstream research on cohesive devices as it merely lists examples of how these tools link the sentences together, and concludes that "linguistic devices have text-binding value" and "that they can function as agents of cohesion in texts" (p. 866). Seemingly, Paramartha (2013), who analyses the use of substitution in *Pygmalion*, focuses on this device as a merely cohesive tool and provides a list of excerpts where this device has been used as an inter-sentential connecting tool. The redundancy in the approaches towards literary texts analysis using cohesive devices can be seen clearly as the studies looked at so far have failed to go off-mainstream and maintained the 'listing-of-examples' style in their presentation.

The issue of looking at cohesive devices as merely inter-sentential linking tools accompanied by lists of their occurrences can also be seen in research examining other types of texts, such as psychology papers. Sharif (2015) puts the objective of her study as "to analyse and identify the lexical cohesive devices in the psychology research articles" (p. 128). In order to do so, the paper uses a closed set of seven cohesive types, which are *result*/*consequence*/*summary*; *contrast* and *comparison*; *giving examples*; *reinforcement* and *addition*; *giving reasons*, *connective*, *position*, *highlighting*; *listing*/*enumeration* and *adverbs*. Apart from the inaccurate conception of the study that takes these sets as lexical cohesive ties, the paper merely lists examples and occurrences of these types in the examined papers without linking their usage to meanings beyond the normal functions of the devices, which are known and common in a huge number of grammar books (Hatch, 1992). For example, the paper holds that in order to summarise, or give results and consequences, the studied articles have utilised devices like *therefore*, *in sum* and *thus*, which can be hardly taken as an addition to the knowledge about these conjunctive words. Thus, one has the right to question the addition this paper has made to the literature so far done on cohesive devices.

Mere listing of cohesive devices can also be seen within the Arabic context in papers that have looked at identification of these tools within certain types of texts. Ilyas (2014) uses the model of Halliday and Hasan (1976) to identify what cohesive devices exist in the short suras (chapters) of the Holy Quran. The study does not go beyond naming the linguistic ties that exist in the studied suras. Some errors in the analysis reveal that there are some misconceptions about cohesive devices that have led to erroneous interpretations at the identification level. For example, the study refers to الكوثر /alkawthar/, meaning the Fount (of abundance), as being an antonym of الأبتر /al'abtar/, meaning cut off (from future hope), although there is no such lexical relation between the two.

At extreme odds with studies that solely account for occurrences of cohesive devices, Prados (2012) extends the analysis of these tools to study the patterns they have in addition to their persuasive function in three political speeches. An obvious merit of this study is that it espouses an integrated instrument of analysis that harbors Halliday and Hasan's (1976) and de Beaugrande and Dressler's (1981) models of cohesive devices. This is considered a plus because Halliday and Hasan's (1976) model, though a comprehensive and clear taxonomy, has been criticised by many scholars (e.g. Brown & Yule, 1983) and has gone through several adaptations and additions (e.g. de Beaugrande & Dressler, 1981) that it has become no longer *the* model, but better the core, or the spring board, of several models. Prados (2012), therefore, adjusts Halliday and Hasan's (1976) instrument to include reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunctives and lexical, with the last of these being divided to repetition (total repetition, partial repetition, parallelism, paraphrase) and replacement (synonymy, superordinate, general word). Applying this adjusted model, the study has concluded that cohesive devices have a variety of functions, which are maintaining texture, emphasising ideas and urging the audience to think of the speakers' meaning.

In the world of media, Yin (2015) examines the set of conjunctions, or linking adverbials, in broadcast news and written news through investigating their usage patterns at three levels, which are form, meaning and position. A conspicuous merit of the study is that it provides a detailed account of the previous literature on conjunctions and a profuse depiction of the concepts involved with it in a variety of studies. Doing so, the study situates itself within the literature and builds its significance since it fills a gap that has not been attended in previous studies in depth. After surveying the literature, Yin (2015) rightly concludes that "previous studies have lacked depth in providing a detailed discussion of all the three aspects…" (p. 2). One de-merit of the study is that the corpus it uses has been fairly small, 21, 623 words, yet the qualitative analysis done in the study may justify the use of a small corpus. At the level of meaning, the study concludes that conjunctions can serve a total of 14 meanings: Addition, formulaic ending, initiating a topic, listing, condition, adversative, result, comparison, alternative, conclusion, logical, consequence, opposite, and signal of evidence. It can be clearly noticed that the sets of meanings are all present in the model produced by Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), except for listing, which was introduced by Locke (2004).

As far as organisation is concerned, Morley (2006) emphasises that lexical cohesion plays a major function in structuring arguments of newspaper articles. This finding accords with the emphasis that cohesive devices are necessary tools for building connections between ideas (Crossley & McNamara, 2009). Morley (2006) twins qualitative discourse analysis and corpus linguistics to analyse the relationship between the structure of arguments in newspaper articles and the employment of lexical cohesion. The study has found that the distribution of lexical cohesive devices that belong to the same semantic field is a key determiner of the argument's structure. It also indicates that lexical items used in headlines can be used as triggering tools for the words that occur within a certain semantic field, which corresponds with Scott & Tribble's (2006) concept of keyness. It can be noted that the use of corpus linguistics has ameliorated the possibility of considering some findings as subjective claims, such as the statement that *a moment for* is used to donate important moments. To this end, the integration of corpus linguistics has provided an objective verification of the results (McEnery & Wilson, 2001). To its credit, the paper investigates a corpus of one hundred million words from four newspapers. The methodology used in the paper has conspicuously served its purpose in two ways. Firstly, corpus linguistics has provided a huge amount of data to verify the results. Secondly, the qualitative analysis has provided the thick description (Merriam, 2009) needed to explain the linguistic occurrences of lexical cohesive devices within the corpus.

Crane (1994) analyses cohesive devices based on Halliday and Hasan's (1976) model in the Newsweek article *Ruins with a View*, and tries to show "how cohesion functions within texts to create semantic links" (p. 132). Still, the analysis hardly goes beyond what has so far been acknowledged as what cohesive devices 'usually' do. For example, the study states that personal reference has been used to "keep track of participants throughout the text" (p. 137), which is obviously a 'built-in' characteristic of this type of reference. Lexical cohesion has been identified as the most prominent cohesive type employed in the studied article; however, the number of occurrences of cohesive devices has not been linked to any sort of meaning or any level that goes beyond the linguistic analysis. Compare this to the studies that have found strong links between the way lexical cohesive devices are used in the press and their impact on forming the ideologies of the readers (e.g. Bloor & Bloor, 2007). The study of Crane (1994) calls for two more comments. The first one is that the study lacks an account of previous empirical literature on cohesive devices. As discussed earlier, this part is of paramount importance to situate the study within what has been accomplished in order to flag the significance of the study (Bell, 2005). It is true that cohesive devices have been presented and explained in the paper with reference to a number of researchers, yet there is a need to account for the literature that addresses the use of these tools at least in the press context. The second issue is that the paper has not specified what method is used to analyse the newspaper article.

These two major components are actually found to be missing from another study that has conducted a similar investigation. Hameed (2008), who provides a detailed account of the frequency of cohesive devices in a newspaper article, has also failed to provide neither an account of the previous literature nor of the method used to analyse the article.

Jambak and Gurning (2014) also focus on the frequency and density of cohesive devices but with a focus on newspaper headlines rather than articles. The study found that the most frequent cohesive device is conjunction with 349 occurrences in the studied column headlines, followed by reference with 162 occurrences and lexical cohesion with 36 incidences. In line with many studies that examined cohesive devices, ellipsis and substitution come at the end of the list of occurrences with 34 and 4 respectively. Nevertheless, the validity of the results is highly questionable because the study has revealed a number of misconceptions about cohesive devices. For instance, Jambak and Gurning (2014) introduce the following example: “The Children never cease asking for their parents and siblings” (p. 66), and comment that it includes two conjunctions, which are *and* and *for*. The authors inaccurately explain that *for* is a conjunction of purpose. While *for* is mentioned in Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) and Halliday and Hasan (1974) as a conjunction of causality, it cannot be considered as such in each and every occurrence in language, one of which is the example introduced above. Since the results of the study are based on providing the frequencies of cohesive devices, misconception about what is and what is not a cohesive device is of paramount importance as it affects the validity of the results. In addition to this issue, the study does not provide an account of the previous literature, so one can rightly argue that the significance and rationale of it are not obvious, given that a lot of studies have been done on the density of cohesive devices.

Going beyond the surface-level analysis of cohesive devices, Abu Ayyash (2013) maintains that cohesive devices play a major role in consolidating the arguments of English editorials. The sample editorial is analysed qualitatively using Halliday and Hasan’s 1976 model of cohesion, and the article used in the analysis has been selected based on purposive sampling. Abu Ayyash (2013) states that, “this article was chosen to be the unit of analysis…because it is rife with cohesive devices” (p. 242). Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) emphasise that “In purposive sampling, researchers handpick the cases to be included in the sample on the basis of their judgment of their typicality” (p. 103). Generally, what is typical about a purposive sample is that the participants or texts are selected because they are available and convenient as far as the purpose of the study is concerned (Gorard, 2001; Merriam, 2009). Adopting a purposive sampling strategy, then, makes the results context-specific and non-generalisable to wider populations (Kumar, 2011). Although Abu Ayyash (2013) states that he is using the micro-analytic approach, the study’s scope encompasses broader than the textual level, which makes the method improperly described. According to Celce-Murcia and Olshtain (2000), a micro-analytic approach involves decontextualising the text, focusing on linguistic elements and function. Obviously, Abu Ayyash (2013) analyses the newspaper article in terms of cohesive devices but goes beyond their textual functions to link the analysis with context and genre. To its credit, the study employs descriptive statistics and links them to the purpose served by certain cohesive devices. For example, to show how conjunctions reflect the argumentative nature of the argument, the study explains how adversative conjunctions outnumber other types, such as additives and causals.

II. Benefiting from Chaos

This part will delineate the major problematic research practices that might have led to the chaotic status in the cohesive devices studies conducted so far in order to propose well-established recommendations apropos the practices of future research on cohesion. Considering the above review of the studies that have investigated the use of cohesive devices in a wide variety of text types, a number of research-practice-related issues have arisen. These are related to the scope of the analysis, the literature review, the methodology and the research design among others.

The scope of the analysis of cohesive devices is one major research-practice issue to be considered. Although studying cohesive devices as merely inter-sentential connection ties goes with the mainstream research on these tools, there is another level of analysis that links cohesive devices to the meta-linguistic level. This type of analysis is of paramount importance because it shall add value to many approaches that call for going beyond the sentence level in analysis, such as considering text quality, text type, coherence and the readers. As a matter of fact, owing to the current research practice that gets studies of cohesion mired in sole textual analysis, there is substantial paucity in the studies that link cohesive devices to context, be it the situational context or the cultural context. To investigate the former, there is a need to look at exophoric reference, the linguistic device that can be decoded only by referring to the context and that assumes a shared world between the reader and the writer which will enable the reader from interpreting the referential item (Widdoson, 2004). As for the latter, there is a need to investigate the linguistic items that link the text to the culture, and therefore, exploring the use of homophoric reference (Paltridge, 2012).

Apart from the scope of the studies, the linguistic-level analysis of the reviewed studies suffers from more ‘lacerations’. Firstly, it is apparent that a significant number of studies which attempted to analyse ALL the cohesive devices in certain texts ended up listing the occurrences of these linguistic tools without any further critical analysis of their usage. Quite understandably, due to the variety of text types, and owing to the fact that the use of cohesive devices lends itself in no small part to human variances, the findings of such studies were hugely incongruent. A recommended research practice in this regard involves avoiding placing ALL the cohesive devices in one basket, and, instead, focusing on one or two subcategories at a time, a practice found in some papers, such as (Jafarpur, 1991). Another linguistic-level practice that calls for comment is the employment of the cohesive devices model as an instrument of analysis without providing a conceptual explanation of the linguistic tools that constitute the bone of the model, or instrument. While this research practice of providing a detailed conceptual framework is found in some papers (e.g. Yeibo, 2012; Yin, 2015), it was completely absent in others (e.g. Jabeen, Mehmood & Iqbal, 2013).

Studies that investigate the correlation between cohesive devices and the quality of writing are recommended both to validate their data gathering tools and not to exclude qualitative discourse analysis from the design as it is hard to establish such correlations without exploring the accuracy of cohesive devices usage, which cannot be accounted for by employing quantitative methods alone. This issue is conspicuously evident in studies that employed electronic tools, such as the Coh-Metrix, since these programmes fall short of accounting for accuracy-related phenomena in texts (e.g. Green, 2012). Still, positivist researchers who have merely quantitative preferences can approach such correlations by employing more than one test, such as the t-tests and Pearson correlation analysis, since the latter is a good tool to observe associations with some focus on the correct usage. However, when studying the relationship between cohesive devices and coherence, it is evident from the literature that linguistic analysis alone is not sufficient, and, therefore, the readers have to be part of the study as can be found in a number of research papers and authoritative books (e.g. Carell, 1982, Hoey, 2001, Johns, 1986). Akin to this inclination, McNamara (2013) stresses that the reader's epistemic knowledge plays a major role in determining whether a text is easily comprehended or not.

Also linked to methodology are a number of issues patent in the research practices imbricated within the reviewed papers here. Utilising the right data gathering and or analysis instrument is of paramount importance. In order for this usage to be optimal, some recommendations can be forwarded based on the discussion of the research practices. Firstly, it is significant to validate the instrument before using it, since failing to do so will have deleterious impact on the results. Secondly, it is strongly recommended that using automated tools, such as the Coh-Metrix, be accompanied with qualitative analysis directed towards overcoming the problems with these tools, which include the areas of spelling and text length. One more issue is the use of the proper research design before claiming that certain findings are 'accurate'. For example, in pre-test, post-test research design, it is of paramount importance to explain the intervention conducted between the two tests.

The above review also found that there are a number of research practices that undermined the role of the literature review section. Literature review should be thoroughly discussed as this practice leads to making informed decisions and choices about the study. For example, Struthers, Lapadat and Macmillan (2013) built an assessment tool of cohesion. Some of the literature-review identified issues include providing a scanty account of the literature, for example (Ali, 2016) cited only four articles, listing the studies without a critical eye (e.g. Rostami, Gholami & Piri, 2016), providing studies that are not recent enough, for example in (Ali, 2016) the most recent study cited on cohesion was conducted in 1984, and finally, providing a conceptually-based literature that is almost free from empirical research on cohesion (e.g. Bahaziq, 2016). The other extreme of the latter can be found in studies which only focused on the empirical research, failing to account for the concepts of cohesion. This has probably led to an ignorance about notions introduced after the 1976 model. With very few exceptions (e.g. Pardos 2012), the majority of the studies have utilised the model of Halliday and Hasan (1976) as the instrument of their textual analysis. While as mentioned earlier, this tool is acknowledged to be a seminal contribution, there is a need for an integrated instrument, or model, that takes into account not only the adaptations to the 1976 model but also the criticisms of it.

What seems rather surprising in the literature review above is that literary texts have not received deep analyses, with the studies focusing primarily on what cohesive devices occur in the studied texts and whether they link various parts at the surface level or not. Given that literature usually contains deep meanings and distinguished stylistics, analysis of cohesive devices is expected to yield results on how these tools serve a variety of functions that go along with the nature of the literary texts.

III. Conclusion

Acknowledging the contribution of the studies reviewed in this paper, it is important to point out that this review aims to explore the research practices on studies about cohesive devices in order to come up with a set of recommendations that might guide the research conducted on these linguistic tools afterwards. One more obvious tendency regarding the previous literature is that a profuse number of papers that have investigated the relationship between cohesion and coherence and/or text quality have come up with incompatible results. It is also noticed that a considerable number of studies that have found no significant correlation between the number of cohesive ties and the quality of writing or coherence have utilised sole quantitative designs. Nevertheless, it cannot be definitively concluded that statistically-driven analyses do not suffice to establish such associations because some other quantitative designs have held that there is a strong correlation between the number of cohesive devices and coherence, or text quality. These discrepancies also apply to studies that have employed automated tools to investigate such relationships. Still, studies that have utilised a quantitative tool accompanied by some kind of qualitative analysis have catered for this type of investigation more fully. More research-practice issues identified in this paper encompass practices related to the literature review, research design, and limiting the analysis to the linguistic level. On a caution note, every study reviewed here has its own contribution to the literature, yet it is hoped that the humble review presented here will lead to better practices in research in this area.

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Iranian Teachers' Attitude towards Using Social Media and Technology to Increase Interaction amongst Students inside or outside the Classroom

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***Abstract*—Internet and Social media is a ubiquitous phenomenon affecting many areas of life, including education. From various disciplines have used some forms of social media in their personal as well as professional lives, the English Language Teaching (ELT) teachers are no exception. Many studies on the area have been conducted such as those reviewed by Inayati (2013), and Tess (2013). However, despite the fact that Iran is among the high users of a number of social media, such study in Iran is still scarcely found in International journals. Therefore, this paper addresses the issue by studying how Iranian ELT teachers perceive social media in relation to their teaching as well as their general attitudes towards this type of media. A number of ELT teachers in recent popular social media (telegram, whatsapp) were surveyed with regards to their attitude and perception of social media use in teaching English. Analysis of the survey results showed that generally, the participants indicated positive attitude towards the employment of social media in ELT. In addition, most participants also showed high awareness of the educative potentials offered by social media in ELT practices, and several factors which could potentially hinder the actual use of social media were also identified. Some implications were drawn based on the findings of the study, some of which are related to the aspect of education management.**

***Index Terms*—English language teaching, social media, Technology-Based Interaction (TBI)**

I. INTRODUCTION

Social media is one of the current phenomena in the technology advancement that touches many aspects of life, including education. It has served educators globally in various manners; some use it to attract more students by social media campaign, some use it to create and maintain professional networking, and others also use it to aid the teaching and learning process. The use of social media in teaching has gained increasing attention over the past decade, which is evidenced by the growing number of research in the area found in the International peer reviewed journals. Social media has been found employed in the instruction process of various disciplines, one of which is the English Language Teaching (ELT).

ELT educators has always been actively incorporating technology into their teaching and learning, starting from the simple recording commonly used during the era of audio-lingual method in the 60's to the 80's, up until the booming of the Internet and its subsequent by-products, such as social media. Social media is a ubiquitous phenomenon that affects a huge number of teachers and students, including those students and teachers of ELT. Social media has been largely used by ELT educators, which is reflected in the review studies conducted by Inayati (2013), Tess (2013) and Sim and Hew (2010). According to Inayati (2013, p. 197) social media has been employed in various ways, some use it for teaching skill courses such as writing and speaking skills, while others use it for teaching content courses such as English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and for teaching cultural aspect in English language learning.

Iranian Internet users have been renowned as one of the biggest users of social media globally, with over 80% penetration rate. In other words, almost all internet users in Iran use social media in some ways. A search on Google searching engine about social media use in Iran shows a considerable number of entries about the employment of social media (whatsApp, telegram, viber, …). However, empirical research on the use of social media in ELT is still very limited, especially in the International journal. This becomes the underlying basis of the current study, which covers the Iranian language teachers' attitude towards the use of social media in their classes or outside.

The necessity of interaction among teacher and students and among students themselves needs not evident clarification in this communication era. The communicative language teaching theory claims that the purpose of language learning is to communicate and interact (Richards & Rodgers, 1986), and previous studies on communicative language teaching (Hymes, 1972; Nunan, 1991) reveal that interaction is a good facilitation for learning of both language functions and of language forms. As there is not sufficient and various forms of interaction in most language classrooms in Iran, social media can serve as a wide spread medium tool to connect classmates and their teacher to experience various types of interactions including group discussion, peer interaction, teacher to students interaction, synchronic and asynchronic communication, video chat, voice or written chat and etc. Many researches conducted by scholars around the world investigating the effect of using ITC, social media, and CMC on language teaching and learning. In the future, based on Skill and Young (2002) learning will not be solely online nor solely instructor-led classroom.

This study aims at gaining Iranian teachers' perspective to the use of any available type of technology to persuade language learners participate in interactional communications inside or outside classroom. Considering this fact that social media has widely spread out amongst Iranian society and the continuing phenomena is including a large number of students, the emergence of research studies in this area can be felt by educational scholars. Internet, in addition to fun and finance, can serve as a learning and teaching medium. As this is a new topic in the context of Iranian educational system, the research is taking advantage of the most available tool to researcher meaning questionnaire. The questionnaire in a Likert Scale format investigates different aspects of using social media from the teachers' view point.

II. Literature Review

A. Importance of Interaction inside and outside Classroom

Long’s Interaction Hypothesis (1996) claims that interaction cosentrates on the ‘negotiation for meaning’. The frequency of occurrence of the target form leads to salience, negative feedback, and input modifications to enhance comprehensibility and content predictability. These processes induce ‘noticing’ of new forms, new form-meaning connections, gaps in interlanguage, and mismatch between input and output. Long (1996) mentioned that interaction paves the way for comprehension and acquisition of semantically contingent speech and negotiation for meaning. Long emphasizes the significance of the interactional modifications that occur in negotiating meaning. In other words, interactive input is more important than non-interactive input (Ellis, 1994). Classroom interactional tasks that provoke negotiation for meaning might turn out to be those among several benificial language-learning activities, for they might be the most convenient ways to facilitate a learner’s focus on form. Classroom interactional tasks often consist of learner classroom participation, group work, teacher talk, role plays, etc. The communicative language teaching theory shows that communication and interaction are the aim of language learning (Richards & Rodgers, 1986), and previous works on communicative language teaching (Hymes, 1972; Nunan, 1991) indicate that it is interaction that facilitates the learning of language functions as well as of target language forms.

A large number of studies have scrutinized the effect of the quantity and quality of learner classroom participation on their L2 achievement, but the expected results have not been conclusive. For example, Seliger (1977) and Strong (1984) found positive effects, while Allwright’s study (1980) brought forth opposite results. Considering to the quality of learner participation in class, tasks and group work are involved, Long (1980) and Newton (1991) revealed in their studies that the mutual interactional tasks lead to promotion of negotiation of meaning. In addition, the study by Long, Adams, McLean, and Castanos (1976) found that small groups of students working togather experience better language production compared to individual language learners. This confirms superiority of group work over individual activities for learners to produce language. Wong-Fillmore (1982) showed that teacher-student interaction, as well as pair work and group work gave a clear effect on L2 learning. The study revealed that second language learning can be influenced by interaction in the classroom, although it does not clarify how specific linguistic features are learned.

Since there is no real situation available for EFL students to interact and communicate meaning outside classroom, the teachers can provide them with a new and possible and manageable procedure out of class. Multimedia technology has newly improved considerably, so computer-aided language learning (CALL) turn out to become an appropriate alternative to traditional models of classroom interaction between student and teacher (Ehsani & Knodt, 1998, p. 45). Therefore, a continuous research attempt is needed as well as a good support of instructional materials to help this improving field of CMC.

Recent studies on the arrival of Internet-based communication recognize a technological innovation with the potential to create a paradigmatic shift in teaching and learning second languages (e.g., Berge & Collins, 1995; Dede, 1993). However, it is claimed by Salaberry (2000, p. 28) that this shift can only happen if specific pedagogical objectives are obtained through the design and implementation of instructional activities in computer mediated communication (CMC) environments.

The *Foreign Language Standards* (1996, p. 28) support this idea that students be given sufficient opportunities to explore, develop, and use communication strategies, learning strategies, critical thinking skills, and skills in technology. The *Standards* also state that “Students must participate in multilingual communities at home and around the world by using the language, both within and beyond the school setting” (p. 9). Salaberry (2000, p. 23) affirms “the pedagogical goal of computer-aided language learning (CALL) activities is for learners to improve their ability in the target language through participating in linguistic interactions.”

The results of a research project on the classroom FTF and online CMC discourse analysis were noticeable in the context of a Hong Kong higher education institute. It debates that both classroom FTF and online CMC in combination paves the way for creation of a dynamic atmosphere for learning and teaching. In the future, based on Skill and Young (2002) learning will not be solely online nor solely instructor-led classroom. They suggest that hybrid or blended learning models are the most effective learning strategy for many of teachers who have been working with various learning models. This tendency suggests that the creation of new learning environments should include both virtual and real learning contexts.

B. Learners' Attitudes about CACDs

In general just a few studies investigated students' attitudes toward Computer Assisted Communication Discution (CACD) or Computer Mediated Communication (CMC). These studies suggest that learners tend to have positive attitudes towards CACD's activities. Attitudes of students were examined by Warschauer (1996) and Dwyer (2005) after a short period of studies, while the same attitudes were investigated after a long period of studies by Beauvois (1997) and Blake (2000). Amongst pioneering researchers in CACD, Beauvois (1998) explored the attitudes of intermediate French learners in a comparative study for a five-week period on reading. Both FTF and CACD discussion were explored. Interviews and questionnaires were conducted to investigate learners' attitudes to CACD. The report from her learners was that they had enjoyed the CACD experience. They had also found it less stressful and felt that they had more language production in CACD than in FTF discussions. Beauvois and Eledge (1996)used Meyers-Briggs Type Indicator to examine students' attitudes towards CACD and discovered that the two types of personality (introvert & extrovert) perceived CACD as a linguistically affective and personally beneficial experience. All others came to the same results including, Dwyer's (2005), Blake's (2000) and Warschauer's (2005).

Another long research CACD study, which continued for two terms, was performed by Blake (2000) on Spanish intermediate learners who were supposed to do three types of activity (decision-making, information-gap and jigsaw). A survey was used to collect Students' attitudes; these revealed the fact that learners found it motivating, conducive to L2 learning, and fun to learn with. Warschauer (1996, p.6), as a major researcher in the field of CMC at that time, carried out a similar short-term course, comparative study but his sampling frame was made-up of advanced English learners whose attitudes were sought through questionnaires only. His learners showed that CACD was less stressful, more comfortable, and more creative. A second short-term study which examined student's attitudes was conducted by Dwyer (2005) who performed a small scale study on three CACD sessions; he explored the role of negative feedback in CACD. In the semi-structured interviews employed to explore students' attitudes towards CACD they indicated that CACD sessions were easy to follow, more communicative than traditional FTF discussion and considered it as a good learning environment where they could notice others' mistakes and learn from them.

C. Social Media in English Language Teaching (ELT)

The use of Social Media for teaching and learning has been connected to several popular theories in education. Selwyn (2011, p.3) proposed the theory of connectivism as the basis of its implementation, suggesting that the ability to access information when needed has become the main feature of learning in this information era. He further explains that the emphasis of learning has shifted from the accumulation of knowledge to the capacity to know more through an individual's connection to a particular source of knowledge. In addition, Shih (2011) pinpoints that the theory of constructivism could also serve as the basis for social media use in education, as its application allows pedagogy designs with meaningful social interaction and community sharing. In ELT contexts, sociocultural theory has also been related to the use of social media in the instruction process, for example by Hsu (2013). In his explanation, Hsu maintains that this theory prescribes learners to be well exposed to the speakers of English and their community of practice, and that meaningful interaction with them is an essential factor in language learning. With regard to this theory, Hsu believes that social media could provide such exposure and facilitate the intended interaction in the classroom. Various forms of popular social media have been integrated into ELT, for example, blogs, wikis, Facebook and Skype. These are employed in various ELT contexts such as teaching courses in English skills and English content. An example of the study was reported by Hung (2011) who studied the use of blogs for teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in a Taiwanese university. In this study, the students in a Business Oral Communication course were required to practice their professional speaking skills in English by video recording themselves and posting the video in the designated blogs for other students to view and offer constructive criticism. By using surveys, interviews and content analysis, the study found that students were generally in favor of using blogs because in addition to its archival feature, blogs enabled them to reflect on their weaknesses in speaking and helped to improve these weaknesses. In addition, Sun and Chang (2012) conducted a study on blog employment to improve the writing skills of English as a foreign language (EFL) students in which they conclude generally positive findings. Using a qualitative approach inquiry design, their study shows that blogs could be employed naturally and independently by advanced-level students to improve their academic English writing skills. In this study, the blog posts of four graduate programme students with advanced English skills were analyzed for improvement in their academic writing skills and their authorship identity building. In this study, blogs were found to be an effective platform for actively generating and sharing knowledge and reflection on experiences, and at the same time enhancing the students' sense of authorship.

Another study on social media use in ELT contexts was conducted by Chik and Breidbach (2011) who used the combination of wikis, Facebook and Skype in their study of the Language Learning History of two student cohorts from Hong Kong and Germany. Students involved in this study were required to write a reflection of their language-learning experiences on a wiki page. The students were then asked to discuss their experience through a shared Facebook page to follow up specific questions based on their wiki entries. A Skype conference was also conducted to allow synchronous live discussion among the two cohorts.

Based on the analysis of content and interview data, the findings of the study suggest that the social media employed in this study effectively served as a platform to allow both cohorts to compose multimodal texts. In addition, the findings were believed to provide evidence that all young people are equally capable of using social media and that social media may serve as an effective platform for intercultural sharing.

However, although the penetration of rate of social media in Iran is considerably high, research on social media use in English Language Teaching (ELT) in Iran is still relatively low. Therefore, this study aims to fill in the gap by conducting a study focusing on the Iranian ELT teachers' attitudes of the use of social media in their classroom.

D. Teachers' Attitudes towards Social Media

This study focuses on teachers' attitudes as several theories have shown the manner in which attitude is closely related to practice, in this case, the practice of English Language Teaching (ELT). Despite originating from the discipline of psychology, the following theories have been employed by many researchers to explain teachers' use of the Internet and Computer Technology (ICT). First, the Theory of Planned Behavior stipulates that an individual's behavior is determined by an intention which, in turn, is influenced by three governing aspects: attitude, subjective norm and perceived behavioral control (Ajzen 1991).

When this theory is applied to teachers' use of ICT or social media, the attitude aspect may include how teachers view the value of the technology, and the manner in which it affects their role in the classroom, students' learning and motivation, teachers' influence in the school, and other teachers (Cox 2003).

Another theory entitled the Technology Acceptance Model proposed by Davis, Bagozzi and Warshaw (1989) suggests that an individual's attitude in using ICT is governed by two aspects: perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use of the technology. Both aspects are believed to be influenced by external variables such as local education policies in ICT, teacher ICT training received, pressure from parents and students, and opinions of colleagues (Cox 2003).

Empirical studies have provided evidence on the manner in which teachers' attitudes play a significant role in influencing their tendency to be in favor of or against using any form of technology in class, with a positive attitude correlating positively to integration (Cavas et al. 2002; Kreijn et al. 2012). Using the Theory of Planned Behavior as the basis of their study, Kreijn et al. (2012) conducted a survey on 1,209 Dutch teachers to observe their usage of digital learning materials (DLM). They found that attitude was the one variable with the strongest predicting factor for the teachers' intention to use DLM. Further, regression analysis showed that attitude positively correlated with teachers' self-efficacy, previous usage of ICT, and to some extent, colleagues' usage of ICT. They also argued that teacher observation of colleagues with successful experiences in technology integration positively influenced their attitude and ultimately their real usage of the technology.

A closer look at teachers' attitudes towards social media was presented in a study by Ajjan and Hartshorne (2008). Again, using the Theory of Planned Behavior as the framework of the study, they surveyed 136 university faculty members in a large south-eastern university in the United States to determine their awareness of social media benefits and their intention of use. They found that the perceived benefits are that social media improves student learning, increases student-faculty interaction and improves student writing. A path analysis of the data showed that attitude was the only factor with a strong significance in affecting the faculty's behavioral intention for use of social media in teaching. The other two factors believed to affect the intention of use, perceived behavioral control and subjective norm, respectively showed a significant but weak effect and no significant effect towards the faculty's intention to use social media. The attitude variable was measured against the faculty's perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and the compatibility of web-based social media. As such, the study suggested that training in integrating social media could be offered to influence faculty's decision to use social media in class.

Within the context of Iranian education, studies about teachers' attitudes towards ICT in general, and social media in particular, are still scarcely found in international journals. To the author's knowledge, the availability of empirical studies on this area of research is still relatively low. As such, this study aims to fill in the literature gap by exploring the Iranian ELT teachers' attitude towards the use of social media in teaching.

The present study focuses on teachers, whose influence over student learning is evident. Teachers are active, thinking decision makers who play a critical role in shaping classroom events. As such, an understanding of their mental state is of central importance to gain insight into the nature of their instructional practices and professional development, as well as to assist policy makers to be more sensitive to the key roles that teachers play in educational innovation (Borg 2006).

The present study focuses on teachers' attitudes to perceived usefulness of social media, and discusses different aspects of using social communication technologies in the process of language teaching and learning. In addition, the correlations between the attitude towards social media and some demographic details of the respondents such as gender, experience, education level, age, were also probed in order to observe the potential relationships.

III. METHOD

Survey is a procedure in quantitative research that involves the use of a questionnaire to explore a population's characteristics, attitudes, behaviors, and opinions (Creswell 2012). This instrument was considered appropriate with the objective of the study, which is observing the attitude of ELT teachers towards the use of social media in their teaching contexts. The survey items were developed through a rigorous process which includes extensive literature study on the area of research to create good and relevant items in the questionnaire. Then it was offered to five language teachers to exclude inefficient and ambiguous items.

The survey consists of three sections: the first section is 15 questions about problematic aspects of using social media (a negative attitude towards using social media). The second section consists of 15 items, which probes into the respondents' attitudes towards social media use from general to professional effects on language learning and teaching (a positive and persuasive attitude towards media use). The third section is about the respondents' profile such as the gender, age, educational background, city of settlement, and years of teaching experience.

The data collection was conducted from 10 Azar to 10 Bahman 1394. The questionnaire was distributed in some social media groups in Telegram and WhatsApp which included large number of English teachers. 46 teachers responded the survey which is considered sufficient and representative. After the data was obtained, they were analyzed using the descriptive statistics with the help of SPSS 20 software. To analyze the respondents' profile, familiarity and use of social media, simple description of numbers and percentage is used. In addition, weighted mean is used to analyze the attitude items as it is considered appropriate to understand the overall trend of the respondents' attitudes.

IV. FINDINGS

The profile of the respondents was dominated by female, younger than 30 years old and with a bachelor degree qualification. The percentage of the female respondents was 68% while the male respondents were 32%. Next, 81% of them were younger than 30 years of age, and held the bachelor degree qualification. As for the length of teaching experience, all the participants had more than 6 years' experience.

Following the profile were the questions about the respondents' application of social media to communicate in English. For this question, all respondents reported familiarity with and use of social media in foreign language communication.

There are 30 items in this section of the survey; each measured using the five-point Likert scale of agreement: (1) strongly agree, (2) agree, (0) undecided, (3) disagree and (4) strongly disagree. Analysis of the results showed that generally, the teachers have a positive attitude towards social media for teaching English and other educational purposes. Detailed account of the respondents' attitude towards social media use in ELT and education in general is presented in the Table.

Items	Agreed	Disagreed	Undecided
1. Technology-based interactions need facilities that not all students may have access to.	100%	0 %	0%
2. Technology-based interactions may impose much time and energy demands on the teachers.	54%	32%	14%
3. Students often prefer to get feedback and be corrected by their teachers directly.	59%	32%	9%
4. Students often prefer to interact directly inside classroom.	59%	32%	9%
5. There is not a formal and legalized procedure to use technology in our education system.	77%	14%	9%
6. Technology-based interactions may distract students' attention from language learning.	32%	59%	9%
7. It may be harmful for students to use internet from a moral and cultural point of view.	32%	59%	9%
8. There is not a specific pre-determined computer application for students and teachers.	36%	32%	32%
9. Students cannot afford it to provide facilities of TBI.	91%	5%	4%
10. Students do not have the skills needed for using TBI.	77%	23%	0%
11. The language used in internet is not formal language.	45%	32%	23%
12 Using similes and characters in social media prevents using the language itself..	50%	32%	18%
13. The students do not have a real personality in social media.	41%	41%	18%
14. The students will not receive sufficient and well-timed feedback in TBI.	41%	45%	14%
15. TBI may fossilize grammatical and lexical errors in the students' mind.	50%	41%	9%
16. TBI may increase students' motivation to language learning.	64%	14%	23%
17. TBI may motivate students' to interact in the target language.	73%	17%	9%
18. TBI may decrease grammatical and lexical errors of students in long term use.	50%	23%	27%
19. TBI may fortify four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing).	59%	27%	14%
20. TBI is a meaningful way of interaction to students.	55%	18%	27%
21. TBI may increase students' vocabulary knowledge.	77%	14%	9%
22. TBI may compensate paucity of face to face interactions in classroom.	54%	36%	10%
23. TBI may increase students' self-confidence.	59%	23%	18%
24. In TBI, it is easier to assess students more accurately and reliably.	32%	45%	23%
25. In TBI, the teachers can experience a convenient way of supervision on students' progression and interaction.	64%	23%	13%
26. Different kinds of interaction (group work, peer interaction, teacher and students interaction, synchronous and asynchronous interaction, …) can be performed in TBI.	82%	18%	0%
27. In TBI, both synchronous and asynchronous interaction can be implemented.	64%	23%	13%
28. In TBI, the students have the opportunity to correct and revise language errors.	82%	9%	9%
29. Using TBI may increase production of language.	77%	9%	14%
30. Using TBI may be more inexpensive than language courses outside schools.	68%	18%	14%

V. DISCUSSION

Overall, it was found that the respondents in the present study were in favor of social media use in education. The Likert scale analysis indicates a generally positive attitude towards social media use in education. A more detailed discussion of the analysis results of the attitude variable is presented below.

As mentioned above, the survey includes 3 parts. the first section is 15 questions about problematic aspects of using social media (a negative attitude towards using social media). The second section consists of 15 items, which probes into the respondents’ attitudes towards social media use from general to professional effects on language learning and teaching (a positive and persuasive attitude towards media use). The third section is about the respondents’ profile such as the gender, age, educational background, city of settlement, and years of teaching experience.

The researcher prefers to put the items into discussion separately in order to clarify the extent to which the participants agree with social media use and technology-based interaction in language teaching. It should be explained that the survey items are a combination of likely barriers on the way of TBI, weaknesses and disadvantages, and the advantages. It was intended to include maximum related issues of TBI and social media in previous literatures and also various aspects of TBI be discussed.

The items 1 (lack of technology equipment for students), 2 (imposing more demands of energy and time on teachers), 5 (lack of a pre-planned procedure in education system), 8 (lack of a specific computer application designed for education system), 9 (students' financial problems to provide the personal equipment), 10(students' weakness in using technology) are the major barriers on the way of using TBI for teachers and students. According to the percentages obtained for the first 15 items, it can be identified that majority of the teachers are agreed with such obstacles.

Equipment is a crucial cornerstone of an extensive change. Due to high costs of technology for most families, it seems having a homogeneous class is far from real. Net users, in Iran, are growing in number, but we are not quite sure about the students' access to technology. Yet, majority of the students, especially in rural areas, are not capable of providing a computer system and internet connection. Therefore, we can at least count on privileged areas in large cities to experiment or execute TBI.

The items 3(the preference of traditional assessment and interaction over technology-based ones by students), 4(the preference of face to face interaction in class over TBI), 6(the disturbance in students' attention and concentration caused by TBI), 7(the behavioral and moral consequences of internet on students), 11(informal language in internet), 12(using similes instead of language production), 13(lack of a real personality in virtual world of internet), 14(lack of sufficient and well-timed feedback), 15(fossilization of grammatical and lexical errors), should be categorized as disadvantages of using technology-based interaction. Noticing the percentages obtained for the items 3, 4, 12, 15, it is clear that agreement percentage overcomes disagreement responses, meaning that the participants confirmed these disadvantages in TBI use. Although, the confirmation does not report much higher percentages than 50. The figures in items 6, 7, 11, 13, 14, tend to explain teachers' agreement which reveal that majority of teachers agree with the drawbacks included in the items.

In the second section of the survey, items 16 to 30, the concentration is on specific issues related to TBI. The survey aims at collecting teachers' viewpoints none of which are not experimented in Iran yet. The items in this part were chosen considering the issues in experimental studies conducted around the world. The previous literature suggests that most of the issues in the second section of the survey had good effects on language learning and teaching, some of recent studies were mentioned in the review of literature. The percentages of this section of survey elaborate that there is a positive attitude towards using TBI. Except for item 24 which a 45% disagreement is showing a negative attitude, but if the 23% agreement and 23% undecided responses are considered accurately, this idea can be inferred that the item had not been much palpable to some of the participants.

VI. CONCLUSION

The goal of this study was to explore the Iranian language teachers' attitude towards social media and technology-based interaction. The results of the study suggest that regardless of gender, employment status, age, education level, and tenure, all faculty members were familiar with social media and have used at least one type of social media. It was found that the respondents generally held a positive attitude towards the use of social media in education, especially in ELT. Based on these findings, some implication could be dawned. First, the ELT educators’ positive attitude towards social media could be best employed by the education institution to promote blended learning, or learning using both face-to-face and on-line platforms, thus also promoting the better integration of technology in education. Second, the respondents indicated positive attitude towards the use of social media for continuous professional development, and a considerably high interest in obtaining further trainings in using social media in teaching. This particular attitude should be best employed by the education institution management by including more aspects of social media use in teaching and learning in their professional development programs. In addition to trainings, to ensure the sustainability of the initiative, the management could also introduce a new policy that promote experimental atmosphere among the faculty members to integrate social media in their teaching.

Finally, future research could be conducted to complement the limitation of this study. For example, as the present study used only a survey to obtain the data, future research could consider doing a triangulation study such as via interview and/ or observation to generate more in-depth data about the issue. Furthermore, the present study merely focus on the ELT educators' attitude towards social media, thus future research could probe further about the issue, for example by studying the actual use of social media in education, or by widening the scope of the study to cover more relevant educational institutions. In addition, to support the smooth integration of social media into ELT, future studies could consider some effective practices in making the best use of social media in the different contexts of ELT. Finally, as the current study focused only on the teachers' perspectives, future research could consider shifting the focus to the students' perception of social media use for educational purposes. Studies in the area of Iranian educational contexts are currently still very limited in the literature and thus, many areas remain open for research.

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Design, Development and Evaluation of Academic Oral English Curriculum Reform

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***Abstract*—The postgraduate students' oral English proficiency has long been considered to be unsatisfactory in tailoring ever-increasing global engagement and international academic cooperation. Numerous Chinese universities are currently undergoing English curriculum reform for enhancing postgraduate students' pragmatic communicative capacity especially in involving in global professional interaction and articulating at international academic settings. To assess the effect of the curriculum innovation, a 670-postgraduate-student questionnaire was surveyed at Southeast University to evaluate its pilot reform encompassing teaching, learning and assessment, namely, "Collaborative Teaching Mode and Interactive Learning Model", "Major-related Teaching Content" and "Formative Assessment System Integrated in Summative Assessment System". The data showcases that the teaching content merged by Simulated International Conference on major-relevant themes has been popularly acknowledged by students. The Sino-foreign collaborative teaching mode and multiple interactive learning model have proven to boost students' enthusiasm and confidence in improving oral English proficiency. The formative assessment system can significantly propel teamwork spirit and arouse students' earnest to practice oral English. The research provides viable modes for oral English curriculum reform in Chinese tertiary educational institutions.**

***Index Terms*—co-teaching, reform, oral English, interaction, formative assessment**

I. Introduction

Chinese Ministry of Education, National Development & Reform Commission and Ministry of Finance have successively issued documents to urge universities in China to conduct comprehensive reform in postgraduate education. To echo the reform appeal, English teaching objective is to "exert every effort and avail every channel to enhance pragmatic competence especially cultivating postgraduate students' verbal and literal communicative capacity in their major-related fields" (He, Zhang & Wang. 2005). It is also mentioned in the new requirement that in the teaching goal, "listening and speaking are to be particularly stressed. This requires that learners should not only understand what people are speaking, but also acquire the ability to talk to people (Hu, 2004). Conversely, during the past decade, the oral English teaching at Southeast University encountered three thresholds before the reform: Firstly, teaching objective and content could not satisfy the current social requirement of developing students' pragmatic ability. Secondly, the teaching mode hinders students' interests in articulating their views in academic contexts. Students are in extreme shortage of interactive oral English practice due to confined oral English learning interaction in class (Liu, 2012). Thirdly, teaching assessment was unscientific for its sparse surveillance of students' investment throughout the learning process. To address the existing drawbacks, Southeast University has been conducting a 3500-student oral English course reform among all registered full-time postgraduate students since 2013. This reformative curriculum schema constitutes three perspectives. Firstly, merge the major-related teaching content of simulated international conference (SIC) into oral English curriculum to elevate pragmatic language skills. Secondly, construct Collaborative Teaching Mode by employing foreign teachers to implement Sino-Foreign collaborative teaching and recruiting Chinese and foreign postgraduate students as teaching assistants to create after-class oral practice chances. And thirdly, complement summative evaluation by adding formative assessment to assess students' learning progress.

II. Theoretical Framework

A. Constructivist Perspective of Developing Linguistic Competence and Performance

The language competence for postgraduate students has been deemed to witness a great improvement in the past decades. However, their language performance has not been enhanced simultaneously, not to mention to serve their professional fields. One pivotal reformation at Southeast University was to supplement major-related teaching content into oral English curriculum by means of simulating international conferences (SIC). Comparing with previous course syllabus which focuses on English for General Purpose (EGP), the SIC enables students to learn English for Academic Purpose (EAP). In preparing for the simulated international conferences (SIC), they learn by doing not only to familiarize themselves with major-related vocabulary and discourse, but also learn to use a language correctly at situational and social context to express social and functional purpose (Hymes, 1972). In other words, it is not only the process of learning linguistic knowledge but also the culturally acceptable ways of interacting with others in an academic context with different situation and relationships by applying their knowledge of the language in actual performance. Regarding how to deliver a speech at an opening ceremony, panel discussion session, poster session, closing ceremony session, keynote spokesman session or to exchange ideas at coffee break etc., students firstly watch their sample video clips downloaded from the internet to obtain "tacit knowledge of language structure" which is "not conscious or available for spontaneous report" and which is appropriately availed at distinct academic settings (Hymes, 1972). Then they make "an explicit account of such knowledge, especially in relation to the innate structure on which it depends" by analyzing the distinct speeches' discourse structures and logic, the intact content, transitional techniques, supportive evidence, scientific research methods and clear conclusions etc. In-class learning offers an access to help learners create and understand infinite set of sentences to facilitate their language competence development. After a mastery of the linguistic competence in the ideal set of innate language structure, students work in team to organize a simulated international conference associated with their disciplines in which they can have chances of "the actual use of language in concrete situation" (Hymes, 1972). Apart from the speech content itself, students learn to evaluate the efficiency of PPT regarding the logic layout, the highlight of gist, the organic integration of distinct visual aids, the concise, accuracy, norms of written language on PPT, the appropriateness of transitional words or sentences, the decent body language and gestures. Also students are required to make a critical thinking of language in use concerning pronunciation, tone, fluency, volume and pitch etc. This learning by doing process enables students smoothly transfer from its initial linguistic competence learning to what constructivist theory asserts as "linguistic performance" – "the most explicitly understood as concerned with the process often termed encoding and decoding". Students are motivated by practical need (SIC) in alternative two processes to create an infinite set of sentences and then realize encoding and decoding process of language learning often termed by "linguistic competence and linguistic performance" (Hymes, 1972). Meanwhile, to cement linguistic performance, as Hymes (1972) puts it, is "revitalization" and "culmination", "carries to its perfection the desire to deal in practice only with what is internal to language, yet to find in that internality that in the theory of the widest or deepest human significance".

Constructivist Theory concerning the linguistic competence and linguistic performance contributes to the primary theoretical framework of teaching content reformation in Southeast University. And the primitive initiative is to alleviate "Dumb English" phenomenon which has been existing and perplexing tertiary education for decades. The teaching content of SIC can act as an agent to efficiently simulate the realistic scenarios by integrating the language competence into the language performance (Hu, 1998). It not only helps students drill four language competence in reading, speaking, listening, writing and interpretation but also evaluate students' performance in using English in their academic fields. Students are negotiated to play one role either as a chairman to preside over the conference, or a distinguished guest to commence the opening ceremony, or a keynote spokesman to present their research paper, or a participant to ask questions from the floor, or a conference participant to exchange ideas over the tea break or a VIP to disclose the conference at the closing ceremony etc. Students, are driven by the tasks to be engaged in pair work or group work to apply their linguistic competence into actual performance and acquire not only the grammatical knowledge of sentences, but also the competence of appropriateness as to when to speak, when not, and as to what to talk about with whom, when, where and in what manner etc. In Widdowson's words (1978), "we do not only learn how to compose and comprehend correct sentences as isolated linguistic units of random occurrence; but also how to use sentences appropriately to achieve communicative purposes." The simulated international conference (SIC) produces an optimal development zone to access students' hierarchic English proficiency to a more competitive level. Besides, it, by and large, creates a scaffold to upscale students' motivation to orally express their professional knowledge. The teacher is no longer an authority but a facilitator to scaffold the students' transfer from the existing knowledge (EGP) to the next higher-level one (EAP).

B. Collaborative Teaching Mode and Multiple Interactive Learning Model in Accordance with Students-oriented Pedagogical Concept

Another reform is to implement the "collaborative model of teaching" which is termed by Maroney and prevailing in European and American teaching contexts, but it is under preliminary stage in China (Geng, 2012). Robinson and Schaible (1995) defined it as "any academic experience in which two professors work together in designing and teaching a course that itself uses group learning techniques". They elaborate the necessaries of collaborative teaching by stating that "partnerships between teachers of English as a second language and general educators can differentiate instruction for students whose first language is not English" (Ann, Jacqueline, & Richard, 2009). Southeast University is following a model in which " two or more people sharing responsibility for educating some or all of the students in a classroom" (Villa, Thousand, & Nevin, 2008) to accomplish the goal of implementing pedagogical interactions that would more likely match the diverse learning style of their students (Conderman, & McCarty, 2003). Sino-Foreign educators collaboratively do "parallel teaching, serial teaching, co-teaching, and co-facilitation" (Eisen, 2000) to teach students of diverse English-level and different cross-culture awareness. Before the class begins, foreign and Chinese English educators hold routine teaching and research meetings in which foreign educators with advantages of content knowledge, advanced pedagogical notion and teaching methods exchange their ideas with Chinese educators with advantages in class management, and a better understanding of learners' diverse English level, cross-cultural barriers and university-stipulated course requirement etc. This joint academic preparation for teaching make it possible for the teaching resources to become interdependent in such collaborative relationships (Chiasson & Olsen, 2006; Dugan & Letterman, 2004; Kluth & Straut, 2003) when both co-teachers contribute their resources, information, or materials for the collaborative effort to be successful (notably, Dugan & Letterman 2004; Kluth & Straut, 2003). When class begins, Chinese teachers “do something to supplement or complement the instruction” provided by foreign educator (Ann el al., 2009). They either participate in the group discussion or help students overcome timidness or hint foreign teachers of potential barriers either of idiomatic expressions or cultural differences. After class, CTs and FTs are “partners who share responsibility for planning, teaching, and assessing the learning progress of students” (Ann el al., 2009). Their collaboration showed how the different expertise areas allowed professors to learn from each other as well as to improve the skills of their students (notably, Jankiewicz, 1999). Besides, both teachers co-teach to accomplish the goal of implementing pedagogical interactions that would more likely match the diverse learning styles of their students (Conderman & McCarty, 2003). To sum up, the reformed collaborative model of teaching aims to enable both teachers to share each others’ preponderant expertise, exchange the interdependent resources and offer more supports to students of diverse language proficiency.

Besides, the multiple interactive learning mode accords with learner-centered pedagogical notion. Vygotsky’s socio-cognitive theory stresses the social interaction and scaffolding in students’ development of skills in the developmental process of mind. Southeast University’s curriculum innovation practices Vygotsky’s socio-cognitive theory in three aspects. Teachers provide “instructional scaffolding” both in class and after class to control well-designed tasks which are beyond the learners’ capabilities for stimulating students to focus on those they can quickly master. Also the “reciprocal teaching involves and interactive dialogue between a teacher and small group of students”. Initially the teacher demonstrates the activities, followed by the teacher and students who takes turns being the teacher” (Schunk, 2000). The third application is the peer collaboration, an effective way for enhancing learning when the students work in group to accomplish the designated tasks. The peer support system can help the learner to internalize the external knowledge and improve his skill in critical thinking, and turn this knowledge and skill into his intelligence.

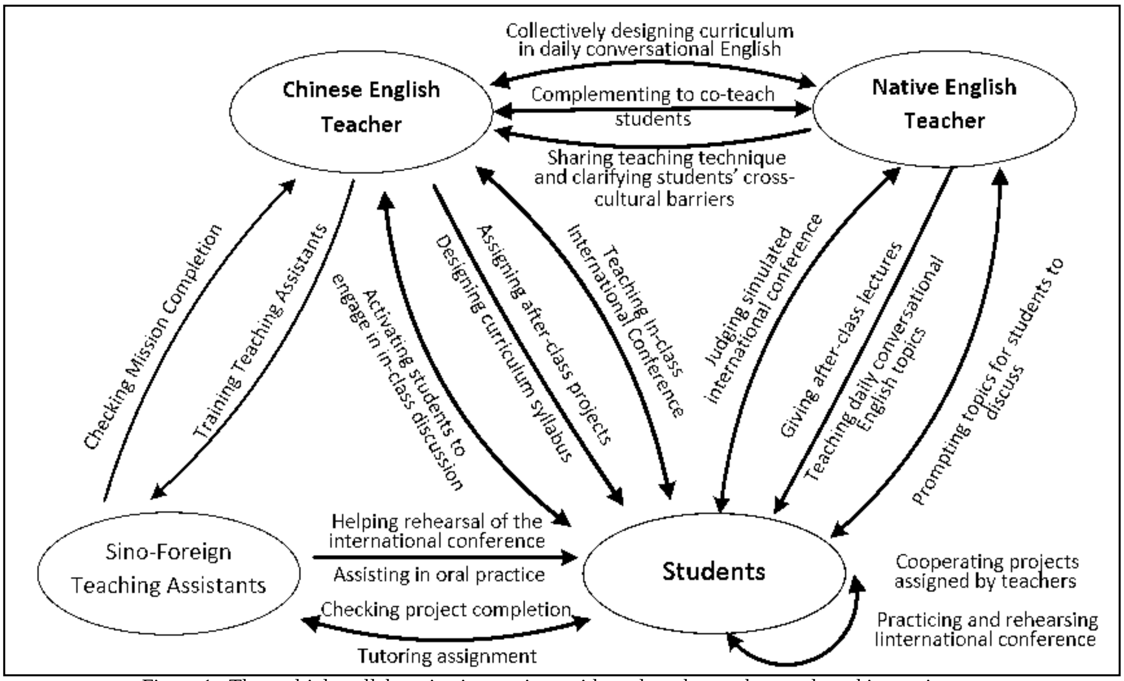

Figure 1. The multiple collaborative interactions with students by teachers and teaching assistants

Fig. 1 depicts how Chinese English teachers, foreign English teachers and Chinese and foreign teaching assistants are collaboratively engaged in multiple interactions with students. Both Chinese and foreign English teachers co-teach in class to enable learners to construct their own meaning by creating ideal language learning environment (Yu, 2009) The reciprocal teaching mode create more interactive opportunities among Chinese teachers & students, foreign teachers & students, students & students and students & teaching assistants. This mode follows the Vygotsky’s theory of the concept of instructional scaffolding in which teachers act as the facilitators instead of the knowledge transmitter. Students involved in interactive activities can either study together with teachers on the tasks that learners could not perform independently because of the difficult level (Schunk, 2000) or are facilitated by peers or teaching assistants to reach what Vygotsky called the proximal development (ZPD). By these multiple dimensional interaction, learners can move into the next layer by either working together with a more competent peer at a level that is just above a learner’s present English proficiency (Williams & Burden, 2000). Besides, the oral practice organized by teaching assistants after class can not only significantly solve the problem of insufficient in-class interactive chances which have been bothering oral English teaching for many years. It efficiently extends limited in-class learning hours into after-class infinite learning ones by peer communication and oral practice.

C. Formative and Summative Evaluation System

The third primary reform in Southeast University is to optimize the assessment system by adding the formative one to the summative one. Oral English assessment including at Southeast University has long been largely grounded on one at the final or two summative assessments both at the mid-term and final term. Such assessment system cannot offer a comprehensive and precise feedback to students' learning behavior, capacity development and performance. As Wu Xiulan (2008) put it, the summary assessment generally by standardized examination constructs only one and incomplete component of teaching assessment. It should be combined with the formative assessment which can underscore learning as its goal and keep track of learning process (Leung, & Mohan 2004; Wu, 2008). The formative assessment has aroused ever-increasing attention of educators and curriculum designers since 1990s (Weir, 1993; Bachman & Palmer, 1996; Harlen & James, 1997; Genesses & Upshur, 2001; Heritage, 2008; Zhang, Jia & Hu, 2013; Yang & Wen, 2014). It has become a pivotal complement to the summative assessment because it monitors students' progression and adapts instruction where necessary through evaluating their learning performance, emotions, attitudes, strategies, etc. As a systematic process, the formative assessment (Black, & Wiliam, 1998a, 2004b) continuously gathers evidence and provides feedback about learning while instruction is underway. The feedback identifies the gap between a student's current level of learning and a desired learning goal (Salder, 1989). The above-mentioned multiple interaction among students, foreign and Chinese teachers and teaching assistants can efficiently offer a dynamic mode between target learners and assessment patterns. Such interactive formative assessment includes scientific knowledge and also the students' feedback and requirements and the teachers' concern about students (Cowie & Bell, 1993). Therefore, the critical role of formative assessment can help teachers draw reasonable inferences of student levels from assessment evidence so as to modify instruction for the next instructional steps to close the gap.

Table 1 illustrates the reformed assessment system and its corresponding percentages in diverse aspects. Instead of one or two summative assessment in the previous teaching syllabus, the upgraded one adds the formative one into the assessment system. These factors all contribute to their term's grades concerning students' involvement in in-class or after-class oral English interaction, attendance in in-class discussion, contribution to simulated international conferences and involvement in the teaching assistants' after-class oral practice.

TABLE 1
FORMATIVE AND SUMMATIVE EVALUATION

	formative 50%	percentage	Summative 50%	percentage
Academic spoken English	Attendance Participation in class discussion	10%	Final Oral exam	20%
	After-school oral practice assisted by TA	10%		
	Progressive Tests	15%	Final paper exam	30%
	Simulated international conference	15%		

In order to evaluate the efficiency of the existing reform, a questionnaire survey among 670 students in 22 sampled classes of six major disciplines was conducted in December of 2015 after a two-year-pilot curriculum reform.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. *Research Questions*

The questionnaire survey aims to address a series of questions on the efficiency of the oral English curriculum reform. Specifically:

Can the teaching content with its focus on speaking and listening tailor the students' need?

Can the diverse interactive opportunities created by collaborative teaching and learning can develop students' interests in cultivating their competence to pragmatically use oral English?

Can the formative teaching assessment supplemented into summative assessment elevate students' passion to practice oral English and enhance their confidence to speak in the public?

B. *Methodology*

A questionnaire survey among 670 students in 22 separate classes was conducted in January of 2015 after a two-year-pilot curriculum reform. The targeted population is the first-year postgraduate students at Southeast University. 669 questionnaires were anonymously collected as the valid ones. It contained fifteen distinctive schools, including School of Information Science and Engineering, Economic Management Institute, Institute of Computer Science and Engineering, College of Law, College of Humanities, School of Mathematics, School of Physics which represented five major discipline fields at Southeast University, namely, Arts, Science, Engineering, Laws and Medicine. 586 out of all the subjects have passed CET-6 (a unified national English proficiency test in listening, reading, writing and translation), amounting to nearly 87.6% of all subjects. The rest have passed CET-4 (College English Band IV), nearly to 12.4%. Although the majority of students have passed CET-6, assumed to have reached the upper-level English proficiency, the students' oral English competence is disappointing and the majority of the students. The questionnaire encompasses four sections: students ranking their most required English skills (Section One), the general acceptability of the reformed course (Section Two), students' satisfaction of the newly established teaching mode and teaching content

(Section Three) and students' adaption to formative teaching assessment (Section Four).

IV. Data Analysis and Discussions

A. Needs and Motivation Surveys

In this section, students were required to rate English skills which they want to improve by descending order concerning listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. Each option was given by points and then calculate each option's mean value respectively, and finally ranked them based on the mean values. For instance, if a student opted to rank the English skills by the descending scale such as listening and speaking > professional documents reading > academic English writing > integrated four English skills > delivering a speech at an international conference, five points were used to rate listening and speaking skills, four points for professional documentary reading, three points for English academic writing, two points for integrated skills of English and one point for ability to participate the international conference. The SPSS19.0 was employed to process the data and the result was shown in Table 2.

TABLE 2
RATING DIFFERENT ENGLISH SKILLS WHICH STUDENTS ASSUMED TO REQUIRE IMPROVEMENT

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	S.D
Listening and Speaking skills	669	1	5	4.27	1.060
Academic writing skills	669	1	5	2.84	1.017
International conference presentation skills	669	1	5	1.68	0.937
Professional document reading	669	1	5	3.15	1.251
Data in valid number	669				

The mean values in Table 2 shows us that students rank listening & speaking as the priority skill to be considered, followed by professional document reading ability, integrated skills of English and academic English writing ability. Their requirement to obtain the skills to present themselves at the international conference ranks the last.

In contrast, in terms of their learning motivation, a SPSS19.0-generated bar chart (Fig. 2) explicitly depicts that the survey result is inconsistent with their above-mentioned need survey. More students learning English are driven by reading academic English journals for their future work. What they need to be urgently strengthened does not correspond to what they deem to be important. But the data also shows us that students attach the least importance to the simulated international conferences.

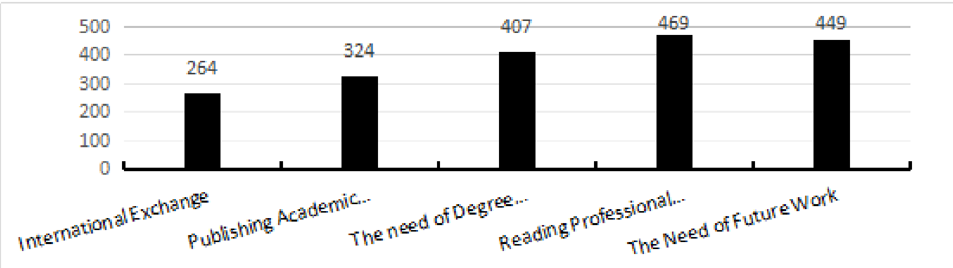

Figure 2. Students' learning motivation

To sum up, Table 2 and Fig. 2 suggest that the fundamental English listening & speaking were considered as the weakest skills from the students' perspective while the professional journal reading was deemed as the most useful skill for their career development. In contrast, the data has shown us a comparative lower demand for developing the ability to deliver their research paper or exchange their academic achievement at the international conference.

B. Students' Satisfaction of the Renovated Oral English Curriculum Compared with Any Other Previous Oral English Courses Which They Have Learned

TABLE 3:
SATISFACTION OF THE REFORMED COURSE COMPARED WITH PREVIOUS ONES

		frequency	Percentage	Efficient percentage
Data collected	A Much more beneficial	371	75.7	56.1
	B beneficial	207	15.3	31.3
	C not much beneficial	73	9.7	11.0
	D no beneficial	10	2.5	1.5
	sum	661	98.7	100.0
Invalid Data	System	9	1.3	
Total		670	100.0	

Table 3 tells us that the majority of the students (75.7%) considered the reformed course as being more beneficial for them in contrast with their previous English courses. Only 2.5% evaluated it to be unhelpful for them. In terms of efficiency and outcomes of learning, among 661 effective questionnaire, 56.2% of students claimed to have made remarkable progress and 31.3% percent, to some extent a progress. Altogether, 87.4% students applauded to the reform and admitted that they benefited from the current oral English.

Meanwhile, data collected in the questionnaire shows us that Teamwork Spirit and Confidence in speaking English in the public ranks the top two, obtaining 467 and 419 voters respectively among 670 voters. In contrast, 109 and 37 students voted for the improvement of their cross-cultural background and research capacity. In other words, the profit from accumulating multi-cultural knowledge and ability to do scientific research obtained relatively low votes,which were at 109 and 37 votes respectively.

C. Learning Modes and Teaching Content

"Collaborative learning is an instruction method in which students work in groups toward a common academic goal. Proponents of cooperative learning claim that the active exchange of ideas within small groups not only increases interest among the participants but also promotes critical thinking (Gokhale, 1996). Faculty who co-teach value the opportunity to be creative and report attaining a sense of fulfillment that they had not previously experienced in their professional roles (Bass, 2004; Vasquez-Montilla, Spillman, Elliott & McGonney, 2007). The statistics shows that the innovative learning modes and teaching content were acclaimed by students regarding the oral practice activities assisted by teaching assistants, in-class and after-class peer discussion and debating, the interaction with Chinese and foreign teachers at the foreign-Chinese teachers' collaborative teaching class and students' cooperative team projects to rehearse the simulated international conference. The teaching content contains two separated but compatible focuses, i.e. the daily communicative topics and the simulated international conference. The first teaching topics are co-taught by Chinese and foreign teachers in the same class while the latter is undertaken by Chinese English teachers by themselves. 670 questionnaires are included into statistics due to one questionnaire discarded for the incomplete answers. Data indicates that the oral practice assisted by TA was deemed as the most popular one by students, gaining 516 votes and amounting to 77.1%. Interaction with both Chinese and English teachers at co-taught classes by foreign and Chinese teachers is acclaimed by 60% voters, ranking the second popular teaching mode while practice on the simulated international conferences after class and attending the oral English classes only by Chinese teachers themselves gain respectively 154 votes (23%) and 147 votes (22%), which are less acceptable.

Table 4 depicts the students' preference of two different teaching contents, daily conversational English and international conference presentation. It represents 660 efficient questionnaires out of overall 670 ones processed by SPSS 19.0. The figure tells us that 552 students out of 660 show their fondness for the daily conversational English topics among whom 14.3% students express their significant interests toward it. 665 questionnaires are collected regarding the students' favor of the international conference. Comparing with 82.4% of students who prefer to learn daily conversational English, the students' interests in international conference is comparatively lower, amounting to 61.8% among whom only 8.1% of students express their great affection towards it.

TABLE 4:
THE FEEDBACK ON EFFICIENCY OF TEACHING CONTENTS

	Frequency	Percentage		Efficient percentage		Cumulative percentage	
		Daily Topic	International Conference	Daily Topic	International Conference	Daily Topic	International Conference
efficiency	Very like	96	54	14.3	8.1	14.5	8.1
	Like	456	360	68.1	53.7	83.6	62.3
	not very like	101	233	15.1	34.8	98.9	97.3
	dislike	7	18	1.0	2.7	100	100
	Sum/total	660	665	98.5	99.3		
Data missing	System	10	5	1.5	0.7		
Total		670	670	100	100		

D. Enhancement of Formative Assessment

666 questionnaires are counted into statistics because 4 questionnaires are excluded due to incomplete answers. The statistics demonstrates that 67.1% students reflect that formative assessment in terms of oral practice with teaching assistants is acceptable and can be accomplished within the designated time. 27.2% students find it challenging, but are still willing to try their best. In contrast, only 3.7% students dislike their interactive oral English practice with teaching assistants and 1.9% students consider the tasks too easy for them to arouse their enthusiasm. It is evident that 94.3% of the students clap their hands to teaching assistants for engaging them in after-class oral exercises. 36.1% students think this formative assessment is appropriate for them, and they can smoothly finish it. 45.5% of the students think the quantity of their extracurricular exercises with teaching assistants is a little heavy although they can manage them. 16.4% students think the amount is too heavy to finish, while only 1.8% students think it easy enough. Thus, totally 83.6% students think after-class interaction in peer and with teaching assistants are moderate to be manipulated by them.

V. Research Results and Findings

The reform of combining daily conversational English with simulated international conference as two major teaching content have received popularity from students although they have not been aware of its association with their future professional development. The majority consider the reformed oral English course as being more useful comparing with any other English courses they have learned before. Thus, the oral English curriculum reform has proven to be efficient and has met the initial anticipation of tailoring the students' needs to cultivate their practical demand in their future career development. In summary, the data has confirmed us that the reform has been oriented to the right direction in taking listening and speaking at academic scenarios as the teaching focus.

A. Multiple Interactions Upgrade Confidence in Spoken English

Meanwhile in-class and after-class oral practice assignment compels each teammate to collaborate with their peers on playing virtual roles at simulated international conferences by either chairing a conference, delivering keynote speech or asking questions at the conference etc. This interaction among peers can extremely help them summon up courage to articulate explicitly and spontaneously in English. It can significantly enlarge oral practice chances and relieve the complaints from English teachers and students about their shortage of time for practicing oral English. This improvement, to some extent, can efficiently relieve dumb English phenomena that have perplexed English teaching education for decades.

B. Task-driven Team Work Projects Boosted Teamwork Spirit

It is also satisfactory to find that the current course has boosted their teamwork spirit. The new English curriculum arrange students to do uncountable after-class teamwork projects such as routine oral practice by teaching assistants and rehearse a simulated international conference by teams with diverse themes negotiated among teammates. These task-driven assignment provide students plentiful time to exchange ideas and work collaboratively. They learn to negotiate, organize and do their assigned work. Their teamwork spirits have been cultivated and in return students gradually learn how to do the teamwork efficiently.

C. Collaborative Teaching Mode Can Boost Both Chinese and Foreign English Teachers to Exchange Preponderant Expertise

This new collaborative teaching mode by which Chinese and foreign teachers has been highly appraised and has been proven equally feasible in Chinese higher learning contexts. Both Chinese and Foreign teachers can cooperate in class efficiently to avail themselves of their merits to be fully developed. This collaborative teaching can offer students timely feedback in class, reduce students' nervousness to face native foreign teachers, reduce the transition of becoming acquainted with foreign teachers, lessen foreign teachers' energy to invest on knowing students' English level, motivation, weaknesses and unload foreign teachers' pressure of managing classroom and students. And thus it can upgrade the classroom efficiency and maximize the communicative interactions among teachers and students.

However, the survey also has some implications for further implementation of oral English curriculum reform. First of all, students' burden from other subjects especially from their major-related courses curbs their investment in oral practice. Students have complained of the frequent and over-crowded exams during their first academic term which incur insufficient devotion to oral English practice. Students at Southeast University who mostly major in engineering are overwhelmingly occupied by nearly 10 major-relevant courses and massive lab projects assigned by their supervisors every week. They might be eager to contribute more time to oral English practice but discouraged by other professional courses. Besides, the unawareness of the significance of the simulated international conference largely results from their misconception of its uselessness. As the first-year post-graduate student, they cannot associate what they learn with what they need to master for their future career development. They have not been aware of the point that SIC acts as the agent which creates a macro language environment to correlate language skills and communication (Hu, 1998). Besides, post-graduate students, unlike Ph.D candidates, are not compulsory to attend international conferences as prerequisites of graduation. Besides, comparing with Ph.d candidates, they have less chances to be engaged into the international exchange programs. Therefore, their anticipation to learn how to deliver a speech at an academic context is not strongly driven. Apart from these two implications, the data (109 out of 666) reveals that students don't believe that their cross-cultural awareness has been enhanced. This result doesn't correspond to our expectation. We assume that the teaching content has not been deliberately designed to explore the inner part of cross culture. Culture, as Cutler (2005) puts, is like an onion. The outer skin contains subjective elements such as tangible elements such as behavior, lifestyle and workstyle etc. The inner part is the value system which consists of ways of thinking, value, human identity etc. Apparently, the in-class English learning focus more on the basic truth of the culture instead of deeper value or thinking way.

VI. Conclusion

To sum up, the analysis of data suggests that English learning had better extend one academic year to two academic years so that students would have more chances to be exposed to oral English learning environment. Their investment on English would not conflict with their time on their majors. Besides, the teaching content of the simulated international conference can be adjusted to the second academic term in which students usually do not have any major courses and thus they can have more time to concentrate on language learning. Secondly, students should be explicitly taught the significance of the simulated international conference as a platform for them to be prepared for voicing their opinions in their major-related academic contexts and meeting ever-increasing demand for cross-cultural involvement in their professional fields. Once they are offered with these tangible blueprints, they might be equipped with more passion and enthusiasm to invest on oral English learning. Thirdly, when in co-taught English class, the Chinese English teachers should stimulate the native English teachers to touch the core culture and explicitly underscore the distinctive way of thinking and communicating in the western cultures. The collaborative teaching mode can be implemented more efficiently and yield fruitful results.

After one-term Spoken English Reform at Southeast University, a 670-student questionnaire survey was analyzed to evaluate the satisfaction of spoken English teaching reform project among 22 classes involving five primary disciplines of liberal arts, engineering, medicine, law and humanities in 15 schools. The objectives are to diagnose the appropriateness of the content of teaching, the teaching means & modes and teaching achievement assessment. The data indicates that the current teaching reform has exerted positive impact on improving speaking English ability. It also indicates that the spoken English course reform enables them to build up their confidence, teamwork spirit and their interests in practicing oral English. Meanwhile, an unanticipated lower rate of students' recognition of the simulated international conference suggests a remodeling of students' better understanding of the significance of its role in integrating four comprehensive English abilities into assessing their pragmatic ability in their academia.

To sum up, the Oral English Course reform concerning collaborative teaching mode, multiple interactive learning model and the combination of formative and cumulative assessment have been proven to be satisfactory. 91% of students evaluate teaching mode and teaching curriculum to enhance their oral communication skills and be more associated with future profession. 82.4% of students applaud the Sino-foreign teachers' co-teaching modes and 83.6% favor the after-class oral practice tutored by teaching assistants. This pilot oral English reform has provided us with valuable experience for the upcoming academic writing course reform. We also need more extra-curriculum activities such as English corners, seminars, workshops for boost their after-class interests so that students can easily pursue a friendly environment and more chances for oral English practice.

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Facilitating Intercultural Study through Novel Reading —The Application of Reading Task Journals

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***Abstract*—As English becomes the global lingua franca, the correlation between the English language and a particular culture is problematic (Baker, 2012). Thus, EFL learners are expected to cultivate their intercultural competence while improving their linguistic competence. There is a growing interest in introducing novel reading to intercultural communication courses, because EFL learners can be exposed to more cultural varieties and understand the culture concepts better by drawing on examples from the novel. However, many EFL learners feel overwhelmed to read due to the reading task difficulty and the lack of guidance about intercultural study. This paper aimed to investigate the effectiveness of applying reading task journals to facilitate students' intercultural study through novel reading. The research findings indicate that the difficulty of novel reading lies in the cultural aspect and the reading task journals successfully help EFL learners comprehend the novel, raise the awareness of the reading process, improve language skills, undertake intercultural study and enhance intercultural communicative competence in the end.**

***Index Terms*—intercultural communication, novel reading, reading task journals, EFL learners, English as the lingua franca**

I. Introduction

A. English as the Global Lingua Franca

Given the fact that English is used to a vast extent on a global scale, it has consolidated its position as the global lingua franca for people of different cultures to communicate with each other. Crystal (2008) estimates that there are two billion English users in the world and many of them are non-native speakers. It is noteworthy that English has numerous varieties and it is not owned by one culture or community. It is problematic to associate English only with the traditional inner circle English-speaking countries like the Great Britain and the United States. Baker (2012) also points out that it is problematic to correlate the English language and a particular culture and nation. Alptekin (2002) asserts that the conventional model of communicative competence has the problem of sticking to the native speaker norms in the target culture, and it will become invalid when it comes to using English in cross-cultural settings. For example, the mastery of American English is not sufficient to ensure an international student to have successful communication with every single person in the United States because some people may not speak American English or they do not express themselves in the American way. The English is now commonly used as "a contact language between interlocutors with different languacultures" (Baker, 2012, p. 63). Therefore, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners are expected to cultivate their intercultural competence while improving their linguistic competence.

B. English Language Teaching and Intercultural Communicative Competence

Speaking of English Language Teaching (ELT), the traditional view puts the emphasis on the linguistic competence and aims to train EFL learners to master the phonology, lexis and syntax. However, the ultimate goal of language learning should be to use it for communication. Thus, ELT scholars and practitioners shift the emphasis to the ability to make use of linguistic resources to communicate successfully in the diverse sociocultural settings. It is very important to have a good understanding of the sociocultural setting but the task is challenging because the communication situation is in constant change. Only understanding one particular native-speaker community's sociocultural norms is not sufficient for global uses of English and it is necessary to have an extensive understanding of various cultural contexts (Baker, 2012). Knowing more cultures certainly helps intercultural communication, but culture knowledge learning is not equal to cultivating intercultural communication competence. Baker (2012) recognizes "a tension between established fixed forms of communicative practice and the more situated dynamic communicative practice of an L2" (p. 64), which indicates the significance of intercultural communicative competence, the ability to adopt appropriate communicative strategies based on the sociocultural settings.

In light of English as the global lingua franca, EFL learners are expected to be competent in the English language and intercultural communicative competence. As most learners study English in the classroom, teachers play an important role in supporting them to use English as an international language in the cross-cultural setting. Alptekin (2002) claims that "[a] new pedagogic model is urgently needed to accommodate the case of English as a means of international and intercultural communication" (p. 63).

II. Research Background

A. Course Design

In order to improve students' English level, a Chinese key comprehensive university implements the English Enhanced Program, with five mission goals of proficiency, autonomy, sustainability, intercultural competence and critical thinking. When students are enrolled into the university, they have to take a placement test and will be put into a certain level course based on their performance. There are six levels ranging from Foundation to Level 5. Most freshmen begin with Level 1 or Level 2. All the courses are integrated skills courses and students receive lots of language inputs and have many practice opportunities because of the wide use of the communicative language teaching method.

Level 3 is a content-based integrated skills course focusing on intercultural communication and discussion skills. It has three major components to foster students' intercultural communicative competence. Firstly, it introduces key culture concepts to students to familiarize themselves with different cultural dimensions, such as individualism vs. collectivism, loose cultures vs. tight cultures, stereotypes, ethnocentrism, hierarchy, culture shock, etc. At this stage, students are equipped with sufficient culture knowledge. They are able to describe the general characteristics of a certain culture and differentiate various cultures. Secondly, Level 3 course provides many critical incidence exercises for students to have imaginative intercultural experiences. The critical incidence is about someone who has an intercultural encounter but gets stuck in that situation and has no idea why it happens and how to solve the problem. Students are encouraged to come up with a number of interpretations and never rush to conclusion. By interpreting the critical incidence from different perspectives, such as considering personal reasons, situational reasons and cultural reasons, students gradually form the habit of thinking through an intercultural situation and develop the critical thinking skills. Thirdly, Level 3 course makes every effort to use authentic materials to enrich students' learning experiences. They are required to watch an American TV series and read a novel for further discussion. While the American TV series stimulates the comparison between American and Chinese cultures, the selected novel aims to provide a third culture to enrich cultural diversity. With the introduction of various cultures, students will have a "more dynamic and heterogeneous perspective on culture and reject as simplistic the equation of a language, culture, and national identity" (Baker, 2009, p. 570).

B. Novel Reading and Intercultural Communicative Competence

Reading is a good way to enhance literacy and acquire knowledge. Students are actively engaged in the reading task and it requires "attaining a deep understanding of what is read, remembering important information, linking newly learned information to existing schemata, knowing when and where to use that information, using it appropriately in varied contexts in and out of school, and communicating effectively with others" (Graves, Juel & Geaves, 2000, p. 24). There is no doubt that reading a novel can expose students to a large amount of language inputs and push them to improve their reading comprehension. Students not only benefit from novel reading linguistically, but also benefit culturally. Students will understand the culture concepts learned in Level 3 better by drawing on examples from the novel. Students will go beyond the sociocultural norms and settings in the traditional native-speaker communities by getting to know a non-English speaking country's culture. Moreover, novels distinguish themselves from textbooks in terms of the authentic language. Authentic literary texts are loaded with real language, providing EFL learners with the opportunity to get in touch with the people, traditions, norms, taboos and other distinctive cultural products of a certain culture, which helps learners to know about and appreciate the glamor that culture (Byram, 1997).

Gómez R. (2012) claims that "intercultural communicative competence should be understood as the ability to identify cultural issues that are necessarily expressed through real language in use" (p. 51), because language is the carrier of culture. Therefore, novel reading can serve as a perfect means to foster students' intercultural study in the sense that a novel has authentic language in use and the cultural elements are naturally embedded into the language.

C. Problems in Actual Teaching Practice

The novel selected for Level 3 is *Veil of Roses* by Laura Fitzgerald, which talks about an Iranian girl who goes to the United States to study English with the hope of finding her Mr. Right before the visa expires. It is a typical romantic story with a happy ending, and the most valuable part is the cultural conflicts between the Iranian girl and her relatives in America, her potential husbands, her classmates and other characters. However, a lot of students feel overwhelmed to read this 320-page book because they think it is very long and they do not have a clear reading purpose expect for reading to know the unfolding plot. That is to say, students are less motivated to read because of the reading task difficulty and the lack of guidance about intercultural study while reading a novel. In order to solve the problem, an action research was conducted, which introduced the reading task journal assignment to help students ease their reading difficulty and have a clear guidance of intercultural study.

III. Research Method

A. Research Questions

1. What factors hinder students' novel reading to enhance their intercultural communicative competence?
2. How effective is it to apply reading task journals to facilitate students' intercultural study through novel reading?

B. Participants and Settings

Participants were 69 undergraduate students of different majors who took the integrated skills course Level 3 at a Chinese key comprehensive university. Among the 69 students, 58 were freshmen and 11 were sophomores; 21 of them were males while 48 were females. They had two sessions of 100-minute English instruction every week and the course lasted for sixteen weeks.

C. Reading Task Journals

In order to address the problem that students feel overwhelmed to read the selected novel, reading task journals were introduced to help them become independent and reflective learners. Because the main purpose of reading a novel is to facilitate the intercultural study, the reading task journal should not disrupt the pleasure of reading, and it should not involve too much work for the students. There were five components in a reading task journal to encourage students' thoughts about the reading content, reflection on the reading process, connection to intercultural communication and vocabulary learning. Here is the detailed description of the journal requirements:

Date: _____________

Chapters: __________

1. Memorable Scene (Describe which scene strikes you most. You can write with words or draw with a comic strip.)
2. Cultural Observation (What cultural difference you notice or what scene that can be an example of a culture concept learned in Level 3.)
3. Opinion (Give your opinion about the character or the plot.)
4. Reflection (How is your reading going? Easy, OK, or Difficult, and why?)
5. Vocabulary (What new words do you want to remember?)

Before the mid-term exam, students were not required to keep reading task journals. However, when the reading problem was identified, the pedagogical intervention was implemented and the students were asked to keep a reading task journal when they finished reading around five chapters. Altogether they kept five journals.

D. Data Collection and Instruments

Questionnaire 1 was used before the pedagogical intervention. It had 5 items to detect students' reading performance, and their reflection on reading and intercultural communication.

Questionnaire 2 was distributed after the pedagogical intervention. It had 19 items formulated on a 6-point Likert scale and 5 other items to investigate students' attitudes toward reading and intercultural communication, and attitudes toward the implementation of reading task journals.

In the exam papers, there was a part about applying culture concepts to analyze culture issues in the novel. One sample exam question was: "Find one element of American culture from *Veil of Roses* that you think might be a stereotype about Americans. Explain why you think this stereotype is problematic for readers who are learning about American culture." Students' mid-term exam and final exam scores in that part were collected to assess improvement in the ability of analyzing the novel from an intercultural communicative perspective.

All the quantitative data were processed and analyzed by SPSS 16.0. The data from the questionnaire Likert scale were shown by descriptive statistics. The mid-term and final exam scores were compared by dependent samples *t*-test. Other qualitative data were processed by textual analysis.

See appendices A and B for the full Questionnaire 1 and Questionnaire 2 respectively.

E. Research Procedures

Step 1: Before the mid-term exam, students received no pedagogical intervention.

Step 2: Before the pedagogical intervention, students finished Questionnaire 1.

Step 3: Students finished five reading task journals in the second half of the semester.

Step 4: After the pedagogical intervention, students finished Questionnaire 2. Mid-term exam and final exam scores were collected.

Step 5: Data analysis of two questionnaires and two exam scores.

IV. Findings and Discussion

A. Findings from Questionnaire 1

There were 66 successfully collected questionnaires. Before the mid-term exam, students were expected to finish 19 chapters of the novel. However, according to Table 1, up to 87.9% (58 out of 66) students didn't finish the reading assignment.

TABLE 1:
THE NUMBER OF FINISHED CHAPTERS

	Frequency	Percent
Less than 5 chapters	10	15.2%
5-10 chapters	11	16.7%
10-15 chapters	24	36.4%
16-19 chapters	13	19.7%
More than 19 chapters	8	12.1%
Total	66	100%

When the students reflected on the reading experience, more than half students (56.1%) had neutral attitudes toward the novel although 31.4% admitted that they resisted reading the book (see Table 2). However, Table 3 shows some reassuring data that up to 87.9% (58 out of 66) students believed that reading the novel was helpful for intercultural communication. They thought that it was worthwhile to read the novel to strengthen their intercultural communication skills. Such positive feedback suggested that if appropriate pedagogical intervention was in place, students would become motivated to read and benefit from the novel.

TABLE 2:
STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARD THE NOVEL

	Frequency	Percent
Hate it	7	10.6%
Dislike it	17	25.8%
OK	37	56.1%
Like it	5	7.6%
Love it	0	0%
Total	66	100%

TABLE 3:
STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARD THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NOVEL READING AND INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

	Frequency	Percent
Extremely helpful	4	6.1%
Helpful sometimes	54	81.8%
Not helpful at all	3	4.5%
Not sure whether it is helpful or not	5	7.6%
Total	66	100%

B. Findings from Questionnaire 2

In total, there were 65 successfully collected questionnaires.

In Section 1 of this questionnaire, students reported why they found it difficult to read the novel. Table 4 reveals that the difficulty in novel reading mainly lied in culture rather than the language itself.

TABLE 4:
DIFFICULTY IN NOVEL READING

Difficulty Factor	Disagree	Agree
Vocabulary	61.5%	38.5%
Grammar	72.3%	27.7%
Reading skills	73.8%	26.2%
Cultural Background	45.3%	54.7%

Section 2 of this questionnaire tried to investigate students' reading habits and attitudes toward reading task journals. Table 5 shows that although more than 80% students believed that reading was beneficial to intercultural communication study, only half of them were able to consciously undertake the intercultural communication study while reading. Therefore, it was necessary to ask students to keep reading task journals to become independent and reflective readers. Table 6 illustrates that the majority of students had favorable attitudes toward reading task journals. 84.6% of them (55 out of 65) considered the journal assignment to be OK and even liked it. Students believed that reading task journals brought about lots of benefits in terms of the comprehension of the novel, the awareness of the reading process and the intercultural study. Keeping reading task journals gave students a means to sustain their reading, to reflect on their reading process, to improve the reading skills, to think about the cultural issues and have a holistic reading experience. Students gave lots of positive feedback like "It is totally OK and it made me think more about the cultural difference." "It helps me understand the novel. And it provides a clearer goal to make me read the book. So I can pick up the key points." "It is not hard to finish, and it can help me focus on the cultural dimension." While reading task journals did not impose much burden on students, they helped them to enhance the linguistic competence and intercultural communicative competence.

TABLE 5:
STUDENTS' READING BELIEFS AND HABITS

Statement	Disagree	Agree
Reading an English novel is an intercultural communication process.	18.5%	81.5%
Reading an English novel is helpful for intercultural communication study.	15.4%	84.6%
I pay attention to the culture differences while reading.	49.2%	50.8%
I pay attention to the cultural dimensions.	53.8%	46.2%

TABLE 6:
STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS READING TASK JOURNALS
A.

	Frequency	Percent
Hate it	1	1.5%
Dislike it	9	13.8%
OK	44	67.7%
Like it	9	13.9%
Love it	2	3.1%
Total	65	100%

B.

Category	Effectiveness	Disagree	Agree
Comprehension of the Novel	Understand the content of the book	33.8%	66.2%
	Stimulate thinking about the plot and characters	33.8%	66.2%
Intercultural Study	Become sensitive to cultural differences	24.6%	75.4%
	Become sensitive to cultural dimensions	27.7%	72.3%
	Understand the culture concepts learned in the course	27.7%	72.3%
Awareness of the Reading Process	Be aware of the reading process	32.8%	67.2%
	Identify the reading problems	35.4%	64.6%
Linguistic Competence	Enlarge the vocabulary	23.4%	76.6%
	Helpful for reading	28.1%	71.9%
Intercultural Communicative Competence	Helpful for intercultural communication study	21.5%	78.5%

Reading task journals yielded favorable outcomes not only in students' positive learning beliefs but also in their exam scores. Table 7 shows that the mean score of the final exam (M =7.83) was higher than that of the mid-term exam (M = 5.86). As for the samples correlations, because sig. < .05, the mid-term and final exam scores were closely correlated (see Table 7-b). Concerning the dependent samples *t*-test of both mean scores, final exam score was significantly higher (M = 7.83, SE = 0.345) than the mid-term exam score (M = 5.86, SE = 0.462). This difference was significant because *t* (68) = -4.28, *p* < .05.

TABLE 7:
MID-TERM AND FINAL EXAM SCORES
A. PAIRED SAMPLES STATISTICS

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Mid-term	5.86	69	3.836	.462
Final	7.83	69	2.863	.345

B. PAIRED SAMPLES CORRELATIONS

	N	Correlation	Sig.
Mid-term & Final	69	.377	.001

C. PAIRED SAMPLES TEST

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
				Lower	Upper			
Pair 1: Mid-term & Final	-1.971	3.824	.460	-2.890	-1.052	-4.281	68	.000

V. CONCLUSION

As English becomes the lingua franca, people from different cultures use English to communicate more frequently. Thus, while improving their linguistic competence, EFL learners are expected to cultivate their intercultural competence. Novel reading is conducive to extend EFL learners' intercultural study because they can understand the culture concepts better by drawing on authentic examples from the novel. However, a lot of EFL learners feel intimidated to read a novel due to the reading task's difficulty level and the lack of guidance about intercultural study through extensive reading.

The results of this research successfully identify the factors which hinder students' novel reading. The reading task difficulty mainly lies in the cultural aspect instead of language aspect. There are a number of cultural factors, such as lack of the target culture background knowledge and unawareness of the cultural differences. While students tend to believe that reading an English novel helps cultivate intercultural communicative competence, they pay little attention to the cultural differences and dimensions in reading, so it is of great necessity to include reading task journals to address this problem. Students generally find reading task journals acceptable or favorable and the journals are effective to help students comprehend the novel, raise the awareness of the reading process, improve language skills, undertake intercultural study and enhance intercultural communicative competence in the end. Students will succeed in the exams due to their improved intercultural communicative competence.

The major limitation of this research was that the scope was not wide enough, and only 69 students at the same university were investigated. The research findings based on the Chinese context may not be generalized for all EFL learners in various settings. More qualitative data are needed for follow-up research. Although 84.6% students had positive feedback on the reading task journals, only 16.9% liked or loved this assignment. It will be interesting to probe into the reasons why only a small number of them genuinely loved the reading task journals.

Anyway, the research findings indicate that reading task journals successfully lead EFL learners to a fruitful experience in intercultural communication skills building through novel reading.

APPENDIX A. QUESTIONNAIRE 1

Survey on the Reading of *Veil of Roses*

• This survey aims to investigate students' reading of *Veil of Roses* in the context of intercultural communication.

• It is an anonymous survey that will NOT affect your grade. Please be honest in your answers.

1. There are 35 chapters in this book. So far, you are expected to have finished 19 of them. How much of the book *Veil of Roses* did you read?

A. less than 5 chapters
B. 5-10 chapters
C. 10-15 chapters
D. 16-19 chapters
E. more than 19 chapters

2. What do you think of this book?

A. I hate it
B. I dislike it
C. It is ok
D. I like it
E. I love it

3. Please briefly explain why you feel this way (Question #2) about *Veil of Roses*.

4. What do you think of undertaking intercultural study from reading *Veil of Roses* (i.e. some cultural differences and some scenes in the book help you better understand the culture concepts, such as individualism/collectivism, stereotypes, culture shock, loose/tight cultures, violated expectations, etc.)?

A. It is extremely helpful and I learn a lot
B. It is helpful sometimes
C. It is not helpful at all
D. I am not sure whether it is helpful or not

5. Please briefly explain why you think so (Question #4) about undertaking intercultural study from reading *Veil of Roses*.

____

APPENDIX B. QUESTIONNAIRE 2

Survey on Reading Task Journals and Intercultural Study through Novel Reading

• This survey aims to investigate students' attitudes toward incorporating reading task journals into intercultural study through novel reading (e.g. *Veil of Roses*).

• It is an anonymous survey that will NOT affect your grade. Please be honest in your answers.

Basic Information:

1. Gender: ☐Male ☐Female

2. Year of study: ☐Freshman ☐Sophomore ☐Junior ☐Senior

3. College: ☐ College of Liberal Arts ☐School of Art and Design
☐ Business School ☐ College of Engineering ☐College of Science
☐ Law School ☐ School of Journalism and Communication

4. Experience abroad
☐no experience abroad ☐travel ☐study ☐work ☐conference ☐others, please specify:
Where: ___________
Duration: ☐less than a month ☐1 to 6 months ☐6 months to a year ☐more than a year

PART 1

Scale: Please finish the following items by ticking the number.

1=Completely disagree 2=Strongly disagree 3=Slightly disagree

4=Slightly agree 5=Strongly agree 6=Completely agree

On Reading and Intercultural Communication							
	Item	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	I find it hard to understand an English novel because I do not have enough vocabulary.						
2	I find it hard to understand an English novel due to the difficult grammar.						
3	I find it hard to understand an English novel because I do not have good reading skills.						
4	I find it hard to understand an English novel because I do not know the cultural background of the book.						
5	I think reading an English novel is an intercultural communication process.						
6	Reading an English novel is helpful for intercultural communication study.						
7	When I read an English novel, I always pay attention to the cultural differences in the book.						
8	When I read an English novel, I always pay attention to the cultural dimensions (e.g. individualism/collectivism; power distance; etc.) in the book.						
On Reading Task Journals							
	Item	1	2	3	4	5	6
9	Reading task journals help me understand the content of the book.						
10	Reading task journals stimulate my thinking about the characters and the plot.						
11	Reading task journals make me sensitive to cultural differences.						
12	Reading task journals make me sensitive to cultural dimensions (e.g. individualism & collectivism; power distance; etc.).						
13	Reading task journals help me understand the culture concepts learned in Level 3 better.						
14	Reading task journals make me aware of my reading process.						
15	Reading task journals encourage me to identify my reading problems.						
16	Reading task journals help me enlarge my vocabulary.						
17	Reading task journals are burdensome for me.						
18	Reading task journals are helpful for my reading.						
19	Reading task journals are helpful for my intercultural communication study.						

PART 2

1. What do you think of reading task journals (compared with group-discussion and essay-writing on the book)?
   A. I hate it B. I dislike it C. It is ok D. I like it E. I love it
2. Please briefly explain why you feel this way (Question #1) about reading task journals.
   ____
3. Which part of reading task journals do you like best?
   ☐memorable scene ☐cultural observation ☐opinion ☐reflection ☐vocabulary
4. Which part of reading task journals do you dislike most?
   ☐memorable scene ☐cultural observation ☐opinion ☐reflection ☐vocabulary
5. In the part of memorable scene, do you prefer to write with words or draw with comic strips? Why?
   ☐write with words ☐draw with comic strips
   Reason: ____

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Different Dialects Cause Solidarity or Solitude

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***Abstract*—This paper attempts to investigate whether dialects cause solidarity or solitude in a society. In this study, in order to understand whether dialect cause solidarity or solitude, 100 people from different places such as company, school, and office participated in this study. These people speak with different dialects such as Shirazi, Bushehri, Lori, Kordi, Azeri, and Bakhtiari. These dialects were surveyed in different places such as company, office and school where people with different dialects contact with each other. The outcome shows that about 78% of people with different dialects have solidarity and only 22% have solitude in different situations. The results of this study shows that when people of different dialects, interact with each other, they try to increase their solidarity and produce friendship between themselves. It means diversity of dialects cause solidarity between people in different places.**

***Index Terms*—definition of dialect, solidarity, solitude, types of a dialect, different dialects in Iran**

I. Introduction

There are many languages in the world and every language contains many dialects. Also it is possible to have many dialects in a small city. Dialect is a variety of a language that spoken by a special group of people in a particular position. Dialect is variety in a regional variety of a language, with differences in vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. On the other hand, it is a language spoken by a special class or profession or by people in different states. So, different people in different geographical place and with different social class have different dialects. In Iran with a rich culture and ancient civilization, there are different sweet dialects in most part of country. When every individual has a special way of speaking, it refers to idiolect of person.

When we open our mouth for speaking we must choose a particular language, dialect, style, register, or variety (Wardhaugh, 1989), and by speaking particular dialect or language, “we reveal who we are, where we grow up, our gender, our station in life,_ our age, and the group we want to belong to” (Coulmas,_2005, p. 173). Every day in different places of society, people with different dialects are meet each other. So people with diversity of dialects are college, co-worker, classmate, and neighbor. This dialects may case solidarity or solitude among people.

According to Gangopadhyay (1997) the **solitude** was a state of mind, independent of environment. In many cases, high **Solidarity** ratings have often been associated with guises using judges’ **in-group language**, whereas low ones—the focus of attention in this study—correspond to the language of **an out-group**. Status ratings, by contrast, have been associated with the relative socioeconomic position of the speakers of each language whatever the judges’ group affiliation may be (e.g., Lambert 1967).

Therefore solitude means social isolation and lives alone without negation with others. But solidarity refers to increase communication with other people.

So this study, at first gives brief history about some dialects in Iran and then investigates whether dialect causes solidarity or solitude in a society.

II. Literature of Review

A. Definition of Dialect

A ***dialect*** is defined by linguists as a variety of a language that is distinguished from other varieties of the same language by its pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, discourse conventions, and other linguistic features.

Although the dialects spoken by different communities are mutually intelligible (Rickford & Rickford, 1995)—they tend to differ in phonetics and phonology but not in semantics (Halliday, 1978)—in the absence of opportunities for clarification, body language, and certain physical clues, tests limit the possibilities for understanding test items. Dialects are rule-governed systems, with systematic deviations from other dialects of the same language (Crystal, 1997). In their study of language convergence and divergence, Auer, Hinskens and Kerswill (2005)describe dialect as:'a language variety which is used in a geographically limited part of a language area… a dialect typically displays structural peculiarities in several language components. 'Wardaugh (2008) refers to both 'a local variety' of a language and 'various types of informal or lower-class speech'.

Haugen (1966,p.922-3) reports that some of the earliest uses of the term *dialect* were in reference to the language varieties found in writings from Ancient Greece. With each dialect having a specific function in Greek culture (e.g. literature, drama and tragedy, choral lyrics, poetry, historical texts and so on) they were, as early as the 16th century, considered to be closely related norms for communication. In other words, dialect refers to features of grammar, phonology as well as vocabulary.

B. Types of Dialects

-Regional Dialects

Regional variation in the way a language is spoken is likely to provide one of the easiest ways of observing variety in language. As you travel throughout a wide geographical area in which a language is spoken, and particularly if that language has been spoken in that area for many hundreds of years, you are almost certain to notice differences in pronunciation, in the choices and forms of words, and in syntax. There may even be very distinctive local colorings in the language which you notice as you move from one location to another. Such distinctive varieties are usually called **regional dialects** of the language (wardhaugh and Fuller2015).Therefore, regional dialects refers to use of different dialects in villages, cities, and regions by different groups of people. So people in different regional use different dialects to express their ideas.

-Dialect geography

When a language is recognized as being spoken in different varieties, the issue becomes one of deciding how many varieties and how to classify each variety. **Dialect geography** is the term used to describe attempts made to map the distributions of various linguistic features so as to show their geographical provenance. Sometimes maps are drawn to show actual boundaries around such variables, boundaries called **isoglosses**, so as to distinguish an area in which a certain feature is found from areas in which it is absent. When several such isoglosses coincide, the result is sometimes called a **dialect boundary**. (wardhaugh and Fuller2015).So **isoglosses is** an imaginary line that separates two areas in the map and a bundle of isoglosses called a **dialect boundary**.

-Social Dialects

The term dialect can refer to differences in speech associated with various social groups .**Social group** or **social class** refers to the various factors that can be used to determine social position, for example, occupation, place of residence, education, income, racial or ethnic category, cultural background, religion, and so on. Such factors has related directly to how people speak or the way a person speak. According to wardhaugh and Fuller (2015) there is a British ‘public-school’ dialect, and there is an ‘African American’ dialect found in many places in the United States; it refers to **ethnic dialects**. Whereas **regional dialects** are geographically based, **social dialects** originate among social groups and are related to a variety of factors, the principal ones apparently being social class, religion, and race/ethnicity. Studies in **social dialectology**, the term used to refer to this branch of linguistic study, examine how ways of speaking are linked to social differences within a particular region. On the other hand, **dialectology** is the study of dialects or it is distinguish between two dialects of the same language and two different languages. In this study in order to understand whether dialects cause solidarity or solitude, the researcher investigates different types of dialects in Iran.

C. Factors Influence Dialect

Place where people lived is an important factor in dialect. In some areas of the city people may use more dialect features than others. In other areas people may be multi-cultural and multidialectal than other varieties.

Age of people is also very inflectional in dialect. Older speakers keep dialect features more than younger speakers.

Relatives, friends and social groups are another factor that influence dialect. You are more likely to speak the dialect similar to your relatives when your relatives or your friends use specific dialect word.

Education The level of education of people has direct effect on types of their dialects. People with high level of education try to speak formal language or dialect and they try to avoid local and informal dialect form.

Mental and emotional factors is another important factor in the type of dialect. These factors that called psychological factors, can be include the ability of learners 'mind, phonological memory, working memory, and emotional and intellectual conditions. These factors have great effect on dialect of people.

D. Different Dialects in Iran

Azeri

Azeri language is in Azerbaijani region of Western Iranian language family (Tvrpatkan) before expanding its scope is limited, and today is a common type of Turkic language. Most Iranian scientists, in recounting the historical roots of the old language of Azerbaijani people believe that ancient language is survived and changed Azeri language and the origins of the Aryan substance that historians and Islamic geographers called it Persia, and Azeri.

Kurds

Kurdish is one branch of Indo-European languages in the western Iranian languages. Also Kurdish refer to a dialect chain that kurds spoken with it. Kurdish is Western branch of the Iranian languages that have relative with Persian and Balochi language. In fact, "Kurdish language" is not like Persian language with a standard form and it has not clearly defined border. Kurdish language is similar to the Baluchi language, Gilaki, and Taleshi, these languages also belongs to the subgroup Northwest Iranian languages. Other language similar to Kurdish that are subgroup of south-western Iranian languages are considered as, Lori and Bakhtiari and Persian are, each of language is spoken in large areas.

Lurs

Lori language are spoken by inhabited and immigrants people in the West and South Iran, at least the southern half of the province, Lorestan, Khuzestan province, south of Ilam, Chahar Mahal and Bakhtiari, Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad, Fars, Bushehr and Isfahan provinces. The language was belong to the southern branch of the Persian Western of Iranian languages. Larry dialects are divided into two distinct groups corresponding to large Lor and small Lor.

These dialects are like Persian dialects. Lori like Persian refers to Middle Persian language and their words are like Persian. Root of Iranian languages, Lori-Bakhtiari and other dialects of Lori refers to Middle Persian and Ancient Middle Persian.

Bakhtiaris

Lori-Bakhtiari or Bakhtiari dialect is dialects of Bakhtiari people. Baḵ tīārīs lurs are considered part of the Greater Lor and they live in southwestern Iran. Bakhtiari dialect is a kind of southwestern Iranian dialects and Lori dialect. This dialect has a few differences with other branches of Lori dialect speakers such as Lori Boyer Ahmadi Lori and Lori Khorramabadi. Bakhtiari dialect generally divided into four categories:

- Eastern dialect that is Influenced by Larry Khgylvy.
- The dialect of the southern region that was affected by Bahmaei tribe dialect,.
- Chharlng regional dialect
- Dialect middle section

Shirazi

Shirazi dialect is, one of the sweetest dialects in Iran. Because there are different dialects in Shiraz, Shirazi dialect has several branches. From Aleh Buyeh to the Qajar period there was one type of Shirazi dialect that is known as Original Shirazi. Toady other dialects of Shiraz are: Middle Shirazi, Pvdnky Shirazi, Ghasredasht Shirazi (urban Shirazi) and many other dialects. Although all these dialects have the same origin, but sometime there are some terminology that make one dialect become different form the other. Most of time they add "u" or "او" at the end of word.

Bushehri

Bushehri dialect sometimes called jonoobi dialect. People in the coast of Persian Gulf in Iran speak jonoobi dialect. Bushehr located in the south of Iran and some of them have Arabi dialect. Also different cities and villages of Bushehr have special dialect that have nuances difference than Bushehri dialect.Some of dialects in Bushehr province are: Dashti, Dashtestani, Tangestani, Jami, Kangani, Genavehi and many other dialects. There is not salient difference between Bushehri dialect and standard language. Symptom of definition in Bushehri dialect is (ku) and (u) and plural mark is (al) that are different from standard language.

Research Questions

1. Is kurdi, Luri and Azeri dialects cause solidarity or solitude among Iranian people?
2. Is Shirazi, Bushehri, and Bakhtiari dialects cause solidarity or solitude among Iranian people?

Hypotheses of the Study

1. Kurdi, Luri and Azari dialects cause solidarity among Iranian people.
2. Shirazi, Bushehri, and Bakhtiari cause solidarity among Iranian people.

III. METHODOLOGY

This study focuses on solidarity and solitude of different Persian dialects in different situations of Busheher. In this study dialects such as Kurdi, Luri and Azari, Shirazi, Bushehri, and Bakhtiari were investigated. The methodology in this study composed of two procedures: The first procedure is collection of data (through visit school, company, office) and second procedure is analysis of data. In this study the data are collected in order to a) Classification of solidarity and solitude level of dialect in Iran; b); Comparison of degree of solidarity and solitude in different dialects. Finally. SPPSS used to analysis the collected data.

A. Participants

The participants for this study were 100 people from different places in Bushehr. The subjects were randomly selected from different company, office, and school and they were also both male and female. The subjects were selected from different places and they had different level of knowledge and education. The location was used to collect data as follows:

1. Gas company
2. Zahra high school
3. Saderat Bank office

B. Instruments

The instruments use in this research were such as a) A General Persian Proficiency Test in the form of interview for understanding dialect of people; b)Attendance in different places and listen to conversation between participants with different dialects c)A recorder to record different dialects d) Analysis of data. The test was selected to assess the kind of dialect in different participants in Bushehr. Then the researcher visit Gas company, Zahra high school, Saderat Bank office in order to listen to different conversation of Persian dialects and then record them. When the data were collected, SPPS was used to analysis the solidarity and solitude among people with different dialects.

C. Procedures

In this research, at first the researcher takes part in various places such as Gas company Zahra high school, Bank Saderat office at Bushehr. In order to collect data, the researcher has short conversation with different participants in the form of Persian proficiency test. The time for each conversation was about 5 minutes. The conversation was in Persian language. To attain the purposes of this study, theses questions (conversation) were accidentally selected. After conversation, the researcher visits their workplace and listens to conversation of people with different dialects. Their discussion, most of time, were related to their job. Then the researcher recoded the voice of people with different dialects (such as Kordi, Bushehri, Shirazi, and ….) to attain the objectives of this study. This procedure repeated at several stages. In this research, the Persian proficiency test was used to recognizing the type of dialects at participants. Then the researcher directly attended in places such as office, company, and school where people with different dialect communicate with each other. The aim was that whether people with different dialects have feeling of togetherness or loneliness**.** Then the researcher listens to record voice and studys them carefully in order to recognize whether different dialects in Iran cause solidarity or solitude. Finally she writes down theses data and then ANOVA was used to analyze them and express a final decision about solidarity and solitude in different Persian dialects.

The analysis of stages in this study was in this way:

Classification of solidarity and solitude level in dialects

In the first stage, *solidarity and* solitude level of dialects were classified. After attending in schools, companies, and offices, the researcher, listen again to recorded conversation of people with different Persian dialects. Then she classified *solidarity and solitude level in people with Bushehri, Shirazi, Lori,* Bakhtiaris, Kurdi and Azeri dialect.

Level solidarity and solitude level in dialects -Comparison of In this level, solidarity and solitude level in dialects become compared. The purpose of this comparison was that whether different types of dialects in society lead to solidarity or solitude.

IV. Results and Analysis

This study deals with solidarity and solitude of different Persian dialects in Iran**.** This study attempts to reveal whether different Persian dialects produce solidarity and solitude among people.

The result of this study indicates that 78% of different dialects cause solidarity and solidarity and 22% cause solitude. The analysis of recorded conversation of different dialects show that in different places such as company, office, schools and other places where people with different dialects communicate with each other, people prefer togetherness rather than remoteness. People in different situation with various dialects try to consult, make friend, solve problem, and progress in a friendly manner. The results show that different dialects cause solidarity not solitude. Table (1) and diagram (2) shows that the number of people who in various situations with different dialects choose solidarity are more than people that choose solitude. Theses number were respectfully (78%) and (22%).

Table(1):
Solidarity and solitude of different dialects in this study

Solidarity of dialect	Solitude Of dialects
78 %	22%

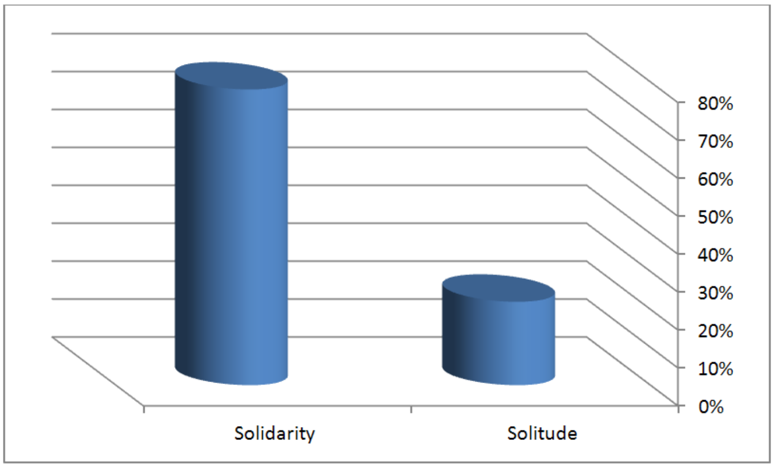

Table (2): solidarity and solitude of different dialects

Table(3):
One-way ANOVA in Bushehri, Shirazi, and Bakhatiari dialects

Test item	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	89.78	2	44.893	0.432	00.3
Within Groups	2734.83	285	8.871		
Total	2724.59	267			

$P>0.05$

TABLE(4):
ONE-WAY ANOVA IN KURDI, LURI, AND AZERI DIALECT

Test item	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	83.45	2	23 .893	0.3 60	00.4
Within Groups	2435.81	297	3.871		
Total	2342.59	299			

P>0.05

ANOVA is a kind of statistical test which use to compares some group of means at the same time. To estimate the degree of the difference between Shirazi, Bushehri, Bakhtiari, Kurdi, Luri, and Azeri dialect in Persian, one-way ANOVA was applied. Table 3 and 4 show that, according to one-way ANOVA results, the difference among these dialects was not statistically significant because of P being above 0.05 (P>0.05). Also F-ratio was less than 1; so there was not meaningful difference among different dialects. So when people of different dialects communicate with each other, diversity of these dialects don't produce solitude. In fact different dialects in Iran cause solidarity not solitude.

TABLE (5):
SHIRAZI , BAKHATIARI AND BUSHEHRI DIALECT IN SOLIDARITY

Dialects	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Shirazi	7.87	2.6 30	3.00	14.00
Bushehri	7.91	3.7 43	4.00	14.00
Bakhatiari	7.93	3.763	4.00	**12.00**

Table 5 show that the standard deviation (Shirazi = 2.6 30 and Bushehri =3.7 43) and mean of solidarity (Shirazi =7.87 and Bushehri = 7.91) of two dialect were not different. Therefore, there was not a significant difference in solidarity types between these two dialects. The standard deviation results showed that the degree of solidarity on Bushehri dialect were the most spread out (s =3.7 43) and were mostly far from the mean, while the solidarity of Shirazi dialect (s=2.63 0) were closely together and typically near to the mean. This table shows that people with Bushehri dialect easily communicate with people of different dialects, therefore a there is a great solidarity among people with Bushehri dialect than Shirazi dialect in different situations. In comparison of Bushehri and Bakhatiari dialects,the standard deviation (Bakhatiari dialect = 3.763 and Bushehri = 3.7 43) and mean of solidarity (Bakhatiari dialect=7.93 and Bushehri=7.91) of two dialects were not so different. The degree of solidarity in Bakhatiari dialect were higher than Bushehri because the mean of solidarity were high in Bakhatiari dialect. Table 5 shows that show that the standard deviation (Bakhatiari dialect = 3.763 1 and Shirazi =2.630) and mean of solidarity (Bakhatiari dialect =7.93 and Shirazi = 7.87) of these two dialects were not different. So, there was not a meaningful difference in solidarity types between these two dialects. Table (5) showed that the minimum number of people who had solidarity in different situation were 3.00 and maximum number of Bushehri people in solidarity was14.00. and the maximum number Shirazi people who producing solidarity among people with different dialects were 14.00

TABLE (5):
LORI, KORDI, AND AZERI DIALECT IN SOLIDARITY

Dialects	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Lori	9.07	2.850	3.00	11.00
Kordi	9.04	2.7 43	4.00	12.00
Azari	8.94	2.73 0	3.00	**11.00**

Table (5) showed that the standard deviation (Lori dialect =2.85 0 and Kordi = 2.7 43) and mean scores (Lori dialect = 9.07 and Kordi =9.04) of two dialects were not different. Therefore, there was not a significant difference in kinds of solidarity between Lori and Kordi dialect. The standard deviation results showed that the solidarity of Lori dialect in communication with people with different dialect were the most spread out (s = 2.850) and had great distance far from the mean, whereas solidarity of Kordi dialect had smaller spread (s= 9.04) than Lori dialect. So in comparison between Lori and Kordi dialect, people with Lori dialect have great solidarity than Kordi dialect. Table (5) revealed that standard deviation (Kodi dialect = 2.7 43and Azeri = 2.730) and mean scores (Kordi dialect = 9.07 and Azeri =9.04) of these two dialects were not distinctive. Therefore, there was not an important difference in types of solidarity between

Kordi and Azeri dialect in different places. It means that both groups of people (Kordi and Azeri dialects) in confronting with people of different dialect try to maintain friendship and sincerity between themselves.

Table (5) indicated that standard deviation (Lori dialect = 2.850 and Azeri = 2.730) and mean scores (Lori dialect = 9.07 and Azeri =8.94) of these two dialects were not distinctive. Therefore, both of these dialects in different places cause solidarity among other dialects. The results of this study showed that kurdi, Luri and Azeri dialects cause solidarity in different situation with diversity of dialects.

Also analysis of data and results of analysis show that Bushehri, Shirazi, and Bakhtiari increase solidarity when meet people with difference dialects. The results showed that the hypotheses of this study were accepted because mean and standard deviation of mentioned dialects in the case of solidarity had not significant different with each other. So almost all of these dialects case solidarity in different places.

V. Discussions and Conclusions

This study shows that there are so many dialects in the world, also many dialects in Iran. This study indicates that people in every place and social group have different dialects. Even within one dialect, there are many dialects. For example Bushehri dialect consists of Dashti, Dashtestani, Tangestani, Jami, Kangani and many other dialects. However, this diversity of dialects don’t cause problems in people’s trade, work, school and other activities. People with different dialects live together easily. Many researches in this study show that diversity and variety of dialect don’t cause solitude. In a society, classroom, city, states, village, and many other places there are people with different dialects such as Shirazi, Bushehri, Lori, Kordi and many other dialects. In this situation people try to behave friendly with each other. These people have cooperation in their works and often they become intimate friends very easily. They don’t attention to differences of dialect s that they have but notice to main points of message in conversation. People with different dialects are co-worker, classmate, colleague and partner. Most of time in a situation with different dialects, people feel more satisfaction because they can become more familiar with different cultures, customs, values, and dialects of different people. Some successful marriages happen between men and women of different dialects. Most of people are eager to become acquaintance with various dialects and even learn them. The diversity of dialects makes deep friendship between people because people with different cultures and thoughts try to use of each other's experience. Certainly, in this condition, people are very successful in every work and the situation is very cooperative. So this study shows that different dialects cause solidarity and togetherness between people not solitude. The outcome of the paper shows that dialect is substandard and different variant of a language. Wardaugh (2008) refers to both 'a local variety' of a language and 'various types of informal or lower-class speech'. There are different factors that can effect dialects such as age, family, education, social factors and many other factors. In this study six types of dialects in situations like schools, company and office were discussed. In this study mentioned that there are different dialects in Iran such as Lori, Azeri, Kordi, Shirazi, Bakhtiari, Bushehri and many other dialects.

The results of the study show that people use different dialects and it refers to different geographical place and social class. People in Shiraz use different dialects than people in Bushehr. Also people with high level of education have different dialect than people with low level of education. The dialect of a teacher is different from a mechanic. So there are different dialects in different area and social statues but these diversities of dialects don’t cause

Solitude. On the other hand this diversity of dialect causes increase of togetherness of people, friendship, cooperation, and solidarity. In conclusion comparison of dialects and analysis of data shows that people with different Persian dialect in different social conditions increase solidarity and they don’t attention to variety of dialects.

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Sources of Chinese Learners' Self-efficacy in Learning English Pronunciation*

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***Abstract*—This study investigated the sources of Chinese learners' self-efficacy in English pronunciation learning to reveal their predicting power in English pronunciation performance by Chinese learners. Unlike some previous studies which found a significant correlationship between the sources of self-efficacy and learners' academic achievement, the findings indicate that of the four sources, social persuasion are not highly correlated with learners' pronunciation performance while mastery experience, vicarious experience, and physiological states are significantly correlated with learners' pronunciation performance with the correlation coefficients at .48, .26 and .29 respectively. However, only mastery experience shows a significant predicting power in Chinese learners' performance of English pronunciation.**

***Index Terms*—sources of self-efficacy, English pronunciation, Chinese learners**

I. Introduction

As an indispensible component of communicative competence, pronunciation contributes a lot to one's linguistic intelligibility and comprehensibility in oral communication and it is especially so in the intercultural communication. However, it has received far less attention than other language skills and knowledge by teachers and learners (Brown, 2014). Pronunciation learning is a cognitive process influenced by external factors such as mother tongue, learning environment, peer performance and internal factors like learning attitude, motivation, learning strategies, etc. As for Chinese learners of English, lacking of opportunities to immerse in the target language and influenced by the traditional Chinese culture, they may be more introverted and feel anxious to practice speaking English in public and therefore they are more likely to experience failure in pronunciation learning and as a vicious circle, end up with "dumb English". In that situation, it is of significance that both the external and internal factors should be considered in English pronunciation teaching and learning to help Chinese learners out of the trap. The social cognitive theory proposed by Bandura (1977) has creatively taken into consideration both the external and internal factors, which broadens our mind in the study of foreign language teaching and learning. The core of the theory is the construct, self-efficacy, which is people's evaluation of their own ability to fulfill a specific task based on their information of what they have experienced in a specific context. It is regarded as a motivational force to mediate learners' affective states and their cognitive behavior in the study of educational area (Schunk, 1991; Bandura, 1997; Pajares, 2003).

Bandura (1977) hypothesized that while developing their belief of their ability to perform a certain task, learners tend to refer to four sources of information: performance achievement, vicarious experience, social persuasion and physiological states. Many studies have claimed the validation of the sources of self-efficacy in academic performance (Bandura, 1997; Usher& Pajares, 2006; Usher& Pajares, 2009; Arslan, 2012). However, these researches mainly focused on the sources of self-efficacy in the area of math, engineering, and physical education. Among the fewer related studies concerning the context of foreign language learning, most studies examined the relationship between self-efficacy and learners' reading, listening and writing performance while few focused on that between self-efficacy and learners' speaking achievement (Raoofi, Tan & Chan, 2012), even fewer on pronunciation learning. Given the importance of self-efficacy in education, this study aims to clarify the sources of Chinese learners' self-efficacy in English pronunciation learning, and to reveal their predicting power in Chinese learners' performance of English pronunciation.

II. Literature Review

A. *Self-efficacy in Foreign Language Learning*

As the core of social cognitive theory, self-efficacy, refers to "beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the course of action required to produce given attainments" (Bandura, 1997), which functions as a better predictor of learners' performance than their real competence. It has been reported that a student with a higher level of self-efficacy achieved better scores than learners with lower levels of self-efficacy regardless of their real ability (Lent et al, 1984), because self-efficacy can influence people's choices of behavior, the degree and duration of their effort in completing a

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task, and even their emotions. The more highly they evaluate themselves, the greater efforts they will exert, and the better achievements they will make.

Self-efficacy is context-specific, and varies with the specific academic area (Zimmerman, 2008). Therefore, it should be examined in a specific domain, and there has been an increasing interest in self-efficacy in the context of foreign language learning. Mills, Pajares and Herron (2007), Hsieh and Schallert (2008), and Tilfarliogln and Ciftci (2011) pointed out that self-efficacy was the most influential predictor of learners' performance in language learning. Self-efficacy has also been found related with learners' strategy use in foreign language learning: Magogwe and Oliver (2007) showed that learners' strategy use was significantly related with their self-efficacy through a study on 480 Botswana learners of English; Wong's study (2005), which explored the relationship between the language learning strategies used by six Malaysian learners and self-efficacy beliefs, found that the higher the level of the learners' self-efficacy was, the more strategies were used in language learning.

Some researches (Mills, Pajares & Herron, 2006; Rahimi & Abedini, 2009) also indicated the relationship between self-efficacy and learners' performance in a certain aspect of foreign language learning. Mills, Pajares and Herron (2006) found that the learners' reading self-efficacy belief was significantly related with their reading proficiency in a survey of 95 college learners of French in USA. Klassen's study (2002) showed that self-efficacy was an important predictor of students' writing behavior. The research by Rahimi and Abedini (2009) also located the positive correlationship between self-efficacy and listening proficiency in Iranian context.

The problem is that most studies concerned just focused on learners' performance in reading, writing and listening, while the investigation into the speaking area can be hardly found (Raoofi, 2012; Liu, 2013). Since self-efficacy is task-specific and people's self-efficacy varies in different contexts (Bandura, 1977), it is necessary to have a deep insight into the relationship of learners' self-efficacy and speaking performance, especially the basic component of speaking ability, pronunciation.

B. Sources of Self-efficacy in Foreign Language Learning

Bandura (1977, 1986 and 1997) pointed out learners' self-efficacy is formed based on four sources of information: performance achievement, vicarious experience, social persuasion and physiological states. Performance achievement, referring to people's past experience of achievements, plays the most influential role in predicting the level of self-efficacy (Usher & Pajares, 2008). People fulfilling a successful task can easily develop confidence in performing similar tasks, because direct experience of success helps to "raise mastery expectations" (Bandura, 1977). Noticing their peers with a similar ability succeed in performing a task, learners can be positively stimulated to have a higher evaluation of their own ability, and thus the level of their self-efficacy is promoted. This is the second source of self-efficacy, vicarious experience. Teachers' or peers' positive evaluation of their ability can give learners more positive stimulus to work harder, which is the third source of self-efficacy, social persuasion. Physiological states can also function as a source of self-efficacy belief, influencing learners' judgment of their anxiety and vulnerability in performing a specific task. Higher level of anxiety and unease may decrease one's self-efficacy and debilitate their effort in performing a task. Otherwise, when they feel more comfortable and are not beset with aversive emotion, they can achieve better performance.

Regarding the four hypothesized sources of self-efficacy, there are only a few studies related with the specific domain of English learning (Raoofi, 2012). Wang and Pape (2007) found that self-efficacy is correlated with Chinese learners' past experience, social persuasion and interests in English learning. Similar findings were also reported by Cakir and Alici (2009), and Moghari et al (2011). Greta (2009) indicated a relation between learners' self-efficacy and classroom environment, peers interaction and interaction between teachers and learners.

C. Research Statement and Questions

Given the importance of self-efficacy in the foreign language learning, it is worthwhile to investigate its influence on learning a specific language skill. Since fewer studies have focused on speaking, especially pronunciation, it is of value to clarify how much learners' self-efficacy weighs in their pronunciation performance, especially in the case of Chinese learners. Therefore, this study is to figure out the answers to the following two questions:

1. Is there a significant correlationship between the four sources of self-efficacy hypothesized by Bandura and Chinese learners' pronunciation performance in English?

2. To what extent can each of the four sources of self-efficacy predict Chinese learners' pronunciation performance in English?

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Participants

The participants in this investigation were 90 undergraduates aging from 18-20 years old majoring in English education from a normal university in Southwest China. They were chosen because as would-be teachers in primary schools, their pronunciation proficiency would be highly emphasized and evaluated in teaching young learners English after they graduated. After understanding the significance of the research, all of them agreed to participate in the survey voluntarily. Among these participants, 22 were males while 68 females. All of them started to be exposed to English when they were third-year graders in primary schools at the age of around 9 but began their formal and systematic learning after attending the middle school at the age of around 13. Besides, none of them had experiences of being abroad before.

B. Instruments

In this research, the scale of sources of pronunciation self-efficacy was used to get the essential data needed. The scale, based on Usher and Pajares' research (2009), included some basic information like the participants' gender, age and length of English learning, and four groups of 24 questions aimed to explore learners' opinions of the four hypothesized sources of self-efficacy in English pronunciation learning. In order to remove the vagueness of the 100-point scale, a 5-point Likert scale (1=never, 2=seldom, 3=sometimes, 4= often, 5=always) was adopted, and the higher score means the higher affirmation of the influence of the factors investigated. All the questions were written in Chinese for clarity. Questions 1-6 were about learners' mastery experience in English pronunciation learning, e.g. "I have made excellent grades on pronunciation; I have always been successful with pronunciation". Questions 7-12 addressed learners' vicarious experience, e.g. "Seeing my classmates do well in English pronunciation pushed me to do better; when I see my classmates communicate with foreigners fluently, I picture myself doing the same thing in the future". Questions 13-18 were used to investigate social persuasion, e.g. "My English teachers have told me that I am good at pronunciation; my classmates like to practice oral English with me because they think I am good at pronunciation." Questions 19-24 intended to reveal learners' physiological states, e.g. "I feel comfortable in the pronunciation class; doing pronunciation work is an easy task". In order to get the consistency confident, we calculated the Cronbar's alpha value, and the number is .89, which proved the validity and consistency of the scale.

In order to evaluate learners' pronunciation performance, a pronunciation test was designed, which included two parts covering the segmental and supersegmental features in English pronunciation. In the first part, a three-hundred-word essay about environmental protection was chosen and the participants needed to read it aloud, while in the second part, participants needed to create a dialogue in groups of two according to the given situation.

C. Data Collection

Before the survey, learners need know about the significance of the research, and their consent to participate in the survey must be obtained. The survey was conducted at a particular time which was convenient for all of the participants. Before the survey, participants were informed of the procedure of the survey, and the meanings of the 24 questions in the scale were clarified. Participants were required to finish the scale within 30 minutes. With the 90 questionnaires in hand, the writer firstly made a rough analysis of them to remove the uncompleted ones, and after that 86 remained for further analysis.

In order to evaluate these participants' pronunciation performance, an English pronunciation test followed the questionnaire survey. The 86 participants with qualified questionnaires were invited to finish the remaining pronunciation test with their pronunciation recorded. At first, participants were required to read the essay in 5 minutes and then made the dialogue in 3 minutes in groups of two. All of them were required to finish the recording in three different rooms respectively, so that the recording could be clear for grading. After they finished the test, the recordings of 86 participants were graded by two foreign teachers of English. The total score for the test was 100 points, and the final score of each participant was the average score given by the two natives.

D. Data Analysis

Statistical Packages for Social Science (SPSS) version 18.0 was employed to analyze the quantitative data collected in this research. In order to reveal the relationship between the sources of pronunciation self-efficacy and learners' pronunciation performance, the Pearson's product correlation was used, and for the predictive power of each of the four sources in learners' pronunciation achievement, regression analysis was adopted.

IV. RESULTS

The descriptive statistics can show us a general picture of the research findings concerned. Therefore, the descriptive statistics of the four sources of self-efficacy are presented in Table 1, including the mean and standard deviation of each of them. It can be found in the table that the mean score for the mastery experience is 3.71, the mean score for vicarious experience 3.62, the mean score for social persuasion 2.8, and that for physiological states 2.67. All the numbers were calculated based on a 5-point Likert scale. Among them, mastery experience and vicarious experience have higher mean scores than the other two, and the scores are close to 4, which implies that most participants agree on the influence of the two factors. Besides, in the table, the mean score of learners' English pronunciation performance is also listed to indicate their pronunciation proficiency. It is 79.6, as is shown in the table.

TABLE 1.
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF SOURCES OF SELF-EFFICACY AND ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION PERFORMANCE

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
mastery experience	86	3.71	0.95
vicarious experience	86	3.62	0.94
social persuasion	86	2.80	0.96
physiological states	86	2.67	1.06
pronunciation performance	86	79.6	5.94

In order to investigate the correlation between the four self-efficacy sources, and that between the sources and English pronunciation performance, Pearson's product correlation analysis was adopted, the results of which are listed in Table 2. As is shown in the table, mastery experience, vicarious experience and physiological state are significantly correlated with learners' pronunciation performance at the 0.01 level, with the correlation coefficients of .48, .26 and .29 respectively. However, social persuasion shows no significant correlation with it. Moreover, Table 2 also indicates that all of the four hypothesized sources of self-efficacy in learning English pronunciation are significantly correlated with each other at the 0.01 level, which further proved the internal consistency of the scale.

TABLE 2.
CORRELATIONS OF SELF-EFFICACY SOURCES AND PRONUNCIATION PERFORMANCE

Variables	mastery experience	vicarious experience	social persuasion	physiological states	pronunciation performance
mastery experience	1	.29**	.60**	.58**	.48**
vicarious experience	.29**	1	.48**	.39**	.26**
social persuasion	.60**	.48**	1	.63**	.11
physiological states	.58**	.39**	.63**	1	.29**
pronunciation performance	.48**	.26**	.11	.29**	1

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

For a deeper understanding of the predicting power of the four self-efficacy sources in English pronunciation achievement, hierarchical linear regression analysis was adopted. Table 3 shows the details of the results investigated: among the four sources, only mastery experience shows a significant predicting power in learners' pronunciation achievement (R^2=.23).

TABLE 3.
HIERARCHICAL LINEAR REGRESSION OF PREDICTING SELF-EFFICACY SOURCES ON PRONUNCIATION PERFORMANCE

Dependent Variables/ Predictor	R^2	R^2 change	F change
pronunciation performance			
mastery experience	.23	.23*	54.6*
vicarious experience	.25	.06	2.633
social persuasion	.01	.01	1.6
physiological states	.08	.00	1.5

*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

V. DISCUSSIONS

It has been shown that the sources of self-efficacy hypothesized by Bandura (1997) have a significant correlationship with learners' academic achievement, which can be further supported by the results in this research. Given the concrete context concerned, the relationship between the four sources and learners' pronunciation achievement presents its unique characteristics. That is, unlike some previous studies which claimed a significant correlationship between the sources of self-efficacy and learners' academic achievement, this study indicates that of the four sources, social persuasion are not highly correlated with learners' pronunciation achievement, and only mastery experience has the predicting power in learners' pronunciation performance.

According to learners' responses to the questions surveyed, the mastery experience ranks the first with a mean score of 3.71, followed by vicarious experience, which signifies that learners hold an affirmative belief of the two factors in their English pronunciation learning. Moreover, both of the two factors are significantly correlated with learners' pronunciation performance, indicating that Chinese learners would like to refer to what they have achieved in the past and what others have done while performing English pronunciation tasks. As for the other two factors, learners hold a relatively weaker belief toward them. As mentioned by Cubukcu (2008), the result can be caused by cultural and educational environment, their personalities and the opportunities to express themselves in the foreign language. Compared with social persuasion, physiological states have more influence on learners' performance and their willingness to make a greater effort to achieve better performance. The higher level of anxiety and fear of learners in the public speaking is more likely to cause the negative self-evaluation, and their performance will be highly discounted (Erkan and Saban, 2011).

The results by hierarchical regression analyses further confirm the role played by the mastery experience in predicting learners' pronunciation achievement while the other three show no strong evidence to be significant predictors. In the situation of pronunciation learning, mastery experience functions as a more direct factor in learners' cognitive developing process. Just as pointed out by Cubukcu (2008), learners refer to their past experience to make a self-evaluation of their capability in achieving something, instead of socially taking others' persuasion into consideration. If learners' perception of success results from their own experience rather than from external aids, self-efficacy will be more likely to be promoted (Bandura, 1977). In the situation of Chinese learning English, they may have compared their own pronunciation with others' model like native speakers', teacher' or their peers', but the factor which decides how far a student can go is their belief of their self-image, which originates from what they have experienced. Vicarious experience has a comparatively indirect influence on learners' performance (Bandura, 1977), but it can function as a referential frame for learners in learning. If they are shown others' gains by perseverance, learners are more likely to enhance their own efforts to perform a specific task. Social persuasion is a rather weak factor in predicting learners' pronunciation performance. As is stated by Bandura (1977), only when learners have no enough related information about their past experience can they tend to take the other three factors for reference.

VI. Implications and Limitation

According to constructivism, learners develop their cognitive ability based on their prior knowledge and experience in related areas when they negotiate with the flow of new information and with the external learning environment, therefore, learners' personal experience is a critical factor in deciding learners' cognitive behavior (Bandura, 1977). For teachers in teaching English pronunciation, it is significant to take some measures to enhance learners' self-efficacy. Firstly, the teaching syllable should be designed to stimulate learners to relate the new information with what they have experienced before, and the learning tasks should be based on learners' current level. The similarities between English and Chinese pronunciation should be listed serving as a positive past experience to facilitate learners' learning. Secondly, positive feedback is in need to promote learners' intrinsic motivation when they finish a learning task, and learners feeling progress after experiencing setbacks will show higher levels of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977). Because Chinese learners are relatively shy to speak out themselves in the public, and the affirmation of their efforts can stimulate them to do more oral practice and achieve more. Thirdly, before the pronunciation teaching, teachers should help learners to form a proper ideal self-image of English pronunciation by analyzing their real self-image and referring to the models around them, which is beyond their current level but within their reach. Others' pronunciation models such as natives', teachers' or peers' can serve as reference for learners, but if learners cannot make an objective evaluation about their current competence, they may be hindered to make further progress in pronunciation practice which in turn weakens their learning enthusiasm and motivation. Moreover, learners can be led to critically think about how they have managed to produce some sounds correctly while failing in others, instead of being pointing out the errors directly by teachers, because learning process is one in which learners should critically reflect on the specific tasks, the strategies they have adopted and the reasons for the strategies so as to obtain true knowledge and promote the development of their cognitive ability (Mezirow, 1996).

Though we have gained some findings, this research still has a few limitations. Firstly, the dynamic influence of the sources of self-efficacy is not ignored, since this is a synchronic study focusing on the learners' current pronunciation status. For the future studies, it might be worthwhile to investigate the predicting power of the four sources in the changes of learners' pronunciation development. Secondly, more proper measurement instruments should be designed to delve into reasons for the low correlation coefficient between social persuasion and learners' pronunciation performance. For example, open-ended response forms can give participants more freedom to express their opinions than the structured questionnaires with questions and choices. Thirdly, the effect of intervening strategies in modeling learners' self-efficacy in English pronunciation is also another aspect worthy of being looked into, and other factors like gender, age, and culture may also be useful variables in the study of learners' pronunciation self-efficacy.

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On Necessity and Feasibility of Foreignization in the Translation of Classical Chinese Poetry*

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***Abstract*—Classical Chinese poetry is the concentrated reflection of traditional Chinese culture and its translation is an event of cross-cultural communication of increasing importance in the present age of globalization. This essay aims to analyze the necessity and feasibility of foreignization in the translation of classical Chinese poetry (CCP). Foreignization in CCP translation can convey the profound cultural connotations that are contained in cultural elements and retains the original poetic flavor. The author concludes that only through foreignization can we meet the needs of those curious readers in the west and achieve cultural communication with the West in the real sense.**

***Index Terms*—necessity, feasibility, classical Chinese poetry**

I. The Divergence between Foreignization and Domestication

Domestication and foreignization are two important translation concepts and strategies, the divergence of which can be summed up from three aspects: translation purpose, faithfulness to the original text and the prediction about the readers' ability to accept the foreign culture. First, the supporter of domestication considers the translation purpose to cross the linguistic and cultural differences for communication while the supporter of foreignization holds that the purpose is to present the culture of other countries. Secondly, the former stresses the faithfulness to the original meaning in order to achieve cultural equivalence while the latter asserts that only when the original information is transformed into the target language, can faithfulness be realized. Thirdly, the former puts the readers' easy reading and understanding at the first place while the latter is sure about the readers' ability to understand and accept the foreign culture.

II. Cultural Characteristics of CCP

Poetry, as the most concentrated and condensed form of literature, is the gem of language and the crystallization of a culture. Poetry is rich in culturally loaded words, which may have very different or even opposite connotations in different languages. It is generally agreed that poetry is the most difficult genre of literature to translate, where linguistic competence alone does not guarantee the quality of translation.

As the carriers of Chinese culture, classical Chinese poems reflect the history, tradition and civilization of China and the living environment, thinking mode, values and tastes of its people in ancient times. They have roots in the fertile soil of Chinese culture, brimming with Chinese scent. The beauty of classical Chinese poetry can be felt from the integration of content and form that are displayed through Chinese language. There are so many poetic expressions in Chinese poetry that carry cultural sediments accumulated over the years and arouse rich literary associations. The allusions and folk tales in CCP may contain some beautiful or historical stories, which adds charm and beauty to the poems. However due to the language and culture differences as well as the special form of poetry, these allusions and folk tales pose great difficulties to translators." For example, the folk tale of the cowherd and girl weaver (牛郎织女) is almost known to everybody in China. The two characters stand for loving husband and wife separated by invincible force who can only meet once a year. In Du Mu's "An Autumn Night (《秋夕》), he wrote, "天阶夜色凉如水，卧看牵牛织女星." This poem depicts how lonely the heroine is when staying alone one night. "牵牛织女星" is used here to express the miserable loneliness and helplessness of this lady when her lover is not with her. Some culturally loaded words in Chinese poetry may arouse specific feelings or experience among Chinese people, which are difficult to be reproduced in other languages. For examples, the word "明月" can be associated with homesickness; the phrase "杨柳依依" may evoke memories of departure. In order to achieve successful cultural exchange and spread Chinese civilizations to the outside world through the translation of CCP, it is of great importance for translators to identify the cultural elements and translate them.

III. Translatability Cultural Elements in CCP

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Poetry, as the inheritance of human culture, interests people around the world. There is no denying that it should be translated. Appreciation of poetry may help people from other countries to have an insight into another culture. As a result, translation of poetry plays an indispensable and important role for those who aim at rendering poetry from one language into another successfully. The charm of classical Chinese poetry, the mainstream of Chinese poetic works, has intoxicated so many people. Thus a great number of international scholars and translators who are interested in Chinese culture have endeavored to recreate in other languages the beauty of CCP. Consequently, it is quite necessary to have CCP translated. Because of the necessity of translation of CCP, there may arise another problem, that is, whether CCP can be translated. Translatability and untranslatability have long been disputed in the area of translation study.

Owing to different cultural heritage, languages of different nations have their own characteristics of lexis, syntax, grammar and so on, which make culture difficult to translate or even untranslatable. “One difficulty involved in translation is that an obligatory category expressed in the one language may not obtain in the other language”(Allén Sture,1999,p.223) Chinese and English belong to different language family, which means greater differences between Chinese and English. The translation of CCP, involves great difficulties because of the use of culture elements in CCP. For so many nouns, especially proper nouns, being used repeated in poetry creation have become so culturally loaded and the mention of them can spontaneously arouse certain feeling in Chinese. Without any footnote or the like for explanation, the essence of such poetry will be lost. Some of the cultural elements are often rather subtle and ambiguous even to Chinese readers without the prerequisite knowledge of history and poetic cultivation; the translated version is bound to lose something when translated into English. Therefore, many scholars, writers, and translators suspected and even denied the translatability of cultural elements in CCP.

However, in spite of cultural differences and all the above difficulties, translators devote themselves to translation activities in order to promote the mutual understanding throughout the world. We should admit that in the translation process of CCP, certain problems or barriers would be encountered, however it is still possible to translate CCP into another language. In fact, translatability is absolute, while untranslatability is relative. There are several reasons for the translatability. First, it is because of the language and culture universals. Despite the uniqueness of a language and culture, there are also similarities. Nida once said,

“All people engage in eating, working, sleeping, and procreating, they make artifacts such as furniture, tools and vehicles. They organize themselves into families, clans, in-groups and out-groups, nations and associations of nations. They share many ideological similarities in cosmologies, values, and religious. The fact, different peoples throughout the world have far more in common than they have of what which separate them from one anther.” (Nida, 2004, p.78).

It is due to cultural similarities of different nations that people from different cultures understand each other and translation is possible. Secondly, the translation practice has already strongly demonstrated the translatability of CCP. Many scholars and poets at home and abroad have translated the crystallization of Chinese literature into English and versions in other languages are also available now. These facts have not only helped demonstrate that poetry is translatable, but also provided invaluable examples illustrating how to deal with the cultural elements in poetry translation. Thirdly, with the ever-increasing cultural exchange and global communication, it is more likely for people to translate a poem into another language and appreciate a poem from another culture.

IV. Necessity and Feasibility of Foreignization in Chinese-English Translation

The discussion in China about the superiority or inferiority of the domestication and foreignization among translation theorists has mainly revolved around English-Chinese translation. Most scholars hold that in English-Chinese translation, the foreignizing strategy should be more often employed, allowing Chinese readers’ freedom of learning about English and English-related cultures. They use Venuti’s theories to justify their argument. However, they should not forget the contexts in which they are used in the discussion. For Venuti (2004, p.306), foreignizing translation is highly desirable, insofar as it seeks to resist the dominant target-language cultural values and signify the linguistic and cultural difference of the foreign text. It is a strategic cultural intervention pitched against the hegemonic English-language nations and the unequal cultural exchanges. Foreignizing translation in English can be a form of resistance against ethnocentrism and racism, cultural narcissism and imperialism, in the interests of democratic geopolitical relations. Some scholars hold that in Chinese-English translation, domestication should be used as much as possible. As a matter of fact, this is exactly what Venuti is against. In the past, in Chinese-English translation, domestication is mainly used to adapt the target text more acceptable and welcome, as is supposed, to English readers, paying far less respect to the fidelity of Chinese culture. The relatively unbalanced employment of strategies reflects, as it were, the permeation of the powerful culture (English) into the weak (Chinese).

By employing foreignization in English-Chinese translation, we have absorbed so many words, expressions, customs, and even some values from western cultures, which resulted in a cultural unbalance. At present, our emphasis should be laid particularly on introducing Chinese culture and literature abroad, so as to let more people know about China and Chinese culture. Only in this way can we promote our mutual understanding with our Western colleagues.” Foreignization should be more often employed in the translation of Chinese literary works, especially of Classic Chinese poetry, which abounds with cultural elements.

A. From the Perspective of Introduction of Chinese Culture and Promotion of Cultural Communication

As we know, translation is not only an inter-lingual activity but also an intercultural activity. In fact, the essence of translation lies more in its intercultural communication, and the ultimate target of translation is to promote the cross-cultural exchange between different nations.

Today more than ever, a culture has the opportunity to be communicated and introduced to the world. However, international communication is far from an equal one. Economically powerful nations, the United States in particular, dominate the production, circulation and consumption of global media products; while developing countries are merely passive subordinate participants in international communication. The disparity in international communication has constituted a serious threat to the weak and small cultures. As the largest developing country in the world, China has a history of over 5,000 years and is famous for its brilliant ancient culture. Nowadays, China is undergoing remarkable economic growth and social changes resulting from globalization, information explosion and knowledge economy as well as domestic reforms and opening up to the outside world.

However, the culture exchanges between China and the Western countries are unequal. On one hand, there has long been an unbalance in China's cultural and literary translation, with the number of translation of foreign culture much more than that of Chinese culture. One the other hand, the disparity can be detected easily in the process of translation through the analysis of the option of source texts and translation strategies. Translators in the weak culture are accustomed to choosing the literary works of the dominant cultures, especially those of the most influential one, to begin with, while translators in the dominant cultures seldom translate the literary works of the weak cultures. Moreover, some translators in the dominant cultures generally compel the translators in the weak to keep consistent with their values not only in language but also in culture. Meanwhile, compared with the Chinese acquisition of the West world, people in the West know much less about China. In these circumstances, it is Chinese translators' responsibility to introduce the remarkable, excellent and preeminent achievements to the outside world to change the unequal exchanges between nations.

In CCP, a lot of Chinese customs are presented. They remain the most original and vital traditions in Chinese culture, long in history, varied in form and rich in content. The words and expressions of Chinese folk customs have been enriched throughout Chinese history. A better understanding of the cultural elements of this field will contribute to effective translation.

Original:

何当载酒来，共醉重阳节。(孟浩然《秋登兰山寄张五》)

Version:

Why don't you bring wine here to have a time gay,
And be drunk with me on this Double-Ninth day? (Tr. Wu Juntao)

Notes: Double-Ninth Day, the ninth day of the ninth moon of the lunar calendar, was, and somewhat will, is a Chinese festival. On that day people customarily climb up the mountains to drink chrysanthemum (or other kinds of) wine.

The Chongyang Festival (重阳节) falls on the ninth day of the ninth month of the Chinese lunar calendar, so it is also known, as the Double Ninth Festival .Chongyang has been an important festival since ancient times. Since nine is the highest odd digit, people take two of them together to signify longevity. Therefore, the ninth day of the ninth month has become a special day for people to pay their respects to the elderly and a day for the elderly to enjoy themselves. The festival is held in the golden season of autumn, at harvest time. The bright clear weather and the joy of bringing in the harvest make for a festive happy atmosphere. By foreignizing translation, the author reserves this important cultural element in TL. The footnote, as compensation, not only introduces Chinese "Double-Ninth Day" to western readers, but also helps them understand the aesthetics of the poetry.

Since foreignizing translation aims to transfer as much as possible the original cultural elements, it is of great significance for translators to employ this strategy in Chinese-English translation. And in the translation of CCP, the Chinese translators have the responsibility to keep the exotic flavor so as to enhance foreigners' understanding of China and Chinese culture. Thus retaining the cultural features of CCP while transferring them into the TL becomes an important factor in the assessment of whether the translation is successful or not. If all the cultural elements in CCP were domesticated into English, it would be absurd to say that we are "translating" poetry from one language into another. If such were the case, the culture underlying the CCP would never be able to be known by Western people. When the source language culture contained in CCP is lost, translation, as an important means of intercultural communication, fails in its mission of promoting cross-cultural exchanges.

B. From the Perspective of Faithfulness to the Original Text

"Faithfulness" has long been the focus of translation. Many translation theorists both at home and abroad stress the importance of "faithfulness" of a translated version. Early in the Tang Dynasty the distinguished monk Xuan Zang put forward his criteria of translation with emphasis on accuracy in meaning and popularity in expression. In the Qing Dynasty, Yan Fu established his famous three-character standard in translation: "faithfulness", "expressiveness" and "elegance", which have long been supported as the only maxim that all translators must observe in China. He was an outstanding forerunner in the circle of translation and made great contributions both to the theory and practice of translation. After the May 4th Movement, Lu Xun proposed his principle of "faithfulness" and "smoothness" as the criteria of translation.

In the last decade of the 18th century, British Translation theorist Alexander Fraser Tytler laid down the three fundamentals by which a translation should be made or judged. They are:

1.A translation should give a complete transcript of the ideas of the original work.

2.The style and manner of writing should be of the same character as that of the orginal.

3.A translation should have all the ease of the original composition. (Lefevere, 1992, p.128)

It is obvious that Tytler also regarded "faithfulness" as the most important element of translation criteria.

In 1901 Herbert Cushing Tolman in his book The Art of Translation approaches the principle of faithfulness from several aspects. According to Tolman's point of view, the translator's first and supreme purpose in translating is to convey the whole ideology of the original, especially the essence of it. The translator should reproduce the elegance and passion of the original and move the power of the original completely into his translation too. Finally, the style of a translation should be faithful to that of the original. It should strictly accord with that of the original. Even the defects of the original should be reproduced in the translation to maintain the characteristics and features of the original. (Tan, 1991, p.224)

From the above translation criteria put forward by various translators or translation theorists, we can come to the conclusion that faithfulness is the core of translation criteria. However, one thing has to be made clear, that is "faithfulness" does not only refer to being faithful in conveying the communicative information of the original but also being faithful in the transference of cultural connotations of the original. Therefore whether it is faithful or not largely depends on the degrees of the translator's knowledge of the subtle differences of the cultural content expressed in the languages.

Original:

寥落古行宫，宫花寂寞红。

白头宫女在，闲坐说玄宗。(元稹《行宫》)

Version 1:

Some white-haired chambermaids at leisure

Talk of the late Emperor's Pleasure. (Tr. X.Y.Z.)

Version 2:

There still the palace maids, with grey hair-buns,

Sit and talk about Xuanzhong-their better days. (Tr. Wu Juntao)

Version 3:

Inside a white-haired palace woman

Idly mumbles of the glorious days of Hsuan Tsung.(Tr. Soame Jenyns)

Version 4:

The ancient palaces present a rueful sight,

Tis vainly that are blooming flowers red and bright.

Those white-hair'd ladies who've survive'd their mental pain,

Now sit at ease recalling Xuanzong and his reign. (Tr. Zhuo Zhenying)

The poem presents us a state of decay and a scene of desolation. The depiction of the palace flowers that are red in full bloom and the white-haired maids who used to be beautiful and full of vigor, forms a sharp contrast between the prosperous past against the decayed present. Then the maids sit, talking about "玄宗 (Xuan Zong)", an emperor of Tang Dynasty, who made great contribution to the prosperity of Tang Dynasty in the early period of his reign, whose indulgence in the pleasure and the beauty in latter period gave rise to its decline. What the maids exactly talk gives us lots of imagination. They may recall the glorious days of his reign and miserable present. The allusion "Xuan Zong" evokes endless imaginations and its translation should try to endow TL readers with the same degree of aesthetic vagueness. Version 1: with the name of the Emperor omitted, TL readers bear no idea of its related cultural background in which the poet's grief over the decline of the Tang Dynasty can't be sensitively comprehended. The last three Versions all keep the cultural elements by transliterating "玄宗" and giving an explanation. version 2 and 3 both give specific interpretation of their own –"their better days" and "the glorious days", leaving the readers no space of imagination while version four is rather suggestive and leaves the readers maximum space for imagination by giving a implicit explanation—"his reign". From the point of preserving the cultural elements as well as the reader's imaginations, the last version is no doubt the most successful. The adoption of foreignization with the cultural terms and its implications preserved can better evoke TL readers' curiosity and imaginations.

"Being faithful to the original, in my opinion, means that the translation of a poem should convey the content of the original and adopt a form close to the original. Only when this is achieved can the translation be regarded successful." (Liu, 1991, p.140) We all know that Chinese literature, especially its representative classical poetry, is characterized by subtle richness of cultural elements which are usually heavily loaded with Chinese cultural information. Since domestication often substitutes the source text image with the target cultural terms, it may easily distort the intended meaning of the source text. Foreignization, on the other hand, strives to retain the cultural messages of the source text so that it works better to convey to western readers the original flavor of CCP, and it is therefore more faithful to the original poetry.

C. From the Perspective of Readers' Demands

For several centuries, Britain and America have always held the dominant position in the world in politics and economy and undoubtedly the culture marked by English language gradually holds the leading place. All these result in the fact that British and American literary works are translated in other cultures in considerable quantity while they seldom translate literary works from other countries. What's more, in translation, those foreign cultural elements are domesticated in English by paraphrasing or substituting with the counterparts –the English culture, so readers will not only be unable to learn about or appreciate foreign cultures, but also capable of getting false illusions. Thus readers are deceived into believing that the work distorted by the mainstream native culture and values are what the original work is really like.

However, curious readers hope to have access to foreign cultures, enlarge their cultural horizon, enrich their knowledge and receive some enlightenment. It is always presumed that it is because of the curiosity about foreign cultures and languages that they approach versions. With China's rapid political and economic development and its important role in the world's cultural exchanges, an increasing number of foreign readers are interested in China, especially its brilliant culture. They are eager to know the thoughts and feelings of Chinese people and get some ideas of Oriental cultures. In the process of reading, they inevitably draw their attention to the exotic elements of Chinese culture. What they feel most keenly is the differences between languages and what is concealed beneath, which are usually deeply rooted in a particular Chinese linguistic system, cultural backgrounds, religions, or historical periods. What they long for is to leave the source text as it is.

Original:

鬓花颜金步摇，芙蓉帐暖度春宵。(白居易《长恨歌》)

Version 1:

Her face like flower, her hair-cloud'dorned with a swinging gold pin,
She passed the spring night with her Lord behind the lotus curtain. (Tr. Zeng Bingheng)

Version 2:

They set a headdress sewn with golden bangles
Upon the cloudy hair of her whose face was like a flower.
And sent her into the imperial presence.
Under a lotus patterned net the two then slept. (Tr. Zhang Tingchen)

This poem writes about the love story between Madam Yang (杨贵妃) and Emperor Xuanzong (唐玄宗). The words "春宵" originally means a night in spring which suggests a harmonious and sound sleep. Constantly used in Chinese literature, it has stabilized to mean a joyful night with love, as is the case in this poem. The emperor had so joyful nights with her love that he even no longer held his morning court. In version 1, the translator thinks that literal translation of this cultural image may not be accepted by the target culture. He deletes the original image and directly expresses it as "the two then slept." This expression is too vulgar in this poetic context. Although it reduces the readers' comprehending efforts, it does not yield the aesthetic effects as the original does. In version 2, "spring night" is a literal translation of the image. The translator in this case aims at introducing new concepts into the target culture. He assumes that the following lines (春宵苦短日高起，从此君王不早朝) can suggest that "spring night" is a euphemism for "joyful moment with love". Hence it does not cost the readers tremendous effort to get the contextual effects, and the translation successfully introduces the cultural image "spring night" to western readers.

V. CONCLUSION

The process of translation is always regarded as pure language transference. As an important means of communication, translation is not only the transformation of language, but also the transformation of culture as well. Nowadays, as culture is on its way to globalization, cultural translation, aiming at turning the cultural connotation in one language into another, deserves more attention. China was passive in the communication of politics, economy and culture in the past, and therefore western civilization has much more effect on Chinese culture than the Chinese culture does on the West. In such a passive situation, the translation of Chinese works was subject to western influence. The cultural elements in Chinese literary works were always domesticated to conform to the clear explanation to the westerners', but not telling them how they were expressed in Chinese, which made many excellent Chinese traditional cultures unknown to western society and was a barrier for international community to know Chinese society. China is heading fast into the international community. Therefore, spreading Chinese culture through translation is extremely imperative and necessary.

Classical Chinese poetry is the concentrated reflection of traditional Chinese culture and its translation is an event of cross-cultural communication of increasing importance in the present age of globalization. As poetry is more abundant with cultural elements than other literary genres, it is imperative that the translator of poetry should be highly aware of culture and more skillful in handling cultural elements in translation. The present thesis mainly deals with the cultural elements in the translation of classical Chinese poetry and tries to find a way to tackle the culture-bound problems in translation.

Foreignization in CCP translation can convey the profound cultural connotations that are contained in cultural elements and retains the original poetic flavor. “The translator should adopt foreignizing translation as the primary approach and try his best to preserve the foreignness of Chinese cultural elements, so as to spread the otherness of Chinese culture to the world through translation and fulfill the goal of global cultural diversity.” (Xie, 1999, p.12) Through foreignization of cultural elements in CCP, we Chinese translators can definitely produce more successful translation versions with introducing them as much as closely to the original to foreign readers so that the target readers may appreciate the elaborate composition and distinctive style of the poet as well as the distinctive Chinese cultural flavor and graceful artistic conception of CCP. Thus the world cultural exchange and the mutual understanding and communicating could be further promoted.

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An Evaluation of Final Conversation Test of BA English Translation Students of Oral/Aural Course in Payam-e-Nour University

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Abstract—**The purpose of the present study was to investigate the correlation between teacher- made test and Payam-e-Nour (PNU) final examination for the aural course of the translation students together with a detailed analysis of the PNU final written test items in terms of their item facility, choice distribution, item discrimination, and estimating validity and reliability of the total final written test. Sixty English majors from PNU university of Rasht took part in this study. The result of Pearson product-moment correlation showed that there was a strong positive correlation between oral teacher- made test scores and PNU written test scores (r = 0.709). Moreover, Cronbach alpha statistic estimated for the test showed an acceptable reliability index of 0.78. The results of item analysis of the PNU written test items revealed that the written test definitely needed revision. The findings also revealed that PNU written test lacks content validity specially in terms of the number of the items, unequal distribution of the items from two books and throughout the units, the example items, representative tasks, representative sample, the importance or weight given to certain elements, and learning level of the testees. The finding of the study implied close consideration of test content and test specification having the objectives of the course in mind in the process of test making by test developers.**

Index Terms—**English conversation test, BA English translation students, PNU**

I. Introduction

Evaluation plays a significant role in deciding the learners' learning and the teachers' teaching in schools and universities. It is universally accepted as integral part of teaching and learning. Any changes in assessment policies can be used as a powerful lever for reforming schools and universities (Reardon et. al, 1994, cited in Agrawal, 2004). Evaluation as powerful means of improving the quality of education can use examinations and assessment for curricular reform (Torrance, 1995, cited in Agrawal, 2004).

According to some practitioners, oral-aural skills are ignored in ELT (Podder, 2012). Although communicative English was apparently introduced to the educational curriculum of many schools and universities with the idea of making the students proficient in the four basic areas of language use, especially in oral-aural skills of the school leavers are considered below expectation level. Podder (2012) stated that lack of rigorous aural/ oral assessment system and also lack of resources in evaluating students can be the main reasons of the ignorance because the teachers and also teacher educators are not prepared enough to assess these two skills, i.e. they are not well trained. So, two possible speaking and listening assessment strategies were suggested for English teachers to assess their students' speaking skills: "a) continuous during-teaching and informal assessment, b) self and peer assessment strategy" (p. 1). Therefore, an efficient English language curriculum needs to be revised and improved through inclusion of listening and speaking skills assessment.

Proponents of evaluation reform think that such written tasks as multiple-choice tests have a restricting effect on the curriculum and teaching methods. This kind of evaluation encourages teachers to teach students test-taking skills rather than develop metacognitive skills and understanding (Agrawal, 2004). According to Kaye (2008) phonological features, rules of language, paralinguistic devices, communicative functions, and social meaning can be the elements to be evaluated in speaking test in isolation by analyzing various elements or by using tasks which can measure the speaker's communicative competence in general. Moreover, emotional factors such as stress and nerves, and also available resources such as time, examiners, equipment and space must be taken into consideration.

The ability to speak the target language has become a major focus of language teaching and testing. How to assess college students' speaking ability within EFL teaching programs at universities has become more important during past years. However, it remains a difficult task for many TEFL teachers to conduct a reliable and valid speaking test for

English-majored students. It is newly believed that a task-oriented approach can be a valid assessment of the productive communicative ability of test taker, especially for English-majored students at advanced level (Taeduck & Finch, 1998).

Beside authenticity and a relaxed atmosphere, there are other important factors in designing an oral test of communicative effectiveness including full local knowledge; a human approach; a suitable balance; and the ability to adapt and improve the test (Underhill, 1987, cited in Taeduck & Finch, 1998). Underhill also mentioned that the test should be designed as a whole, and based on the learners' need. Savignon (1983, cited in Taeduck & Finch, 1998, p. 4) in confirming this 'human approach' stated, "Language is culture in motion. It is people interacting with people…the most effective programs will be those that involve the whole learner in the experience of language as a network of relations between people, things, and events.

Traditionally, the test of spoken English at advanced level is conducted indirectly and invalidly, containing mechanical greeting, dialogues, sentence reading, storytelling, passage recitation, situational conversations, or a prepared speech based on a given topic. However, such an assessment of students' speaking ability can be criticized for lack of authenticity because of the artificiality of much testing material, and also because of the negative wash back effect in producing well-memorized answers in a prepared speech topic (Gong, n.d). Hughes (1989) pointed out, "We want to set tasks that form a representative sample of the population of oral tasks that we expect candidates to be able to perform. The tasks should elicit behavior which truly represents the candidates' ability and which can be scored validity and reliably" (p. 101).

Speaking is "the process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal and non-verbal symbols, in a variety of contexts" (Chaney, 1998, p. 13, cited in Kaye, 2006). Speaking is a crucial part of second language learning and teaching. Despite its importance, for many years, teaching speaking has been undervalued and English language teachers have continued to teach speaking just as a repetition of drills or memorization of dialogues. However, today's world requires that the goal of teaching speaking should improve student's communicative skills, because, only in that way, students can express themselves and learn how to follow the social and cultural rules appropriate in each communicative circumstance (Kayi, 2006).

Many universities throughout Asia including Iran have compulsory English conversation courses. The common schedule in these courses usually includes two hours of class per week plus a midterm and final exam. The format of the exam is different in different universities. Sometimes it is a fixed format (i.e. Must be written, must be oral, a one-on-one interview, etc.), but it can also be more flexible depending on the teacher's knowledge and experience. According to Moodie (2008), there are many ways to administer exams in university conversation classes including:

- Written exams (some with listening component)
- Interviews or one-on-one question period with instructor
- Pair work conversations or pair communicative activities

Each of the above formats has some advantages as well as disadvantages. Written exams are preferred especially in large classes in that they can be administered and controlled with few resources, for all students at once. This is a very efficient use of time for the teacher. What is more, an objective written record of answers is at hand to be compared easily. Also, the instructor can test for many language structures since usually up to two hours' time is available in each exam. However, the most important disadvantage of the written exam for conversation courses is lack of construct validity, "written tests ostensibly do not test for speaking ability" (Moodie, 2008, p. 1). This glaring weakness of the written exams can be removed by one-on-one interview examination. But the main problem of this approach is that time constrain prevents the student and instructor have any kind of normal real- world conversation. Lack of enough time to test both speaking and listening comprehension ability is the major obstacle. Moreover, time limitation puts a lot of pressure on the students to act normally. Besides, performing ideally in front of the instructor who is also a tester would make it more stressful for the students. It is also very difficult for the instructor to both have a conversation with a student and evaluate it simultaneously (Moodie, 2008).

According to Moodie (2008) and also some other expertise in the field, task-based pair work exams seemed the most appropriate way of testing in conversation courses. Utilization of pair work activities in conversation course tests can be a way to improve upon one-on-one testing format. This type of activity "frees up the cognitive resource of instructors in order to pay closer attention to the production of each student than if they were participants themselves. Students have longer time to interact, instructors have longer time to evaluate and comment on each student's performance" (Moodie, 2008, p. 2). Moreover, since communicative language teaching methods are the most common methods of teaching nowadays in which pair work is usually the main part of the class, it would be befitting to include similar activities in the exam. Moodie (2008) stated that "for a conversation course, oral pair work exams are much more relevant than written exams or one-on-one interviews", and "there may also be benefits regarding student's motivation" (p. 3).

English oral/aural courses at EFL universities are of significant importance because the result of the courses can greatly help students to get along well with their major of study and cope with the responsibilities and objectives of the course of study during the semesters. Among the factors affecting EFL learners' oral/aural abilities, assessment procedure or testing methods, particularly of final tests, are highly important. The result of final conversation test at the end of the terms will inform EFL learners and also teachers' real abilities in speaking and listening and will give them a feeling of satisfaction if the test is really valid and reliable.

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the appropriateness of the final conversation test of a group of BA English translation students in Payam-e-Noor university in which the final oral/aural test consists of two major parts: oral/aural teacher-made test and written test of the course made by the central educational department of Payam-e-Noor University. Moreover, this study is also intended to prioritize the qualitative evaluation of the final conversation test along with quantitative investigation of the test including reliability and correlation. Validity aspects of a national test are superior to its reliability and quantitative information. High correlation between PNU teacher made test and written test, and also high reliability of written test do not guarantee appropriateness of a national test without ensuring its validity. The following research questions were proposed in order to address the purpose of the study:

1. Is there any significant relationship between the two sets of scores (oral teacher-made test scores and PNU written test scores) of the final conversation course?

2**.** What are the item characteristics of the written test like in terms of item facility, item discrimination, and choice distribution?

II. Methodology

Participants

This study was conducted based on availability sampling of a group of 60 BA English translation students who took their English conversation course in their first semester of Payam-e-Noor University of Rasht. They were Iranian students whose L1 was Persian, predominantly female, ranging from 19-30 years old. Actually, these students' final written test scores were taken from the question bank of Payam-e-Noor University in Rasht in the second semester of 1390-91. All participants, though heterogeneous in terms of English knowledge and level were the first semester freshmen students majoring English translation course in 1391-92.

Instruments

Teacher-made test and written test scores of PNU students majoring English translation were used. Moreover, for the sake of item characteristics and unavailability of written-test answer sheets of PNU students, written test was taken by a smaller sample group in the form of a paper and pencil test. The written test score was out of 14 and the teacher-made test (practical score) was out of 20. PNU written test consisted of 50 questions including listening comprehension, vocabulary, stress and intonation sections. Surprisingly, one grammar question was also included in the test. Regarding teacher-made test (or practical score) there was no special criterion or a fixed test to evaluate students. That is, the teacher used different ways to improve students’ conversation ability based on his own experience and knowledge regarding the material provided, that is, two interchange books by Jack. C. Richards.

Procedures

In the first stage of data collection, the written test scores and the teacher-made test scores of conversation course along with the written test paper and its audio sheet were taken from the question bank of PNU in Rasht. In the next stage, the same written test was taken by a smaller sample students to define the item characteristics in the Fall semester of 2013. Because the researcher was not allowed to have the written test answer sheets of the students by principals of the PNU for the security reasons in order to check each item of the test in terms of item facility, item discrimination, choice distribution, and also reliability index of the test.

The test was administered to 34 PNU students in the lab by the researcher as a proctor. The listening section was played by their own teacher. The objective of the test was explained to the participants first. Then they were given 80 minutes to answer 50 questions plus listening, and reading the audio by the teacher. In order to take the test serious the students were asked by the teacher in advance to be prepared to take it in the last session of their semester.

III. Results and Analysis

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics for the two primary variables of teacher-made test scores and PNU written test scores. Frequency, mean, and standard deviation of two sets of scores are presented.

TABLE 1.
STATISTICS FOR THE TEACHER-MADE AND PNU WRITTEN TEST SCORES

		Teacher- made test scores	PNU written test scores
N	Valid	60	60
	Missing	0	0
Mean		14.8250	12.1287
Median		15.0000	12.6000
Mode		18.00	12.88
Std. Deviation		3.65089	1.48922
Variance		13.329	2.218
Range		14.00	6.72
Minimum		6.00	7.28
Maximum		20.00	14.00
Sum		889.50	727.72

Table 2 confirms the normal distribution of both written test and teacher-made test scores. Before running the statistical test namely Pearson correlation, Skewedness analysis was done to check the normality assumption.

TABLE 2.
ONE-SAMPLE KOLMOGOROV-SMIRNOV TEST

		PNU written test	Teacher test
N		60	60
Normal Parameters [a, b]	Mean	12.1287	15.1467
	Std. Deviation	1.48922	3.50643
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	.151	.125
	Positive	.111	.083
	Negative	-.151	-.125
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z		1.171	.972
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		.129	.302
a. Test distribution is Normal.			
b. Calculated from data.			

The results of the Skewness analysis, as it is signified in table 2 by running Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, confirmed the normality of the distribution for both PNU written test and teacher-made test. The insignificant results indicated that the probability of the Z statistic is higher than 0.05 for both of the tests (.129 for the PNU written test and .302 for the teacher- made test), meaning that the distributions are normal with two parameters of 12.1287 for the PNU written test and 15.1467 for the teacher- made test.

Table 3 presents the statistics related to the correlation between teacher-made test and PNU written test. A correlation analysis was performed between the two sets of scores by using a Pearson product-moment correlation procedure. The researcher used Cohen's (1988) classification of correlation strength. Cohen (1988) suggested that a correlation is considered small when r = .10 to .29, medium when r = .30 to .49, and large when r = .50 to 1.00. As it is shown in Table 3, strong positive correlation is reported.

TABLE 3.
CORRELATION BETWEEN TEACHER-MADE TEST AND PNU WRITTEN TEST

		Practical score	Testing score
Teacher- made test score	Pearson Correlation	1	.709**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	60	60
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

At the .01 level, the correlation of .709 is significant between the two sets of scores (oral teacher-made test scores and PNU written test scores) of the test for the conversation course. It is evident that students who scored high on oral teacher-made test scores received very similar scores on PNU written-test scores, and the opposite is also true. The above findings reject the first research null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between the two sets of scores (oral teacher- made test scores and PNU written -test scores) of the test for the conversation course.

Table 4 summarizes items analyses of the written test in terms of item facility, item_difficulty, and item discrimination. Item analysis was done to examine student responses to individual test items of PNU written test in order to assess the quality of those items and of the test as a whole. After the PNU written tests were administered and scored, a post hoc analysis was performed in order to evaluate the test's effectiveness. This procedure involved an analysis of the individual items on the test and the reliability analysis of the whole test. Item analysis of the PNU written-test scores including item facility, item difficulty, item discrimination and choice distribution were done to examine the efficiency of the items, the results of which are presented in the following sections.

The results of students' performance in PNU written test was then used to determine the item facility index, difficulty index and discrimination index of each item in the respective test. In this study, the item facility index (IF) refers to the percentage of the total number of correct responses to the test item. It is calculated by the formula IF = C/N, where C is the number of correct responses and N is the total number of responses (i.e., correct + incorrect + blank responses). To analyze the items, the difficulty level and discrimination index were judged using Farhady et. Al (2006) and the guidelines suggested by Ebel et. Al (1965), who has given the following four guidelines for the interpretations for ID values:

1. If ID $\geq$ 0.40: no item revision necessary;
2. If .30 $\leq$ ID $\leq$ 0.39: little to no item revision is needed;
3. If .20 $\leq$ ID $\leq$ 0.29: item revision is necessary; and
4. If ID $\leq$ 0.19: either the item should be completely revised or eliminated (Ebel et.al, 1965, cited in Courville, 2004, p. 40).

The item facility index ranged between 0.35 (items 13 and 23) and 1(items 16 and 26), with a higher value indicating that a greater proportion of examinees responded to those items correctly, and they were thus easiest items. In this study Farhady et. al (2006) criterion was used to determine the easiness of the items. Items with facility indexes below 0.37

were considered too difficult, and items with facility indexes beyond 0.63 were considered too easy. The ideal item facility index was considered to be 0.50.

Only items 13 and 23 were too difficult. Other items which all had item facility indices higher than (0.63) were found to be too easy. (Items: 1 to 12; 14 to 22; 24 to 32; 34 to 38; 40 to 45; and 48 to 50) .Only four items had normal and acceptable item facility indices. (Items: 33, 39, 46, and 47). The results of Table 4 also show that the higher the facility index value the lower is the difficulty index. The item discrimination procedure suggested by Farhady et. al(2006) was used in this study. Items which show discrimination value beyond 0.40 can be acceptable and the ideal item discrimination index is unity (Farhady et. al, 2006).

The range of the discrimination index found was -0.05 to 0.58 (see Table 4).

TABLE 4.
ITEM ANALYSIS

		Item difficulty	Item discrimination
N	Valid	50	50
	Missing	0	0
Mean		.2126	.2194
Range		.65	.63
Minimum		.00	-.05
Maximum		.65	.58

Items 19 and 20 discriminated negatively, in other words the most knowledgeable examinees got these items wrong and the least knowledgeable examinees got them right. The negative discrimination indexes for items 19 and 20 might indicate that these items measured something other than what the rest of the test was measuring. Table 5 shows the relationship between item difficulty and item discrimination for each PNU written test item administered to 34 participants. Item Difficulty Index (ID) and Discrimination Index (ID) for Each PNU written test items analyzed for 50 test items

It indicates that there is a relationship between item's difficulty index and its discrimination index. In items which had a very high (or very low) facility indexes(lower than 0.37 or beyond 0.63), the value of the discrimination indexes were much less than those items which had a mid-range item facility items (including items 33, 39, 46, and 47 which all had satisfactorily facility indexes). Some items had low discrimination index, but the item's facility index was high (such as items 3, 16, and 26) , these might be interpreted the items as being too easy for almost the entire set of examinees, and probably for that reason not providing much discrimination between high ability and low ability examinees. Only six items (including items 6, 9, 13, 31, 39, and 46) had acceptable item discrimination. In other words the item discrimination indices for 44 items were lower than 0.40. Items 3, 16, and 26 had the worst item discrimination indices (ID = 0).

The reliability of the PNU written test was checked on 34 subjects. Cronbach's alpha statistic was computed for the 50 test items and a reliability of .78 was obtained which is considerably higher than the minimum required value of 0.70.

TABLE 5.
RELIABILITY STATISTICS OF THE PNU WRITTEN TEST

Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.783	50

The guideline adopted from Lord 1952 was used to interpret reliability coefficients for the present study. The measure of reliability used was Cronbach's Alpha. This is the general form of the more commonly reported KR-20 and can be applied to tests composed of items with different numbers of points given for different response alternatives. The table 5 presents the distribution of the PNU written test in terms of the skills or sub skills tested.

TABLE 5.
DISTRIBUTION OF THE QUESTIONS OF PNU WRITTEN TEST IN TERMS OF SKILLS OR SUB-SKILL

Skill Sub-skill	Frequency Questions	Percentage
Listening comprehension	30	60%
Stress & Intonation	3	6%
Vocabulary	16	32%
Grammar	1	2%
	Total=50	

According to this table, the present PNU written test consists of four parts of listening comprehension, stress and intonation, vocabulary, and grammar. Most of the questions are from listening comprehension part (60%) and grammar part has the least number of the questions, that is, only one question (2%).

IV. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The learning situation in the present study (which was distance education) and was different from regular classroom teaching can be considered the next factor. The EFL BA students had to study the whole content of the books (interchange intro and interchange 1) and participate in both teacher- made and the centralized final exam. The students and the instructor in this study were all aware of the conditions of the present study in distance mode. Orientation programs can also be useful for the staff new to distance education. According to Pritchett (2004), an orientation workshop should include an orientation to the delivery system, analysis of prospective students, instructional design issues, interaction and learning activities, feedback and assessment, hands-on experience, and logistics of the distance learning program at the institution.

Item analysis was used to calculate the discriminatory power, difficulty index, and choice distribution of individual items. The basic purpose of using these methods was to give a numerical value to the relationship between scores for the total test and the score for a single item. This numerical value is the index of the discriminatory effectiveness, easiness, and distribution of the choices for the items. Although there are various similar ways of calculating the discrimination index, the simplified technique of selecting the upper and lower, which has been suggested in Farhady, et. al (2006) was used in this study.

The researcher obtained test score distributions and a list of students' scores in percentile rank order. Each item was identified by number and the correct option was indicated. Discrimination indices were computed for the test items which are reported in Table 4 the findings are important in that poor discriminatory items are a valuable sign towards ambiguous wording, grey areas of opinion and perhaps, even wrong keys. Out of 50 items, three items (including items 3, 16, 26) have unacceptable item discrimination indices. This implies that these items are deficient and should be either modified or discarded from the test.

The quality of the PNU written test as a whole was assessed by estimating its internal consistency. Questions in PNU written test were mainly very short and isolated, they were easy to mark and gave reliable results. Thus the given PNU written test produced relatively consistent scores for the same individual on separate items of the test. Reliability is inversely related to the amount of measurement error in test scores. Thus it can be concluded that the test was reliable and had acceptable internal consistency(r = 0.783, N=50) with a little amount of measurement error. This supports the assumption that the test under analysis is composed of items measuring a single subject area or underlying ability.

Some factors contribute to the positive relationship between the scores obtained in two different administrations in PNU system. One reason for the close relationship between the findings of the two administrations might be due to employing professional PNU instructors who identify the main target of teaching and learning and teach towards them. Here the instructors’ expertise which had noticeable positive impact on assessment procedure increased the assessment quality in terms of real reflection of the students’ knowledge.

Hence, the second factor can be related to applying suitable textbooks by the instructors for the purpose of teaching and practicing. This factor is justified based on what Motamedi (2009) suggests. He argued that preparing the appropriate content according to the approved topic of every subject by using the advanced scientific findings is one of the main activities of Payam-e-Nour University. These textbooks are regulated by programming instruction to facilitate the learning processes and thus lead to reasonable assessment.

The findings of the study revealed that high reliability and high correlation between PNU teacher – made test and the written test do not guarantee the validity especially content validity of a national test. Training testers and employing well – trained test makers should be taken into consideration by instructional policy makers of PNU system for standardization of the conversation test in line with other national tests, for example, state university and Azad university tests.

The findings have also got some pedagogical implications for test developers to determine the examinees’ needs which are going to be analyzed, and clarify the main purpose for testing. This emphasizes the role of using valid and reliable assessment tools. Testers should use assessment tools that are appropriate for the target population. Alternative assessment methods that have less adverse impact can also be considered by test developers.

PNU test designers need to examine different ways to use the test that either reduces or is free of adverse impact. Yet another pedagogical implication of the present study is that when tests are used over a long period of time, it is likely that some items will leak out. The students can easily access the sample final questions on the NET. To help maintain security, test developers can introduce new alternate forms. If alternate forms of the test are available, security can be increased by varying the form used. The result will be higher value for the reliability of the test and preventing measurement error. To improve the reliability, suitable and uniform assessment conditions should be used by test constructors.

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A Study of English Vocabulary Learning Strategies Used by Ethnic Minority Students in Leshan Normal University, Sichuan, China

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***Abstract*—This paper probes into the English vocabulary learning strategies adopted by ethnic minority students in Leshan Normal University. In a study carried out in Leshan Normal University, altogether 250 non-English majors from different departments are chosen at random as research subjects, of whom 125 are Han students and the rest are ethnic minority students. Based on the data analysis, the study finds out: firstly, all students in the study share in common that English vocabulary should be acquired in context and by practice instead of being acquired simply by rote; secondly, the ethnic minority students adopt nearly all the vocabulary learning strategies more frequently than the Han students; and finally, the Han students and the ethnic minority students differ mainly in the following vocabulary learning strategies: guessing strategy, mother tongue dependence strategy, selective attention strategy, visual repetition strategy, association strategy and dictionary strategy. By this study, the paper tends to help ethnic minority students to take advantages of diverse vocabulary learning strategies in their English study and further to put forward some implications for EFL teachers in Leshan Normal University.**

***Index Terms*—English vocabulary acquisition, English vocabulary learning strategies, ethnic minority students**

I. Introduction

With the enrollment expansion of colleges and universities, there are an increasing number of ethnic minority students in Leshan Normal University. Han nationality college students differ greatly in English vocabulary learning, let alone students from different ethnic groups. The ethnic minority college students have their own culture and mother tongue, speaking Chinese as their second language and English as the third one. Therefore, it is worthwhile to study how they study English. Based on a study carried out in the university comparing the Han students and the ethnic minority students in terms of English vocabulary learning, the paper is supposed to help ethnic minority college students to make the best use of English vocabulary learning strategies and further put forward some advice to EFL teachers in Leshan Normal University.

II. Previous Studies of English Vocabulary Learning Strategies

As a matter of fact, English vocabulary learning strategies play a vital role in strengthening English-learners' learning ability. Foreign researchers did abundant studies on vocabulary learning strategies. Hatch and Brown (1995) identified five steps in vocabulary learning: source, a clear image, learning, a strong memory and using. Luppescu and Day (1993) found out that students who often use dictionaries in their vocabulary study did a better job on vocabulary tests than those who do not use dictionaries. Lawson and Hogben (1996) studied college students in Australia studying Italian vocabulary, finding out how they study the meaning of new Italian words, that they often repeat the new words' spellings and meanings and that only a few students use context to guess the possible meanings of the new words. Kafipour and Naveh (2011) studied the effect of vocabulary learning strategies on reading comprehension, finding out that certain strategies make a difference in reading comprehension. Nosidlak (2013) pointed out that the vocabulary learning strategies adopted by eminent English-learners and further probed into the relation between language competence and certain vocabulary strategies. By using the best vocabulary learning strategies, students who are poor in vocabulary may save time and effort in their English study.

In China, Gu and Johnson (1996) studied the English vocabulary learning strategies adopted by Chinese university students and further probed into the relation between strategies and performances, finding out that two meta-cognitive strategies (selective attention and self-initiation) help the students most in vocabulary learning while strategies like visual repetition of new vocabulary hinder the students' vocabulary study. Fan (2003) did a survey, finding out that the vocabulary learning strategies of excellent vocabulary learners should be introduced to poor learners and that all students are supposed to be encouraged to develop their own efficient vocabulary learning strategies. Ding (2006) made a comparison between good learners and poor ones in terms of vocabulary learning, pointing out that correct use of strategies matters most while frequent use of strategies does not. Wu (2011) presented a detailed observation of vocabulary learning strategies adopted by non-English majors in colleges and found out the reason why poor learners fail to use vocabulary learning strategies effectively and efficiently, advocating that English learners need more knowledge of appropriate vocabulary learning strategies under specific guidance.

III. RESEARCH DESIGN

The research began from September 2016 to February 2017, which consisted of the following 4 stages: first, designing questionnaire and selecting subjects; secondly, handing out questionnaires and recollecting the data; thirdly, analyzing the data by SPSS 13.0 and verifying the results by interviews; and finally, writing the paper.

Research Subjects

In the research, 250 second-year non-English majors were chosen at random as the research subjects, among whom 125 students were Han students and the rest were ethnic minority students (including 70 Yi students, 30 Tibetan students, 10 Mongolia students and 15 Hui students). The subjects were from different departments including Computer Department, Accounting Department, PE Department, Political Science and Law Department, etc.

Research Questions

The research questions about the English vocabulary learning strategies adopted by the ethnic minority students in Leshan Normal University are listed as follows:

1. What are the current vocabulary levels of Han students and ethnic minority students respectively?
2. What are the most difficult problems in English vocabulary study, in Han students' eyes and in ethnic minority students' eyes respectively?
3. What vocabulary learning strategies are used by Han students and ethnic minority students respectively?
4. What are the commonly-used strategies of Han students and ethnic minority students respectively?
5. What are the similarities and differences in strategy use between Han students and ethnic minority students?

Questionnaire Design

The questionnaire on English vocabulary learning strategies includes four parts. Part one is about the subjects' background information such as name, age, gender, ethnic identity, major and CET scores, etc. Part two is about their major problems about learning English vocabulary. Part three is about their preferences and beliefs to English vocabulary learning, specifically, by rote, by context or by practice? And finally, part four consists of questions and statements about different vocabulary learning strategies such as guessing strategy, mother tongue dependence strategy, selective attention strategy, visual repetition strategy, association strategy and dictionary strategy.

Procedures

Firstly, the author gave 50 students questionnaires as a pretest to find the possible problems which may appear in the research. And then the main study was carried out in which the questionnaires were distributed to all 250 subjects during their English class with the help of their English teachers. Before finishing the questionnaires, all the subjects were informed by the English teachers that they are supposed to finish the questionnaires honestly, conscientiously, independently and anonymously within 20 minutes.

Data Collection and Data Analysis

The author recollected the questionnaires from the English teachers and then inputed the data into computers for further study and analysis. Acturally, 244 valid questionnaires were recollected, and the other six were excluded in that four subjects didn't finish all the questions and two participants did more choices than needed. Therefore, the 244 questionnaires were available for further analysis and research. By using the SPSS 13.0, the author analyzed the valid data. Further, in the process of analysis the author discontinuously implemented short interviews with 50 subjects who did the questionnaires aiming to understand the results better and to verify the validity of the results as well as to find more problems in the students' vocabulary study.

IV. MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE RESEARCH RESULTS

In the research, after a comparative study of English vocabulary learning strategies between Han students and ethnic minority students in Leshan Normal University by means of questionnaires, data analysis as well as interviews, the author concluded the following findings:

1. It is clear that all students in the study, Han students or ethnic minority students, share in common that English vocabulary should be acquired in context and by practice instead of being acquired simply by rote.
2. It is found that the ethnic minority students adopt nearly all the vocabulary learning strategies more frequently than the Han students.
3. It is found that Han students tend to use guessing strategy in English vocabulary study more often than their ethnic minority counterparts.
4. It is found that ethnic minority students tend to use more mother tongue dependence strategies in English vocabulary study than Chinese dependence strategies which Han students often adopt.
5. It is found that ethnic minority students tend to use selective attention strategy more frequently than Han students in English vocabulary study.

6. It is found that ethnic minority students tend to use visual repetition strategy more often than Han students in English vocabulary study.

7. It is found that ethnic minority students tend to use sound association strategy more frequently than Han students who often use meaning association strategy in English vocabulary study.

8. It is found that ethnic minority students tend to use the dictionary for content understanding more frequently than Han students in English vocabulary study.

V. Implications of the Research

The above-mentioned questionnaires and interviews have also revealed some problems in English vocabulary learning of the students in Leshan Normal University. Both Han students and ethnic minority students have their strong points and weak points in vocabulary study respectively. In order to improve the students' English vocabulary learning and the EFL teachers' teaching, the paper puts forward some advice as follows.

1. Most the students want to master English vocabulary, but they do not study hard. The students, Han students or ethnic minority students, need to make a detailed plan for their vocabulary accumulation under the correct guidance of the EFL teachers. Also, the interview shows that most of the students pronounce English vocabulary in a wrong way and they complain that they do not have any partners to rectify their mistakes in the pronunciation of the vocabulary. Thus, in this case they need a cooperation in that the teachers can not help them anytime and anywhere. They can make joint efforts, share vocabulary learning strategies and communicate common problems with each other so as to make progress together. What's more, the students need to be aware that the plan is on a long term basis and they have a long way to go in English vocabulary study.

2. Obviously, English vocabulary learning strategies are of substantial significance in the students' English vocabulary acquisition. Therefore, the EFL teachers need share different vocabulary learning strategies to help the ethnic minority students to study vocabulary effectively. Further, the findings in the above-mentioned study show clearly that there are big differences in English vocabulary learning strategies between Han students and ethnic minority students. Thus, in English classes, EFL teachers should concentrate more on the factors that influence ethnic minority students' English vocabulary learning strategies, such as educational background, cultural background, different mother tongue, motivation, etc. The teachers should also realize that ethnic minority students might have a weaker basis in English compared with Han students so that they need more patience in teaching ethnic minority students.

3. Basically, EFL teachers are supposed to stimulate the students to use the most effective learning strategies on their own. Besides, EFL teachers should let students be aware that vocabulary study is a task not only in classroom but also in their spare time independently or by cooperation with classmates. After all, limited classroom study can not enable them to study all vocabulary. It is also true that students do need some spare time to reflect and review what they have learned in the class on their own and that they also need some occasions in which they can practice those vocabulary. Otherwise, there is a possibility that the students only study the vocabulary in class and the newly-learned vocabulary will be forgotten soon after the class is over.

4. In the English class, EFL teachers are supposed to set up a comfortable and positive atmosphere for both Han students and ethnic minority students to learn English vocabulary and introduce diverse approaches to learn English vocabulary, for instance, the EFL teachers may use TV programs or radio to let the students practice vocabulary they have learned through listening practice. By this way, the students can vividly have a closer understanding of those words and phrases in different contexts other than in textbooks, which can undoubtedly reinforce their memory of the vocabulary. The findings of the above-mentioned study show that ethnic minority students tend to use visual repetition strategy more often than Han students in English vocabulary study so that the teachers should do better in accordance with this.

5. Ellis (1994) held that language learners' motivation did have a positive effect on the quality of learning strategies they adopt. Therefore, the more motivated vocabulary learners tend to do a better job in the use of vocabulary learning strategies. It is true that the students, especially non-English major students, lack a clear goal of English study and confidence in English vocabulary. So, they need to be motivated by the EFL teachers who are supposed to arouse the students' interest in English study and to improve their confidence in English vocabulary. The findings in the above-mentioned questionnaires and interviews show that ethnic minority students are more motivated in English vocabulary study compared with their Han counterparts. What ethnic minority students need is a correct guidance of appropriate vocabulary learning strategies.

6. Prabhu (1987) firstly put forward the task-based language learning, which refers to students' studying second languages by accomplishing the various kinds of tasks in the process of language learning. And numerous researchers have proved that TBI is an efficient and effective in language education. The same is to English vocabulary teaching. Therefore, the EFL teachers can design different kinds of tasks to facilitate the students' vocabulary study. For example, the EFL teachers can require the students to do vocabulary presentation by turns in which every student is supposed to introduce a new word to the whole class with detailed explanations as well as usages. By this way, the students have to prepare a lot before presentation, which can help a lot in their vocabulary study in that they will try to find the best way to introduce the word to the whole class.

7. The findings in the above-mentioned study show clearly that both Han students and ethnic minority students hold a

negative view of learning English vocabulary by rote while being in favor of learning vocabulary through context. Therefore, the EFL teachers are supposed to introduce the skill of guessing the meaning of a certain word in a context. In addition, the more input, the more output. The EFL teachers should assign appropriate reading materials to the students to read regularly on their own in the spare time, after all, the textbooks are limited in content and quantity. For example, the original novel and newspapers as well as magazines are good choices, especially those to their like and interest, which can help a lot in their vocabulary study in that interest is the best teacher.

8. The EFL teachers are supposed to master different kinds of English vocabulary learning strategies before introducing them to the students. What's more, because of the differences between Han students and ethnic minority students in many ways, especially the big difference in English vocabulary learning strategies they use respectively, the EFL teachers should come up with different learning strategies that can suit different students best. On the other hand, the students need to try different strategies first before finding the best way because of individual differences. In the process of the trial, the EFL teachers can help the students to make records about their different progress out of different vocabulary learning strategies so as to find the best way.

VI. CONCLUSION

To sum up, different English learners consciously or subconsciously adopt different vocabulary learning strategies in their study. What matters most is that English learners should try to find the vocabulary learning strategies that suit them best. Cohen (1990) stressed that there is no such thing as a single learning strategy that will be appropriate and effective for all the students or for all the tasks. Therefore, language learners should employ diverse strategies in different occasions in accordance with their different conditions and different needs in language learning. And for ethnic minority students who have their own educational background, cultural background and mother tongue, they need to know more about learning strategies and try more to find the best one. On one hand, in English teaching, the EFL teachers should employ different skills and design various tasks to teach vocabulary instead of directly asking the students to memorize the words and phrase by hard work. On the other hand, the students should realize that vocabulary acquisition is a long-term process that requires not only the appropriate way but also the time and the energy. Besides, vocabulary study calls for the cooperation not only among students to communicate and learn from each other but also the cooperation between the students and the teachers to make joint efforts so as to find the most efficient and effective way.

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Restudying Oral Corrective Feedbacks in EFL Classes of Jinan University—A Statistical Analysis of Discrepancies via SAS Software*

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***Abstract*—This paper intends to restudy teachers' oral corrective feedbacks in English classes of Jinan University, China. Based on the data collection from classroom observations, questionnaires and interviews, with the use of SAS (Statistical Analysis System) software, the author discusses the findings of three research questions designed and reveals the discrepancies between students and teachers with regard to the frequencies of each technique teachers employed and student's corresponding preferences. At the end of the paper, the author suggests the pedagogical implications of this research and points out that measure needs to be taken to deal with the discrepancies; otherwise it will affect the effectiveness of foreign language teaching and learning.**

***Index Terms*—EFL class, oral corrective feedback, techniques, discrepancies, implications**

I. Introduction

For a foreign language learner, making errors is almost inevitable. Although error treatment has for long been a controversial issue for linguists and language teachers, few would agree that we should just leave them alone. Corder S. P. (1967) argues that "errors are an integral part of language learning". David Horner (1988) suggests that in language acquisition, corrective feedback is an indispensible component, and correction in itself is normally regarded and well received as it's an essential classroom activity. Even Ellis (2008), who had held a skeptical view towards error correction, later admitted that "errors can show the psychological process of language learning, so they are not completely insignificant." In fact, just as what Miroslaw Pawlak (2014) wrote, when learners are making errors, it is a fine good thing because they are testing their hypothesis about the target language they are learning. If they violate the rules, the feedbacks they receive will enhance their cognitive knowledge. For the teacher's part, by analysis of the errors, he can also evaluate and assess their communicative competence on grammar, culture and context appropriateness. Therefore, error study, especially corrective feedback study, has both pedagogical implications for teachers as well as practical significance for learners.

II. Previous Studies

There were a few researchers who fixed their attentions on students' and teachers' beliefs and attitudes toward error correction. Ilona Leki (1991) was among the earliest. He argued that a given teacher and class of students must agree about what constitute improvement in writing and suggests that students' expectations may need to be modified if students are to profit from teacher feedbacks on their compositions. Moreover, students are needed to alter their expectations if they intend to benefit from the teacher's feedbacks. R. A. Schulz (1996) explored on this subject and conducted a pioneering research at University of Arizona, before reporting that discrepancies were most noticeable on the questions of error correction, the least agreement was on the desirability of correcting written mistakes, while the highest disagreement was found on the desirability of correcting oral mistakes. (ibid: 346) S. Loewen et al (2009) investigated a group of learners studying different target languages, such as French, Latin, Spanish etc, and revealed their different attitudes over the role of grammar instruction and error corrections and found that they were varied. Nuriye and Selami (2017:37-51) fixed their attention on speaking class, however, and surveyed the teachers' understanding and recognition of error correction before summarizing the strategies that the teachers employed in correction. Dea Rizky Ananda et al (2017) used qualitative approaches to find out what corrective feedback the students prefer, when and how the correction should be executed. Their research revealed that, for Indonesian college students investigated, repetition turned out to be most wanted and majority of the students preferred to be correctly immediately in classroom.

Domestically, Qiu Zhaojie (1997) did a research in this filed and published his paper in *Foreign Languages World*, an influential language journal reviewed by Shanghai University of Foreign Studies, one of the best universities in

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language studies. With the data collected from questionnaires and interviews, the students' attitudes and requirements were obtained. He thought Hendrickson's (1978) five questions speak for his needs and gathered information regarding the following five questions: (1) is it a must learner's errors should be corrected? (2) If yes, when the teacher should correct learner's errors? (3) Of all errors, which should be not ignored? (4) How should the teachers correct the errors? (5) Who should take the initiative and do the correction job?

Guang Shi (2017) followed suit and employed Hendrickson's five questions, explored the relationships between teachers' and students' attitudes, teachers' actual corrective moves and their effects in college English classrooms in China. It was found that negotiation of form, favored by both teachers and students, had the best effects among all error correction types.

To summarize the previous researches conducted in other countries than China, they either focused too much on "form", that is, adopted qualitative approach or were conducted in SLA context, while in China, English is being taught as a foreign language---English was not acquired, but learned for Chinese college students. The domestic researches heavily relied on Hendrickson's five questions of "what to correct, whether to correct, when to correct and how to correct, who to correct", without probing specifically into what practical techniques the teachers are using in classrooms, which provide more value to the teaching practice. What's more, none of the researchers chose to observe the teacher's classes and took inventory of the actual correction strategies the teachers employed and investigated students' corresponding acceptances and preferences towards each one. Language teachers, especially when English is being taught as a foreign language (EFL) in China, researchers should attach more importance to gathering first-hand data from classroom teaching practice and the actual correction techniques.

This paper intends to fill this gap by collecting data from classroom observations, questionnaires, and interviews, and obtain information for the following three questions: 1) What are the practical moves in teachers' corrective feedbacks and their respective employment frequencies? 2) What are the students' views and preferences? 3) Are there any discrepancies between students' attitudes and the employment frequency?

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A. Krashen: Affective Filter Hypothesis

Stephen Krashen (1982) put forward the Affective Filter Hypothesis and Input Hypothesis, in which he observed that input is the precondition for learning a language. The input should be comprehensible and better to be comprehended. It should also contain i+1, which means that it has to structure a bit beyond the acquirer's current level, and but it is not enough to have input alone. In order to make the learners learn in an effective way, a low "affective filter" is necessary, because it allows the input "in". (See figure1)

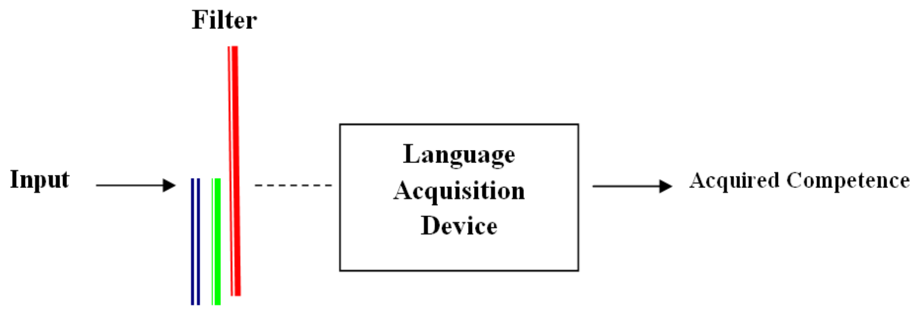

Figure 1. Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis

Though a hypothesis it is, the Affective Filter Hypothesis has significant connotations for language practitioners. It means that so long as the learner are learning in a highly-tense environment where they feel no security but anxiety, no comfort but dissatisfaction, no willingness but indispositions, even if the input is appropriate and sufficient which provide the i+1, he still cannot be a successful learner. A low-anxiety environment should be a prerequisite. As the teachers, we need to provide the learners a low or weak filter atmosphere. It holds true when dealing with errors on teacher's part. Students are conscious of their self-image. So when the teachers are giving corrective feedbacks, if not processed as expected as they like them to be, emotions occur and filters arise. Even the best methodology can be filtered while everything left in learner's mind is repulsion. Despite Krashen & Terrell (1983) later suggested that probably none of the methods can totally eliminate filters, the teachers' goal in classroom practice is foremost guarantee that filters should not be built up inside the learners, or at least be minimized.

B. Learner-centeredness Approach

About 400 years ago, Galileo stated that he could not teach, his job was only to help the students discover it in themselves. Tudor (1996) said, "We are teaching people, not the material." Hutchinson and Waters (1987) put forward the leaner-centeredness approach and argued that the learning process should be totally decided by learner. The teacher's role is to influence them, be a watcher, facilitator, coordinator and evaluator. The learner, with their internal knowledge, determines what to learn and how to learn it. Learner's motivation and emotions, his acceptance of the teaching methodology is the key factor to the success of teaching. Adopting learner-centeredness approach, language teaching can never be a solo; instead, it should cater to the student's views, attitudes, likings and expectations. Despite this approach was later challenged by other theorists and practitioners, it goes with saying that learning is mainly the learning's job, especially when language learning is referred to. Hence, the teachers, with their oral corrective moves, which is an essential part of English classroom teaching, should never underplay the students' feedbacks and the discrepancies, if possibly exist, between teacher's corrective moves and students' acceptance.

IV. METHODOLOGY

A. Research Questions

This research set out to investigate the actual oral corrective techniques teachers use in teaching practice in Jinan University, China and intended to find out the discrepancies between the teacher's corrective moves and student's expectations. To achieve this goal, the paper targeted at obtaining the answers for the following three questions: 1) What are the practical moves in teachers' corrective feedbacks and their respective employment frequencies? 2) What are the students' views and preferences? 3) Are there any discrepancies between students' attitudes and the employment frequency?

B. Subjects

The research subjects included students, as well as teachers since both parties are involved. The number of subjects is 108, among which 37 males and 71 females. They are all from English Department, Shenzhen Tourism College of Jinan University, a key university which belongs to "211 project". There were 4 full-time teachers from English department who participated in the investigation. Their courses included pronunciation course, intensive English and English listening & speaking.

C. Instruments

To obtain the original data, the researcher chose to observe the classroom, distribute questionnaires and interview the subjects. As an important part of the research, the paper chose SAS software to analyze the data. The employment of SAS software is to reveal the standard deviation and correlation of the two variables, namely the preferred corrective moves of the teacher and the students' attitude towards each one.

D. Data Collection

The research underwent two periods. During the first period, the researcher, with the agreement of the teacher, sat at the rear part of the classroom and observe the classroom activity. He then noted down the correctives moves. In order not to interfere with the teaching operation, the research did not participate. During the second period, the research handed out the questionnaires to the students. With monitoring and guarantee that their feedbacks will not be shown to the teacher, students completed the survey independently. The researcher gathered the forms before interviewing them.

V. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

A. What Are the Practical Moves in Teachers' Corrective Feedbacks and Their Respective Employment Frequencies?

Results:

Lyster & Ranta (1997) generalized six types of error correction techniques through classroom observation: (1) *explicit correction*, (2) *recast*, (3) *clarification request*, (4) *metalingusitic feedback*, (5) *elicitation*, and (6) *repetition of error*. For convenience of qualitative and quantitive analysis, the author will base the research on their research results. Yet in Jinan University, considering the different teaching environment and culture, the author also discovered that apart from these six, sometimes the teachers did not utter any words and simply resort to *body language* to imply there may be some errors in the students' utterance. Moreover, under certain circumstances, the teachers simply interrupted, thus it was termed *interruption*.

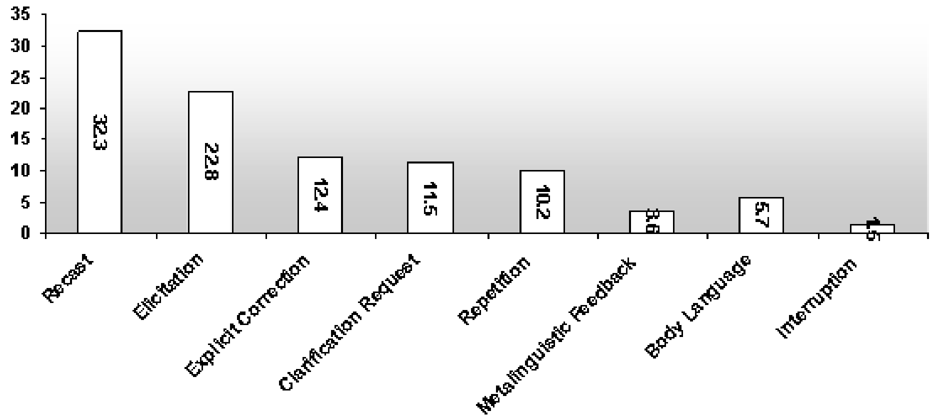

Figure 2 Ratio of teachers' corrective moves

As we can see from figure above, for the ratios of teacher's employment of techniques, recast (32.3%) and elicitation (22.8%) ranked the highest while interruption ranked the lowest, with a ratio of only 1.5%. The following table presents specific numbers of corrective moves each teacher made in the class activity. Four teachers (1-4) taught pronunciation, oral and intensive English courses respectively. Table 1 elaborately records their usage frequencies of each technique and thus as teachers, their preferences can be revealed.

TABLE I.
THE NUMBERS AND RATIOS OF THE MOVES

Teacher / Technique	Teacher 1 (Total: 146)	Teacher 2 (Total: 99)	Teacher 3 (Total: 90)	Teacher 4 (Total: 77)
Recast	48(33%)	30 (30%)	32 (36%)	23 (31%)
Explicit Correction	34 (24%)	22 (23%)	18 (20%)	14 (22%)
Elicitation	21 (14%)	11 (11%)	10 (12%)	9 (9%)
Clarification Request	20 (14%)	14 (14%)	14 (13%)	10 (18%)
Repetition of Error	13 (9%)	10 (10%)	6 (7%)	9 (10%)
Metalingusitic Feedback	5 (3%)	4 (4%)	3 (4%)	1 (1%)
Body Language	2 (1%)	7 (7%)	5 (7%)	8 (8%)
Interruption	3 (2%)	1 (1%)	2 (1%)	1 (1%)

Discussions:

The teachers' most preferred corrective moves are not necessarily producing best results.

From figure 2 and table 1, it was clearly presented that teachers, regardless of which course they are teaching, like to use recast as the primary technique to correct the students. It was partially because of its easy availability and teachers' first reaction to students' errors because they tend to repeat part or the whole lines that the students just said. As the initial of teacher's doing so is to avoid hurting the students' dignity while achieving the goal of correcting, recast had been proved to be the least effective method of correction.

Lyster & Ranta's (1997) conducted a research 20 years ago and found that despite the teachers' well intentions and partial likings towards recast, it had already been proved to be the most invalid and ineffective method. They even claimed that recast is not only useless, but also even prevent students from repairing the errors. In Lyster & Ranta's research, for the four teachers, as part of the subject, of all the corrective moves, 55% are recasts for its easy access for tongue and operability. Nevertheless, later on, they were stunned by the fact that recast does not help students correct the error because they can not repair themselves at all when the next similar language context occur in which they are likely to make the similar mistakes. So they concluded that recast does not lead to any repair at all.

From what I can see in the English classroom teaching, the same things was happening---recast accounts for 32.3% of the total corrective moves. This is particularly worrisome. The researcher himself once saw a student who did a presentation on a smart gadget which enables the handicapped men to listen and feel through an application installed on smartphone:

S: Through the use of this smart Application installed on our iPhone, we can manipulate their listening. (Lexical *error)*

T: Through the use of this smart Application installed on our iPhone, we can help with their listening (Recast)

The teacher repeated his utterance and recast a correct version. At the moment, the student's uptake was positive and valid. However, several days later, when I was in the same class, he failed to use the same word again. Another student in intensive reading class, proved that elicitation was not effective either. She was then arguing with another classmate:

S: Katherine and I were good friends. He used to be with me whenever possible. (Grammatical)

T: Is Katherine a boy or girl? (elicitation)

S: A girl of course.

T: So you should use…?

S: She…

In this case, the girl's uptake was immediate and impressive---she realized that she had made a mistake and instantly corrected them. The girl self-repaired the error once the teacher elicited her to correct herself while later on when she was delivering a speech on *My Hero,* she made the same mistake again. Although these incidences reconfirmed what Lyster and Ranta's assumptions, it is a little bit rash to conclude that these 2 moves are ineffective at all. However, it at least indicated that the most preferred corrective moves do not necessarily overlap their efficacies.

B. What Are the Students' Views and Preferences?

Results

In this section, the researcher handed out 108 pieces of questionnaires and managed to collect the data of students' views and preferences towards each corrective technique that the teachers used. In accordance with students' feedbacks, different scores are given from strongly disagree 0, disagree1, undecided 2, agree 3 to strongly agree 4. Table II reports specifically the scores for the eight techniques:

TABLE II.
STUDENT'S VIEWS ON EACH CORRECTION TECHNIQUE

Opinions / Techniques	Strongly agree/ Agree			Undecided	Strongly disagree/ Disagree		
	Strongly agree	Agree	Total		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Total
Explicit Correction	64	31	95 (85.7%)	6 (5.7%)	1	4	5 (4.7%)
Elicitation	55	28	83 (78.4%)	12 (11.3%)	8	9	17 (16.1%)
Repetition of Error	44	37	81 (76.4%)	14 (13.2%)	3	6	9 (8.5%)
Body Language	45	32	77 (72.6%)	15 (14.2%)	4	6	10 (9.4%)
Clarification Request	30	35	65 (61.3%)	15 (14.2%)	10	16	26 (24.5%)
Metalingusitic Feedback	26	29	57 (53.8%)	5 (4.7%)	27	19	46 (43.3%)
Recast	13	14	23 (21.7%)	19 (17.9%)	31	33	64 (60.3%)
Interruption	0	7	7 (6.6%)	8 (7.6%)	32	59	91 (85.8%)

It was suggested by table II that about 85.7% of the subjects preferred to be corrected explicitly. Of the 108 subjects, 64 expressed strong agreement and 31expressed agreement to explicit correction. For elicitation, 78.4% (55) of the students echoed strong agreement and 28 fed back with agreement. It was quite surprising that body language was the third most preferred, with the percentage of 72.6%. 45 students told the researcher that they strongly agree and 32 students agree to it. On the other hand, understandably interruption was the least liked corrective technique; with 85.8% of the subjects reported they did not like to be interrupted while speaking as they think it is rude and rash since they have not finished the talk. "It holds me back from accomplishing my speech and is affecting the fluency," one student said. Recast came next as the next most undesirable way of correction, with the a percentage as high as 60.3%. Totally only 27 students, of which 13 strongly agree and 14 agree, said they would accept this way, a comparatively low ratio as the total number of subjects is 108.

To obtain analytical data from SAS software and find out the discrepancies between the student's preferences and teachers' corrective methods, the author processed the data by adding up the total numbers of students who either strongly agree or agree a specific correction method. It was done for the easier operability of data processing and quantitative analysis.

TABLE III
RATIOS OF STUDENTS WHO STRONGLY AGREE OR AGREE

Category / Technique	Strongly agree (4)	Agree (3)	Ratio
Explicit Correction	64	31	19.5%
Elicitation	55	28	17.2%
Repetition of Error	44	37	16.6%
Body Language	45	32	15.8%
Clarification Request	30	35	13.1%
Metalingusitic Feedback	26	29	11.7%
Recast	13	14	4.7%
Interruption	0	7	1.4%

Table Ⅲ presents the figures of students who were holding favorable views towards the corrective techniques. This is table is done for the convenience of processing data in the next research question.

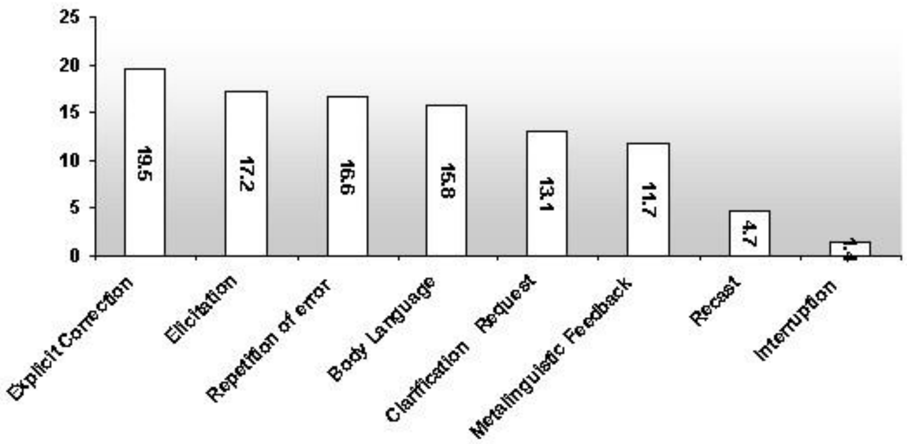

Figure 3 Ratio of students with favorable views

The highest column on Figure 3, as is evidently shown, is the explicit elicitation, while recast and interruption are the lowest two columns. What the author intends to do is to compare the data in Figure 2 and Figure 3, with the help of SAS software and find out their correlations, which is the main task of the next phase.

Discussions:

There are basically three facts that aroused the author's interests from the results of research question 2. The first fact is that except for the recast and interruption which the students objected to apparently, there were no significant distinctions between the other 6 techniques, ranging over 17.2% to 11.7%. The reason for this is, if we delve into the psychological activity of the students, difficult for us to find out. That is the corrective moves that the teachers made are those which do not press them to correct right way and to large degree maintain their self image. While Jinan University is a key university in China which belongs to "211 project", the majority of the students were rigorously recruited and chosen from high schools all over China, they have a higher self-esteem from years of successful academic career. They cannot stand being put down in front of their teacher and classmates; being corrected directly and abruptly a case. Therefore, it is understandable for them to be averse to the techniques which involve interruptions and recasts.

The second fact was discovered through the researcher's analysis and collection of the interview recordings. The author interviewed the students and raised the questions about the reasons why they like or dislike certain corrective moves. They explained that it has something to do their favorite teaching style and the teachers' personal charisma. For instance, one student who claimed to prefer clarification request explained the reason why he liked it because when teacher asked for correction and said, "Can you explain it in a clearer way, please?" the teacher proved to be patient and caring. Likewise, when correcting, if the teacher did not utter a single word, instead, he grimaced or shook his head with a smiling face or any other gestures, implicitly signaling that is a wrong expression, the teacher was a humorous veteran. Quite on the opposite, if the teacher uses the metalinguistic feedback, such as "not in that way", he saw it as an indication that the teacher is being too arbitrary.

As for interruption, we still have some students who like it. For them, they do not care when and how the teachers correct them since any errors and mistakes are simply "intolerable". "I do not care if my teacher corrects me to tears.

That is all about language learning." One student said, "And when I was uttering a long sentence, if he does not interrupt me, both of us will forget about it after I finish." While this is a minority, far more students reported that they feel hurt and discouraged when interrupted. Some even regarded it as a sign that they are academically inferior in the teachers' minds, since when the academically better students made a mistake, teachers corrected them in a gentle and caring way. The learners with lower self-esteem often finish the learning task with unsatisfactory performance. Thus, it is the author's belief that interruption should be avoided thoroughly.

C. Are There Any Discrepancies between Students' Attitudes and the Employment Frequency?

With research question 1 and 2, as Figure 2 and 3 has shown, the teacher's preferences of corrective technique and students' corresponding attitudes were recorded and illustrated. For the next research question, the author is going to focus on "Are there any discrepancies between students' attitudes and the frequencies of teachers' corrective technique employment?" In this phase, a statistical software (SAS) will be employed. The major purpose of using SAS is to find out the standard deviation through comparing the two sets of data collected from questionnaire and classroom observations. Teacher's employments of the each corrective technique are defined as variable one while student's corresponding attitudes are defined as variable two. SAS software will then further analyze the correlation coefficients (CC) between the two sets of data. With the rationale of SAS software, if the CC is below 0, it indicates that there are no correlations, with which we can draw a conclusion that there are discrepancies between the teacher's corrective moves and students' expectations.

Results:

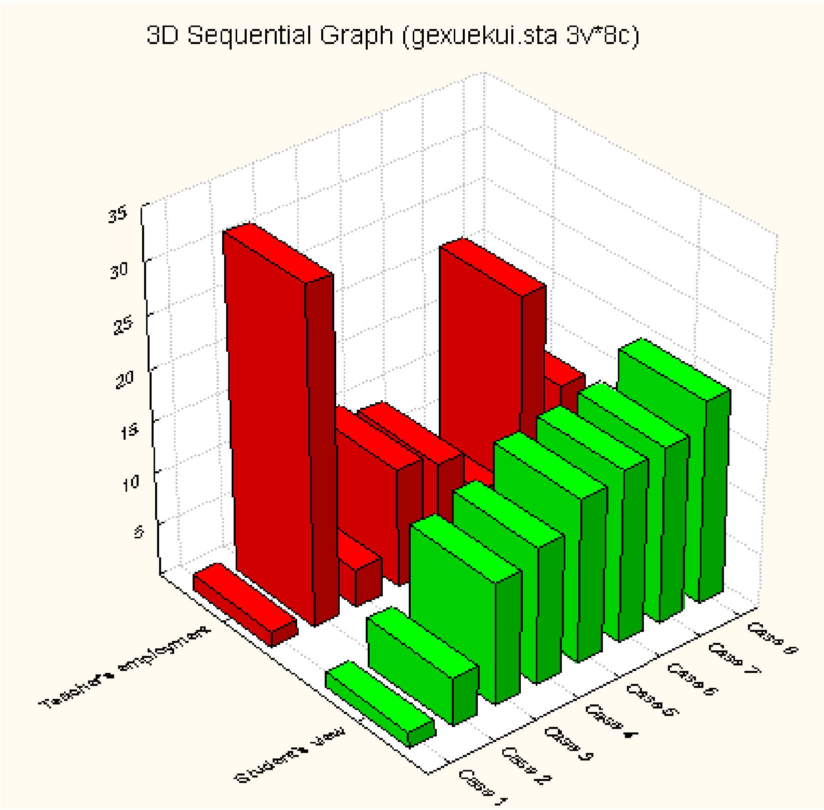

Figure 4 Comparison of student's views and teacher's employment

Figure 4 is full-color 3D sequential graph which indicates a sharp comparison between the two sets of data. Table Ⅳ shows the standard deviations (SD) of the two variables. According to Wikipedia, "In statistics, the standard deviation is a measure that is used to quantify the amount of variation or dispersion of a set of data values. A low standard deviation indicates that the data points tend to be close to the mean (also called the expected value) of the set, while a high standard deviation indicates that the data points are spread out over a wider range of values."

TABLE Ⅳ.
STANDARD DEVIATION OF TWO VARIABLES

	Descriptive Statistics (gexuekui.sta)				
Variable	Valid N	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Std.Dev.
Student's view	8	12.47500	1.400000	19.50000	6.34705
Teacher's employment	8	12.50000	1.500000	32.30000	10.35705

As we can clearly see from this table, with student's view 6.34 and teacher's employment 10.35, as far as variance and diversity are concerned, the teachers application of the moves are more remarkable.

In the next part of the research, the author will find the correlations between the students' view and teacher's employment. The correlation coefficient (CC) is calculated to examine the relationship between the variables. By examining the CC, we are able find out whether the two sets of variables' co relatedness. If the CC is above zero and higher, chances are that the variables are correlated. A low CC below zero will necessarily mean that the 2 variables are least correlated.

TABLE V.
CORRELATIONS OF THE TWO VARIABLES

	Correlations (gexuekui.sta) Marked correlations are significant at p < .05 N=8 (Casewise deletion of missing data)	
Variable	Student's view	Teacher's employment
Student's view	1.00	-0.03
Teacher's employment	-0.03	1.00

This table tells that the CC is -0.03, smaller than 1.00. It conveys a clear message that the correlations between the student's view and teacher's employment are negative, or we shall put it more plainly, the two variables almost have no correlations. Figure 5 utilizes two curves to manifest their relationship more explicitly.

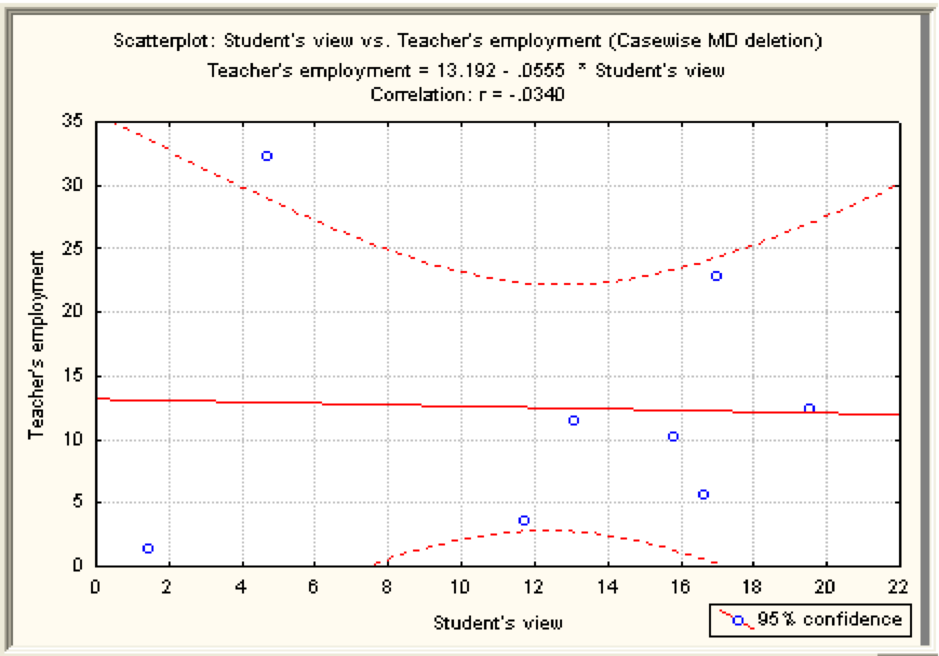

Figure 5 Correlations of the two variables

As is more observably displayed in this figure, there are 2 curves; the upper one being the teacher's corrective technique curve and the one below is student's view. The red line which passes through the figure is to tell the correlation of the two variables, or the two curves in the figure. According to the working mechanisms of SAS, the variables' correlations are the greatest when the line across the figure is diagonal; a flat line implies the variables are least correlated. In this figure, the red line is nearly flat, almost parallel to the horizontal line at the bottom. Accordingly, a safe conclusion we shall come to that there exist limited correlations between the two variables, namely the student's view and teacher's employment.

Discussions:

With SAS software, we have processed the empirical data obtained from the teaching practice in Shenzhen Tourism College, Jinan University. Statistically, there are scarcely no correlations between the student's expectations and the teachers' actual corrective moves. Within the context of collaborative teaching, communicative teaching or even objective-oriented teaching approach, student-centeredness is a cornerstone upon which any theories or practices can never negate, especially when language teaching classes are concerned. A more or less blind conduction of error correction will inevitably lead the classroom teaching into an irreversible end, students being demotivated by the teacher's haphazard usage of the corrective techniques and teachers on the other side, not aware of it at all. The bottom line is that the discrepancies we find from the research reflects that when treating errors of the students, they are not placed as the center of the teaching activities.

Nevertheless, in pedagogy, it has been long established recognition that "learner-centeredness" should be achieved as an ideal in teaching practice. No matter it is in the classes where language is acquired as a second language or learned as a foreign language, the bilateral intercommunication, together with the students' affection, accounts for the effectiveness of the teaching. If we do not bear it in mind, according to Smith (1997), the consequences can be serious. He observed that the result is that students will feel deeply alienated and helpless, and become indifferent with unstable intellectual and psychological state, together with abnormal individuality and obsessive and sensitive self-consciousness. As Smith's words may drive it too far, Nunan (1988) was more objective. He states that in classroom teaching, both learners and teacher should collaborate with each other, in an effort to sort out problems and make decision. The learners should be center of all classroom activities; even the choice of content, and the teaching methodology should be decided by them. As a teacher, he is just one participant in the classroom activity. What the teacher plans and teaches should all be resonant with the student's needs. Scrivener (1994) generalizes the meanings of error correction and points out that the ultimate purpose of correcting students' errors is to help them build up confidence; raise consciousness of articulating the target language more accurately while acknowledging their improvement and accomplishments. But given the fact that error correction was practiced in such a unharmonious way, the fours aim suggested by Scrivener cannot be achieved easily.

The researcher has also interviewed the four teachers, who unanimously asserted that they had adopted Communicative Approach, which is predominantly a recognized methodology in Chinese language teaching classes. While Communicative Language Teaching Approach argues that in the communicative activities, the teacher's role is counselor, facilitator and organizer. However, according to the statistical analysis, obviously, when teachers are correcting errors, both parties lack of understanding both technically and psychologically. As a necessary result, student's "affective filter" will probably be so much heightened that they lose motivation and interest. Thus necessary measures are called for.

VI. Conclusion and Pedagogical Implications

Based on the research findings and analysis, the following conclusion shall be drawn. Firstly, apart from the six techniques suggested by Lyster&Ranta, two more, body language and repetition, were found by the author. Recast was most frequently used by the teachers whose classes were observed. 2) With the data collected through questionnaire and interview, students prefer to be rectified by explicit correction techniques while recast and interruption were disliked .3) Discrepancies do exist between students' expectations and teacher's preferences for corrective moves.

Pedagogically, this research has some practical implications: First, the teachers need to keep affective filter in mind, and aim at enhancing confidence and fluency as the purpose of correction. Second, the teachers should constantly evaluate the effectiveness of their corrective moves through seminars and interviews so as to find out the problems and use remedial measures to meet the student's needs and expectations. Third, due to the fact that individuals differ from each other, the teachers can consider using diversified corrective techniques, with the precondition that students are encouraged and motivated. Finally, no matter what technique may be employed, students ought to be placed as the center of activity. A firm belief shall be held that with students' confidence, strong motivation and moderate anxiety, teachers can obtain satisfactory effects from their corrective moves. The author sincerely hopes the research can help the current teaching practice and future researches.

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Persuasion in Journalism: A Study of Metadiscourse in Texts by Native Speakers of English and Iranian EFL Writers

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***Abstract*—Metadiscourse is a set of linguistic devices used to communicate attitudes and mark the structural properties of a text. This study explored the frequency of occurrence of metadiscourse devices, and the role they play in the construction of persuasion in opinion articles written by English native speakers and Iranian EFL (English as a Foreign Language) writers. A corpus of 60 opinion articles, 30 by American writers and 30 by Iranian EFL authors, was collected and examined using Hyland's (2005) model of metadiscours. The articles were taken from newspapers and news websites in October 2014 and were published in the period from May, 2013 to October, 2014. A quantitative analysis was conducted to determine the frequency of occurrence of metadiscourse devices. The non-parametrical Mann-Whitney U test was used to see if the frequency counts in the two corpora differ statistically. Findings suggested that metadiscourse devices were present in the both groups; however, there were variations as to the number of code glosses, hedges, self-mentions and engagement markers. Genre-driven conventions, culture-driven tendencies and Iranian columnists' extend of English command were the factors affecting the choice and frequency of metadiscourse markers.**

***Index Terms*— metadiscourse, EFL writer, persuasive writing, opinion articles**

I. INTRODUCTION

In writing a persuasive text, the writer aims a message to be understood and be accepted. Constructing such a text relies on a number of factors including an awareness of audience and purpose and a mastery of necessary linguistic resources (Hyland, 2005). A persuasive text may be found in several different genres. Journalistic discourse, such as editorials and opinion articles, specifically can be characterized as being persuasive, for in such texts the writer obviously puts forward a proposition about a current issue in society, and intends the audience to agree with her/his stance. As Crismore, Markkanen and Steffensen put it: "Both professional and nonprofessional writers project themselves into texts, guiding and directing readers so that readers can better understand the content and the writer's attitudes toward the content and the readers" (1993, p. 39).

Metadiscourse is mostly considered as a set of linguistic devices used to communicate attitudes and to mark the structural properties of a piece of discourse. Therefore, it is regarded as a key element of persuasive writing. (Fuertes-Olivera, Velasco-Sacristan, Arribas-Bano & Samiengo-Fernandez 2001). Crismore et al. point out that metadiscourse plays a vital role in the creation of solidarity between the addresser and the addressee since it helps construct a coherent text and reflects the writers' "personality, credibility, considerateness of the reader, and relationship to the subject matter and to the readers" (1993, p. 40).

The theoretical basis for metadiscourse comes from the works of the modern linguist M. A. K. Halliday. Halliday (1973) discusses that there are three macro-functions for language: ideational, textual and interpersonal. "Ideational meaning" is the meaning of a writer's ideas. It is the propositional material. "Textual meaning" is the meaning that helps the reader to navigate through the text. The "interpersonal meaning" is the meaning about the relationship between the writer and the reader. The interpersonal function encompasses the relation between the addresser and the addressee in a discourse situation. According to Hyland, (2005, p. 8) "language is not simply used to convey information about the world. It also acts to present this information through the organization of the text itself." As we communicate through the text we continuously decide about the effects we wish to make on the readers by exploiting the textual and interpersonal functions of language. Metadiscourse is the actualization of these two functions. In short, metadiscourse is "discourse about discourse" (Crismore et al., 1993, p. 40). Writers achieve their communicative goals, in part by using metadiscursive strategies.

The concept of metadiscourse has been the focus of several studies on various genres of texts (e.g. Holmes, 1982, 1984; Keller, 1979; Ismail, 2012; Latawiec 2012; Hyland, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2004; Hyland & Tse, 2004; Crismore et al., 1993; Abdi, 2002; Crismore & Abdollahzade, 2010). However, it has been explored in journalistic texts by only a few researchers for example (Abdollahzadeh, 2007; Dafouz, 2003; Le, 2004, Biria and Noorian, 2010). This study aims to analyze the features of this kind of text with regard to the use of metadiscourse markers in order to add to the existing information we have on the structure and mechanics of texts in different genres and how these mechanics help the writer persuade the reader. In this research, the role of metadiscourse markers in journalistic texts, specifically opinion articles written by native speakers of English and Iranian EFL writers, and published in newspapers or news websites, were compared. The aim of this comparison mainly was to find out how metadiscourse markers help make a text more effective in terms of persuasion. Two research questions were addressed in this study:

1. To what extent are opinion articles in newspapers and news websites written by native speakers of English and Iranian L2 writers different or similar in terms of meta-discourse use?

2. What is the pragmatic role of metadiscourse markers in construction of persuasion in opinion articles of newspapers and news websites written by native speakers and Iranian L2 writers?

II. Literature Review

A. *Metadiscourse*

In the systemic-functional theory of language, Halliday (1994) differentiated between ideational, interpersonal and textual meta-functions of language. As opposed to the ideational function of language which is “the use of language to represent experience and ideas” (Hyland, 2005, p. 26), the textual and interpersonal functions of language can be fulfilled by metadiscourse. Halliday (1973) defined the textual function as “an enabling function, that of creating a text”, “that enables the speaker to organize what he is saying in a way that it makes sense in the context and fulfills its function as a message” (p. 66). Respectively, the interpersonal function was theorized to incorporate “all that may be understood by the expression of our own personalities and personal feelings on the one hand, and forms of interaction and social interplay with other participants in the communication situation on the other hand” (Halliday, 1973, p. 66). Metadiscourse has been defined by several scholars. Williams (1981, p. 40) states that “metadiscourse is the language we use when, in writing about some subject matter, we incidentally refer to the act and to the context of writing about it.” Vande Kopple (1985, p. 83) defines it as “discourse that people use not to expand referential material but to help their readers connect, organize, interpret, evaluate, and develop attitudes toward that material.”). Hyland defines the term as: “the cover term for the self-reflective expressions used to negotiate interactional meanings in a text, asserting the writer (or speaker) to express a view point and engage with readers as members of a particular community” (2005, p. 37).

The term "metadiscourse"is too broad and includes different lexical items from various grammatical classes and even punctuation. However, many scholars consider it an umbrella term which falls into two main categories: textual metadiscourse and interpersonal metadiscourse. According to Dafouz (2008, p 97), “textual metadiscourse refers to the organization of discourse, while interpersonal metadiscourse reflects the writer’s stance toward both the content in the text and the potential reader.” Hyland believes that the textual function of the language in fact serves the interpersonal function, and that “textual functions cannot be seen as ends in themselves” (2005, p. 27). As by using textual resources, the writer tries to organize the text in the most reader friendly manner, the eventual purpose of textual elements in a text seems to be creating a better interpersonal relation between the writer and the reader.

The interpersonal metadiscourse acts like liaisons which connect the writer as the producer of the text, with certain attitudes and viewpoint toward what he writes, to the reader as the recipient who actively tries to decode the meaning and connect to the writer as a member of a community and also simply as a person. Vande Kopple defines interpersonal metadiscourse as the devices that “can help us express our personalities and our reactions to the propositional content of our texts and characterize the interaction we would like to have with our readers about that content” (1985, p. 87).

B. *Persuasion*

Numerous definitions of persuasion can be found in the literature. However, Seiter & Gass’s definition seem to be more comprehensive and thorough. In their definition, Seiter & Gass state that “persuasion involves one or more persons who are engaged in the activity of creating, reinforcing, modifying or extinguishing beliefs, attitudes, intentions, motivations and/or behaviors within the constraints of a given communication context” (2003, p. 34). Persuasion can also be interpreted as exploiting one's available resource to change people's opinions and consequently their behavior. All the modern definitions of persuasion draw on Aristotle's *On Rhetoric.* In his book, Aristotle recognizes three means of persuasion: Ethos, Pathos and Logos. George A. Kennedy (2006, p. 15) summarized these three notions in plain language in his introduction to the translation of Aristotle’s *On Rhetoric* as follows:

• Ethos: the projection of the character of the speaker as trustworthy
• Pathos: consideration of the emotions of the audience
• Logos: inductive or deductive logical argument

Aristotle’s three elements of persuasion (ethos, pathos and logos) are reasonably related to the concept of metadiscourse. When metadiscourse links the elements of argument it pertains to Logos. It is related to pathos when writers use metadiscourse to show respect for the audience’s opinions. Finally, metadiscourse relates to ethos when it refers to a writer’s authority and competence. As Hyland (2005, p. 63) puts it, “because metadiscourse helps writers to engage their audience, signal relationships, apprise readers of varying certainty and guide their understanding of a text, metadiscourse pursues persuasive objectives.”

C. *Empirical Findings*

In the early 1980, the concept of metadiscourse began to receive the recognition it deserved as a productive field of enquiry. Generally, work on metadiscourse includes the studies related to genre, community of discourse and contrastive rhetoric and the ones that attempt to study metadiscourse in light of pedagogic issues.

Metadiscourse has been studied in various genres of written texts such as research articles (e.g. Abdi, 2002, 2009; Faghih & Rahimpour, 2009; Hyland, 1998, 2004; Hyland & Tse, 2004; Siami & Abdi, 2012), student writing, (e.g. Crismore et al., 1993; Dastjerdi & Shirzad, 2010; Davaei & Karbalaei, 2013; Gholami. J., Rafsanjani Nejad & Looragi Pour 2014; Simin & Tavangar, 2009; Steffensen & Cheng, 1996; Taghizade & Tajabadi, 2013; Tavakoli, Bahrami & Amirian, 2012.), andpolitical speeches (Ismail, 2012), emails (Jensen, 2009), medical texts (Gholami, M., Tajalli & Shokrpour, 2014) and advertising (Fuertes-Olivera et al., 2001).

Despite the fact that journalistic texts are among the most common texts people read in their everyday lives, they have not received much attention by researchers interested in metadiscourse. In fact, only a few researchers have addressed metadiscourse in such texts (Abdollahzadeh, 2007; Biria & Zavari, 2014; Dafouz, 2003 and 2008; Hashemi & Golparvar, 2012; Kuhi & Mojood, 2014; Le, 2004; Noorian & Biria, 2010; Tarrayo V. N., 2014; Yazdani, Sharifi & Elyassi, 2014.)

Dafouze (2008), explored the role of metadiscourse markers in construction and attainment of persuasion by studying 40 opinion articles taken from the Spanish *El País* and the British *The Times* (20 from each newspaper). In this cross-linguistic study, using Hylands's (1998) model, she attempted to identify which metadiscourse categories stand out in this type of text and how they are distributed according to cross-cultural or cross-linguistic preference. Moreover, by using a group of informants, she tried to find out how metadiscourse operates as a means of persuasion. The results of this study indicated that in general, Spanish texts used a higher number of textual metadiscourse than English texts while with regard to interpersonal metadiscourse, Spanish texts used a lower number of metadiscourse than English texts. Also, the informants who were asked to participate in the evaluation of metadiscourse as a persuasive tool found the texts with a balanced number of metadiscourse as the most persuasive.

In a similar study, Elisabeth Le (2004), attempted to study how the French elite newspaper *Le Monde* achieves its authority and persuasiveness through its argumentative editorials. She analyzed the three metadiscourse categories of evidentials, person markers and relational markers, by using Hyland's (1998) model as her framework, in 20 editorials. By making use of both quantitative analysis and qualitative discussions, Le showed that the above mentioned three metadiscursive categories were instrumental in connection with the argumentation structure of editorials.

The present study examines the metadiscursive devices in opinion articles written by native speakers of English and Iranian EFL writers in order to find out more about the role of such devices in making the texts more natural, effective and persuasive. I aim to explore both textual and interpersonal metadiscoure resources by using Hyland's (2005) model of metadiscourse as a framework.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. *Corpus*

The data of this research came from the opinion articles of prestigious American and Iranian newspapers and news websites. The opinion articles written by Iranians are taken from *Iran Daily and Tehran Times* and also from the news website of *Press TV.* The English opinion articles are taken from *Los Angeles Times, New York Daily News, New York Times, Washington Post*, and the news website of *CNN.* The newspapers from which the data is taken are among the most widely read in Iran and the USA. Adel (2006) believes that cultural conventions are different not only from language to language but also from a variety of a certain language to another (cited in Kuhi and Mojood, 2014). For this reason, the English articles are taken from American sources to avoid the potential effects of language variety on the findings of the study.

Sixty English texts (30 from American sources and 30 from Iranian sources) comprising 47621 words were selected. The texts derived from the Iranian sources contained a total of 23849 words, with the average length of 795 words. The texts extracted from the American sources comprised 23772 words with the average length of 792 words. The selected articles were matched for length and topic in order to ensure comparability. While the articles covered various topics, such as Iran nuclear talks, ISIL, Syria, and Israel and Palestine, the main theme was the Middle East issues in all the articles. A list of the selected opinion articles for this study appears in Appendix A.

The texts selected for this study are journalistic articles, and the reason for this choice is closely related to the great role mass media play in modern communities. Computers and the Internet have made it possible for the people to have access not only to the news about events happening even in the remotest parts of the world, but also learn about what others think of these events. Opinion articles are written to reflect the writer's stance toward the contemporary issues in a society. Connor (1996) considers opinion articles as one of the most appropriate examples of persuasive texts in all countries which can set standards for persuasive writing (as cited in Dafouz, 2008, p. 96).

B. *Data Collection Procedure*

In order to collect the corpus, first, a total number of 320 opinion articles from the websites of Iranian and American newspapers and news websites of CNN and Press TV were retrieved. All the articles were saved in the form of Word Office Documents in the computer. Great care was taken to make sure that each article is saved in the folder specified for a certain source- not to mix the articles from different sources. Data collection was done in October 2014, and the collected articles were published in the period from May, 2013 to October, 2014.

In the next step, a smaller group of articles were chosen for the analysis. In order to control the several variables involved in the writing of a text, such as topic, the length of the article and the nationality (native language) of the writer, only 60 articles were chosen. With regard to the topic, care was taken to include only the articles which were written about the Middle East Issues, since it is essential that the topic variable be controlled. As many researchers have suggested (e.g. Hyland, 1999; Dafouz, 2003, 2008) the topic may affect the type, frequency and distribution of the metadiscourse markers used, and that is why the corpus could not include just any topic. The other variable which needed to be controlled was the native language of the writer. I realized that many of the articles published in Iranian newspapers and websites are written by people other than Iranians. In the same way, many of the articles published in American newspapers and websites were written by people other than English native Speakers. At the end of each opinion article, a brief biography of the article's writer is published. The information in these biographies (such as name, nationality, affiliation, and position) was of great help in selecting the articles which suited the purpose of the study. Therefore, for the English native speaker corpus only the articles were chosen which were written by Americans. In the same way, for the EFL corpus, only the articles were selected which were written by Iranian authors. Care was also taken to match the articles in the two groups, so that both groups have nearly the same number of words as well as the same average of words.

C. Data Analysis

The analysis of the selected texts was closely based on Hyland's (2005) taxonomy of interactive and interactional metadiscourse (see table 1). As metadiscourse devices usually have more than a single function, it is essential that the analysis be carried out precisely for each text manually.

TABLE 1
AN INTERPERSONAL MODEL OF METADISCOURSE (HYLAND, 2005, P. 49)

Category	Function	Examples
Interactive	Help to guide the reader through the text	Resources
Transitions	Express the relations between the main clauses	*In addition; but; thus; and*
Frame markers	Refer to discourse acts, sequences or stages	*Finally; to conclude; my purpose is*
Endophoric markers	Refer to information in other parts of the text	*Noted above; see Fig.; in section 2*
Evidentials	Refer to information in other texts	*According to X; Z states*
Code Glosses	Elaborate propositional meaning	*Namely; e.g.; such as; in other words*
Interactional	Involve the reader in the text	Resources
Hedges	Withhold commitment and open dialogue	*Might; perhaps; possible; about*
Boosters	Emphasize certainty and close dialogue	*In fact; definitely; it is clear that*
Attitude markers	Express writer's attitude towards the proposition	*Unfortunately; I agree; surprisingly*
Self-mentions	Explicit reference to the authors	*I; me; my; our; we*
Engagement markers	Explicitly build relationship with readers	*Consider; note; you can see that*

All the metadiscourse items were highlighted in the texts in coded colors in order to make counting easier. The list of metadiscoure items in Hyland (2005, Appendix, pp. 218-224) was used for this purpose. Hyland stresses that metadiscourse is a relative concept so "what might be metadiscourse in one rhetorical context may be expressing propositional material in another, and analysis must always examine each item individually to determine its function" (2005, p. 24). Therefore, the context of each item was carefully considered not to mark an item wrongly with regard to its function as propositional content or metadiscourse device. Additionally, each item was examined with regard to its category of metadiscourse. After identifying and categorizing the metadiscourse markers, a quantitative analysis was conducted to determine the frequency of occurrence of the different types of interactive and interactional metadiscourse and to find the differences between the two groups in this regard. The information gained by the quantitative analysis was crucial for marking the existence and distribution of the metadiscourse categories.

Finally, in order to see if the results gained in the frequency counts, done on the two groups of texts, differ statistically or not, the non-parametrical Mann-Whitney U Test was used. Since the corpus was rather small and the distributions of the markers were not normal, I decided to use this test. Since the contrasted texts did not have the same length, the raw figures were standardized to a common basis (markers per 1000 words), so that comparability would be possible. As Hyland (1998) notes, metadiscourse has clause-level or higher scope, therefore, standardizing the raw figures to a common basis is merely to compare the occurrence rather than the length of the metadiscourse markers.

IV. RESULTS & DISCUSSION

As the length of the opinion articles differed, the raw counts were standardized to a common basis of 1000 words to make the comparison possible. On a general level, the quantitative analysis revealed that the texts written by Americans used a higher number of interactive metadiscourse markers than did the texts by Iranians (texts by Americans, n=1100, texts by Iranians, n=935). The raw and standardized figures for the interactive and interactional metadiscourse markers are summarized in table 2 and 3 respectively.

TABLE 2
THE TOTAL RAW NUMBERS OF INTERACTIVE METADISCOURSE MARKERS AND THEIR FREQUENCY PER 1000 WORDS

Op. Articles	Interactive Metadiscourse									No. of words
	Tran	Frame markers				End	Evi	Cod	Total	
		Seq	Lab	Ann	Shif					
By Iranians	514	13	3	0	4	0	134	266	935	23849
Per 1000	21.55	0.54	0.12	0	0.16	0	5.61	11.15	39.20	1000
By American	552	27	1	0	5	1	81	433	1100	23772
Per 1000	23.22	1.13	0.04	0	0.21	0.04	3.40	18.21	42.27	1000
Total Raw	1066	40	4	0	9	1	215	699	2035	47621
Total per 1000	22.38	0.83	0.08	0	0.18	0.02	4.51	14.67	42.73	1000

Note. Tran=Transitions, Seq=Sequencing, Lab=Label stages, Shif=Shift Topic, End= Endophoric markers, Evi= Evidentials, Cod= Code Glosses.

TABLE 3
THE TOTAL RAW NUMBERS OF INTERACTIONAL METADISCOURSE MARKERS AND THEIR FREQUENCY PER 1000 WORDS

OP. Articles	Interactional Metadiscourse						
	Hed	Boo	Att	Self	Eng	Total	No. of words
By Iranians	214	129	91	4	78	549	23849
Per 1000	8.97	5.40	3.81	0.16	3.27	23.01	1000
By Americans	326	128	120	29	212	815	23772
Per 1000	13.71	5.38	5.04	1.21	8.91	34.28	1000
Total	540	257	211	32	290	1364	47621
Total Per 1000	11.33	5.39	4.43	0.67	6.08	28.64	1000

Note. Hed= Hedges, Boo=boosters, Att= Attitude markers, Self= Self-Mentions, Eng=Engagement Markers

Within interactive metadiscourse markers, transitions had the highest rank in both corpora with a total of 1066 markers (American texts, n=552, Iranian texts, n=514). In fact, transitions had the highest number in corpora among all the subcategories of metadiscourse.

Code glosses occupy the second rank in both groups of texts followed by evidentials as the third numerous markers. The remaining categories (i.e. frame markers including sequencing, label stages, announce goals and shift topics and endophoric markers) displayed a low frequency of occurrence in both sets of corpora. The markers which announce goals were in fact non-existent in the corpus. Also, there was only one endophoric marker in the American corpus.

Regarding the interactional metadiscourse, findings disclose that these markers are used by Americans a lot more than Iranians (texts by Americans, n=815, texts by Iranians, n=549). As it is clear from table 3, the differences in the frequency of use in the interactional metadiscourse markers are greater and more evident. As for the subcategories of interactional metadiscourse, hedges were the most frequently used category in both sets of data. Americans of course used a greater number of hedges in their articles compared to their Iranians colleagues (American texts, n=326, Iranian texts, n=214). Hedges are followed by engagement markers with 290 markers in both corpora (American texts, n=212, Iranian texts, 78). Boosters are quite numerous in the data as well with 257 markers showing very similar frequencies of occurrence (American texts, n=128, Iranian texts, n=129). Attitude markers occupy the fourth place in terms of frequency of occurrence with American writers using 120 markers and Iranians using 91 markers, giving a total of 211 markers in the corpus. Finally self-mentions display the lowest score within the interactional metadiscourse, with a total number of 32 markers of which 29 belong to American texts while only 4 belong to Iranian texts.

The findings regarding the total number of metadiscourse markers in the corpus also shed light on the frequency of occurrence of such markers. Table 4 on the next page also indicates the total raw figures of both interactive and interactional metadiscourse and their frequency in 1000 words.

As it is clear from table 4 the total number of (interactional and interactive) metadiscourse markers used in the opinion articles by Americans is higher than that of articles written by Iranians. Americans and Iranians used 1915 and 1484 metadiscourse markers respectively. On a general level, in the American corpus there was one metadiscourse marker every 12 words, while there was one marker, every 16 words in the Iranian corpus. Considering the whole corpus, there was one metadiscourse item every 14 words. The results of frequency counts in terms of percentage of markers in the corpus are summarized in a figure visually. Fig. 1 provides the evidence to claim that the two groups of texts enjoy different numbers of metadiscourse markers. American writers made use of higher numbers of both interactive and interactional metadiscourse. Hence, the sum of metadiscourse markers used by Americans was also higher. The ratio of markers to words, with 1 marker every 12 words also shows that the American corpus was denser in terms of frequency of metadiscourse occurrence.

TABLE 4
THE TOTAL NUMBER OF INTERACTIVE AND INTERACTIONAL METADICOURSE MARKERS, THEIR FREQUENCY PER 1000 WORDS, AND THE RATIO OF METADISCOURSE MARKERS TO WORDS IN THE CORPUS.

Opinion Articles	No. of words	Total No. of Markers in corpus	Total No. of markers per 1000 words	No. of words/No. of markers
By Americans	23772	1915	80.55	12
By Iranians	23849	1484	62.22	16
Both	47621	3399	71.37	14

The opinion articles written by native speakers of English (Americans) are richer in metadiscourse use and enjoy a higher frequency of occurrence in both interactive and interactional, and as a result, in the total number of metadiscourse markers.

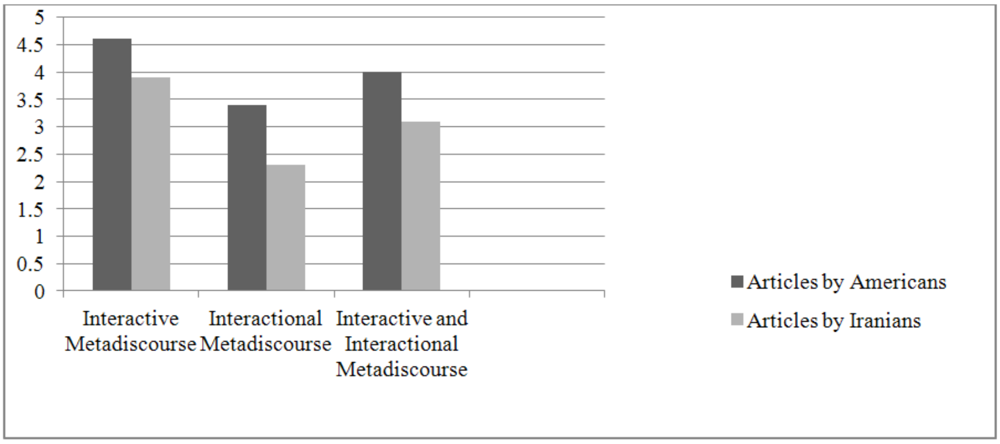

Figure 1. The Percentages of Interactional, Interactive and Sum of Both Interactive and Interactional Metadiscourse Markers in Articles by Americans and Iranians

A. Statistical Differences between the Two Corpora

In order to find out whether or not these differences reached statistical significance across the two groups of articles, a Mann-Whitney U Test was conducted for each of the sub-categories of metadiscourse as well as for the total numbers of interactive markers, interactional markers and the sum of both of them. The results of this test are summarized in table 5 on the next page.

As implied in Table 5 the two groups of articles are significantly different in terms of some categories of metadiscourse. As mentioned earlier, the differences are significant at the 0.05 level (i.e. $P<0.05$).

As for the interactive metadiscourse, it is evident than the difference between American texts and Iranian texts is statistically significant with the alpha level of $p=0.028$. American texts are richer in terms of interactive metadiscourse frequency of use. With regard to the subcategories of interactive metadiscourse, code glosses display a statistically different frequency in the two sets of articles. With an alpha level of $p=0.000$, Americans' more use of code glosses compared to Iranians is meaningfully different. Although the number of evidential markers used in the American corpus was higher than that of Iranian corpus, the difference was not statistically significant. This is true about the remaining subcategories of interactive metadiscourse as well. Therefore, from a statistical point of view, the frequency of use of frame markers and endophoric markers did not differ from one set of data to another.

Regarding interactional metadiscourse, the findings were interesting as in most sub-categories the differences were statistically significant. As mentioned before, Americans used more interactional markers and this was proved statistically too. With an alpha level of $p=0.000$, the difference is evidently meaningful. Hedges which were the most frequent devices among interactional markers were used differently and with the value of $p=0.027$, it was proved that Americans certainly use more hedging markers than Iranians. Self-mentions were also used differently in the corpus with Americans tending to mention themselves a lot more often than Iranians. For self-mentions the obtained p value was 0.002. The last subcategory for which the obtained alpha level was lower than 0.05, was the engagement markers with a $p=0.001$. Engagement markers were used by American writers more frequently than their Iranian colleagues.

TABLE 5
THE RESULTS OF MANN-WHITNEY U TEST FOR THE METADISCOURSE CATEGORIES IN AMERICAN AND IRANIAN OPINION ARTICLES

Macro-Category of metadiscourse	Sub-category of Metadiscourse	Markers in Iranian Articles (1000)	Markers in American Articles (1000)	Std. Deviation	Mann-Whitney U Test Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
Interactive metadiscourse	Transitions	21.55	23.22	9.74	0.734
	Sequencing	0.54	1.13	2.74	0.134
	Label Stages	0.12	0.04	0.49	0.313
	Transitions	21.55	23.22	9.74	0.734
	Sequencing	0.54	1.13	2.74	0.134
	Label Stages	0.12	0.04	0.49	0.313
	Announce goal	0	0	0.00	1.000
	Shift Topic	0.16	0.21	0.54	0.920
	Endophoric	0	0.04	0.17	0.317
	Evidentials	5.61	3.40	6.25	0.235
	Code Glosses	11.15	18.14	10.69	0.000*
	Total of Interactive	39.20	42.27	22.00	0.028*
Interactional Metadiscoure	Hedges	8.97	13.71	8.84	0.027*
	Boosters	5.40	5.38	4.34	0.652
	Attitude	3.81	5.04	3.32	0.173
	Self-mentions	0.16	1.21	1.41	0.002*
	Engagement	3.27	8.91	7.66	0.001*
	Total of Interactional	23.01	34.28	22.55	0.000*
Metadiscourse Markers	Total of Interactional and Interactive	62.22	80.55	38.72	0.002*

Note. P*<0.05

As for the total number of metadiscourse markers used in the corpus, the difference between the two corpora was significant. With a p=0.002, it was clear that American texts in general had more interactive and interactional metadiscourse devices than Iranian texts.

These findings lead to the answer of the first question this paper tries to answer about the extent to which opinion articles written by native speakers of English and Iranian L2 writers differ in terms of meta-discourse use. Texts written by native speakers of English (Americans) were statistically different from texts written by Iranians. American texts had more interactive and interactional metadiscourse markers and therefore more metadiscourse devices. Within the category of interactive metadiscourse, code glosses were used more by Americans while the other markers (transitions, frame markers, evidentials and endophoric markers) were used similarly by Americans and Iranians. Within the category of interactional markers, hedges, self-mentions, and engagement markers reached a statistical significance. They all were used more by Americans. Boosters and attitude markers were used similarly in the two corpora.

Generally, the findings of this study revealed that metadiscourse markers were present in the both sets of articles. The fact that interactional metadiscourse was used more frequently than interactive devices can be explained by taking the genre of the texts studied in this paper in to consideration. Opinion articles are written in order to discuss a current issue in the society and to attempt to persuade the reader of the stance taken by the writer toward the issue. To achieve this goal, the writer may invest more on improving the relationship between himself or herself and the reader through interactional devices in the text. Interactional metadiscourse tends to be numerous in a more conversational, informal, personal style of writing (Crismore et al., 1993, p. 64). Opinion articles, especially the ones written by Americans, enjoy this style of writing and therefore are richer in interactional metadiscourse.

B. Interactive Metadiscourse

Within the category of interactive metadiscourse, the only sub-category which was used differently by American and Iranian writers was code glosses. As seen in table 2, transitions were used almost the same in the two sets of texts. They are also the most numerous markers in the corpus. This can be interpreted as the writers' attempt to guide the readers in the intended direction and thus, achieve their anticipated persuasive goal. As Hyland (2004, p. 140) notes, transitions are devices that "represent writers' attempts to ensure readers are able to correctly recover their intentions".

Despite the fact that there was no statistical significance in the use of frame markers, a detailed look in the figures presented in table 2 reveals interesting information. Among the subcategories of frame markers, sequencing markers have the highest frequency. However, there are not as many sequencers in opinion articles as one can find in some other genres, like research articles. This finding is in line with Hempel and Degand's (2008) study of sequencers in different genres in which they point out that journalese has a freer style of writing and therefore has fewer sequencing markers than academic texts but has more markers than fiction. The markers in the both corpora that label the stages of the text or signal a shift in the topic are virtually non-existent. This scarcity of these frame markers can be explained by considering the length of an opinion article. Normally opinion articles are not longer than 2000 words. As Dafouze (2008, p. 107), observes "the prospective and retrospective functions of frame markers are not necessary in such a short length genre". Quite interestingly, there were no markers in either of the corpora for announcing the goals of the text explicitly. This can, too, be due to the short length of opinion articles.

Another non-existent sub-category in the corpus was the endophoric markers. There was none in the Iranian corpus while there was only one item in the American corpus. This finding is not totally unexpected since the role such markers play is to refer to the other parts of the text. Thus, it is natural not to find many such markers in opinion articles considering their limitation in terms of length.

Regarding evidentials, findings of this study indicate that Iranians made use of them slightly more than Americans. Although this difference in the use did not reach statistical significance, it is curious to note that evidentials, as devices that contribute to a persuasive goal by granting credibility to the writers' propositions and arguments, are present in the both corpora. As these markers "distinguish who is responsible for a position" (Hyland, 2005, p. 51), writers of opinion columns may use them to strengthen their argument or build their arguments by comparing other people's ideas with their own or by supporting their arguments by presenting similar ideas from more authoritative figures. Thus, the presence of evidentials contributes to the overall persuasive power of the text.

Code glosses are the second frequent markers after transitions in the whole corpus. Statistically, Iranians and Americans used them differently with Americans using them almost as twice as Iranians. This finding coincides with Dafouze's (2008), study on opinion articles by British and Spanish people in which she observes that opinion columnists are aware of the wide audience they address and therefore include some explicit reading cues and more exemplifications. However, this result is contrary to what Le (2004) expected from journalistic texts. Le (2004) studied a corpus of editorials (indeed a text type very close to opinion articles), and she stated that the content of editorials can be exposed with less complexity and to a wider audience, therefore not many code glosses are needed in this type of texts (p. 690). However, a "large and not specialized audience" might be exactly why opinion articles were replete with code glosses.

With regard to the total number of interactive metadiscourse markers, a significant difference was observed between the Iranian and American texts too. Americans columnists used more interactive devices compared to their Iranian colleagues. According to Hempel and Degand, a characteristic of a good writer is "a certain degree of knowledge of what to make explicit in his/her text and what to take for granted, in order to avoid incomprehension or even wrong interpretation of what he/she intended to express" (2008, p. 678). One can conclude that interactive metadiscourse does exactly that. Generally, the role interactive metadiscourse devices play in the text is to explicitly lead the reader through the text. A wider use of such markers, then, will eventually make the text more readable. It is possible that the writer-responsible quality of English language and the fact that American writers are brought up in an educational system that dictates this through all types of texts, are reasons for the more frequent use of interactive devices in the opinion articles written by Americans. In contrast, Iranians who write in English, despite having good knowledge of the language might not be aware of this fact about English and unconsciously bring their own cultural norms in writing of texts in English instead of adapting themselves to the expectations readers of such texts have of writers.

C. Interactional Metadiscourse

Within the category of interactional metadiscourse, hedges, self-mentions and engagement markers were used differently across the two corpora. Boosters and attitude markers did not differ in terms of frequency of occurrence in the two sets of articles.

Hedges, among interactional metadiscourse, were the most frequent markers in the both corpora. Many studies have found similar results regarding the frequency of hedges among interactive resources in various genres such as research articles (Hyland, 1998, 2004; Hyland and Tse, 2004; Abdi, 2002, 2012; Blogojevic, 2004), advertisement (Fuertes-Olivera et al., 2001), and journalistic texts (Dafouz, 2003, 2008; Noorian and Biria, 2010; Abdollahzade, 2007; Yazdani, Sharifi and Elyasi, 2014).

As hedges are used to show the writer's uncertainty or lack of commitment toward the truth of the content of the text, it is possible that they might also indicate to the reader that the writer is polite toward them by being not too assertive and by respecting the probable opposing opinions. Holmes (1982) suggested that hedging is used as a signal for politeness and consideration for others (as cited in Crismore et al., 1993, p. 65). The findings of this study indicate that hedges were used more frequently in texts written by Americans. This might be because of American columnists' greater concern about their audience's ideas. Also, as Hyland (2005) states, hedges play a pivotal role in creating rapport between authors and their respective audience.

From another point of view, hedges can "weaken the expression" (Hyland, 2005, p. 84), and therefore they can be viewed as rather a negative point in an argument than a constructive one to strengthen it. This might be one reason why Iranian journalists did not use hedges in their texts as frequently as Americans. Iranian opinion columnists probably do not view *perhapses* and *maybes* as constructive to their persuasive goals.

Boosters stood out as the second most frequent markers among the interactional devices in the Iranian corpus after hedges, while they took the third place in the American corpus after hedges and engagement markers. Although the difference between the two sets of text was not significant in this regard, their high frequency of occurrence, especially in the Iranian texts is important. As Hyland (1999), states "boosters emphasize certainty and construct rapport by making involvement with the topic and solidarity with an audience, taking a joint position against other voices" (as cited in Hyland, 2005, p. 53). Boosters are "an intrinsic characteristic of opinion columns, since readers expect to find the writer's opinion overtly stated" (Dafouz, 2008, p. 108). Considering all this, and the fact that boosters were the second frequent markers among interactional devices in the Iranian texts, one might conclude that Iranian authors were perhaps using more boosters to show their certainty and therefore render a confident, determined and strong-minded ethos. Iranians probably see heavy use of boosters productive in achieving persuasion. This finding is also in line with Noorian and Biria's (2010) finding about boosters.

The two texts did not display any significant difference in the use of attitude markers. Despite this, Americans used slightly more markers of attitude in their articles compared to Iranians.

Self-mentions as the fourth studied markers were used very much differently in the two corpora. Americans used a lot more self-mention markers than Iranians. According to Hyland (2005, p. 53), "the presence or the absence of explicit author presence is generally a conscious choice by writers to adopt a particular stance in relation to their argument, their community and their readers". Therefore, if a writer chooses not to explicitly refer to him or herself, it could mean that he/she does not prefer a personal rhetorical style and would not like to *mingle* too much in the text with the audience. This, I think, is a distancing strategy Iranian writers tend to use in their texts. Iranian columnists' invisibility in their texts might have another reason too. In Iranian educational system, students are taught not to mention themselves too many times in a formal style of writing, because it might be considered as an indication of being too arrogant or self-praising. As a result, writers try to shun using such markers in order not to be perceived as having a bad character and subsequently present a modest ethos to the readers. However this underuse of self-mentions can lead to a less interactional text in the eyes of readers with a different cultural background.

Engagement markers were the last outstanding display of significant difference between the two sets of texts within the interactional metadiscourse. American authors used a lot more engagement markers in their articles in comparison to Iranian writers. Engagement markers are devices to address the readers directly to focus their attention or include them as discourse participants (Hyland, 2005). These devices serve the purpose of constructing and maintaining the writer-reader relationship to a great extent. According to Hyland, engagement markers are used with the goals of "acknowledging the need to adequately meet readers' expectations of inclusion" and "pulling the audience into the discourse at critical points, predicting possible objections and guiding them to particular interpretations" (2005, p. 54). The first goal seems to be in line with the responsibility of the writers to respect their readers; however, the writers might follow a double-purpose by acting on the second goal: by pulling the readers into the discourse and including them explicitly, they can show respect to their readers and serve to make an interactional relationship while they can also manipulate the readers in taking the exact direction set out by the writer in interpreting the propositional material. This manipulation is not necessarily negative, since it is the aim of the writer of a persuasive text to convince the reader of his/her own opinions. Iranian writers' underuse of such markers then can be explained by drawing on the fact that their style of writing does not allow for a strong writer-reader interaction and that they do not consider written texts a type of discourse appropriate for making explicit and involving relations with their audience.

American texts had more interactional metadiscourse, in general, than Iranian texts. This difference was statistically significant and that goes back to American authors' interactional style of writing. This finding coincides with Noorian and Biria's (2010) results. They found a similar pattern in the use of interactional metadiscourse in their comparison of opinion articles written by American and Iranian authors.

D. Persuasion and the Presence of Metadiscourse Devices in Opinion Articles

Dafouz (2003) believes that all metadiscourse categories ultimately fulfill a persuasive aim. Each category, though, relies on a different strategy to improve the text's persuasiveness. Interactive metadiscourse, explicitly leads the reader in the surface of the text and makes the reader follow a pre-determined frame in a step by step way. Interactional metadiscourse, on the other hand, explicitly follow the aim of persuasion by giving the writer the opportunity of stating his/her opinion about the content material, involving the reader in this process and attempting to build solidarity with him/ her. When the reader feels connected to the writer in the text, reading the text becomes more like a dialog than a one-way communication. Therefore both interactive and interactional metadiscourse have persuasive powers, however in case of interactive metadiscourse, the devices are more linguistically limited while in case of interactional metadiscourse the range of expressions is wider and the writer has a broader choice (Dafouz, 2003).

An example of using metadiscourse effectively to achieve persuasion is the artful combination of hedges and boosters. Experienced writers of opinion columns make use of this strategy very often. The skillful opinion columnists combine these weakening and strengthening expressions to make their texts persuasive by forming it in a way that is neither too assertive nor too vague (Dafouz, 2003). The following extracts which show this strategy are taken from the corpus (hedges are underlined and boosters are double-underlined):

(1) American Text Article 9 *"How Putin lost his head in Crimea"*

<u>Certainly</u>, Putin does not fear President Obama. (<u>Almost</u> no one does.) But it <u>would</u> be good if he did.

Attitude markers explicitly express how the writer feels toward the content material of the text and thus have a great role in leading the readers to an agreement with the writer on that matter. The following examples from the American and Iranian corpora show this (attitude markers are underlined):

(1) American Text Article 14 *"Israel's fight for its very existence"*

The Israelis will degrade Hamas' military capabilities — its rocket-launching sites and its tunnels — and end for a time its ability to attack Israel. Every rocket, <u>no matter how primitive and wobbly</u>, is an act of war.

(2) Iranian Text Article 24 *"Truth prevails, even if the whistleblower is silenced"*

It's laughable that the United States regularly quashes, detains and condemns the whistleblowers that reveal the furtive activities of its horrendous intelligence apparatus, but never investigates the illegal restrictions imposed on the people's freedom.

In these examples, the reader can easily grasp the writer's stance toward the content material and may decide to agree with him/her. Attitude markers are strengthening expressions alongside booster (Dafouze, 2008), and a competent writer can dexterously exploit these and hedges to create his/her intended effect.

Similar to the function of attitude markers, self-mentions serve a persuasive goal as well. Note the following examples taken from the corpus (the self-mention markers are underlined):

(1) American Text Article 29 "*Internationally, Obama must be feared as well as admired*"

Tell me something: What do you think would happen if the United States concludes that Iran has been cheating and delaying and is about to pop a fully functional nuclear weapons program? Would President Obama respond by joining Israel to bomb the Iranian nuclear facilities to smithereens, or would he stall and equivocate? My bet is the latter and also, just to double down, what I bet the Iranians are betting. They have taken the measure of Obama. He lacks menace.

(2) Iranian Text Article *26 "Unrealistic demands could scupper nuclear deal"*

As I observed while covering the discussions in the Austrian capital for the Tehran Times, diplomats from both sides were seriously engaged in the talks and seemed determined to find a way to settle the issue.

As it can be seen from these extracts, the American author has created a more personal and engaging style by explicitly writing about his own ideas. He used self-mentions three times in a paragraph and that, I believe, is a purposeful choice to make the readers concur with him.

Finally, engagement markers serve a persuasive goal by obviously engaging the readers in the discussion, creating a dialogue and meeting his/her expectations of being involved in the communication taking place through the text. Consider the examples below; taken from the corpus, (engagement markers are underlined):

(1) American Text Article 3 *"How big a nuclear arsenal do we really need?"*

Instead of blindly moving ahead with building submarines and other expensive nuclear paraphernalia, let's determine our actual needs. Let's fully examine whether modifying existing submarine designs might suffice. And while we're at it, let's talk about a range of other expensive nuclear weaponry.

(2) Iranian Text Article 5 *"Gaza genocide and Arab fratricide"*

Let's not mince words. Israelis are committing genocide in Gaza. But the United Nations is loath to use the "G" word and is using the "C" (condemn) word instead. Why? Money talks.

In both examples, the writer has predicted a role for the reader as an active participant in the process of making meaning. As for the American text, even the title of this opinion article is a rhetorical question. Rhetorical questions are devices for directly address the reader. They are either answered in the text by the writer or are used as steering devices to help the reader toward getting at an intended answer. Hence, engagement markers, especially rhetorical questions and imperatives, are efficient in persuading the reader.

In the light of the above, now I can turn to the second question of this study about the pragmatic role of metadiscoure markers in construction of persuasion. I believe, authors of opinion articles, especially gain from using metadiscourse devices since such devices pave the way for a smoother, less aggressive and more collaborative style of persuasion. While interactive markers help the writer achieve his/her persuasive goals more implicitly through textual elements, the interactional devices serve the same goal more explicitly by means of creating solidarity with the readers, responding to the reader's expectation of involvement and giving him/her the benefit of overtly stated opinions.

V. CONCLUSION, PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE STUDIES

This study was conducted with the aim of comparing the opinion articles produced by native speakers of English and EFL Iranian authors with regard to the metadiscourse devices used in them. The results of this study revealed that opinion articles enjoy a high frequency and a wide variety of metadiscourse markers. With regard to the similarities between the two corpora, both sets of texts had more interactional than interactive markers. Transition markers in the both groups had the highest frequency of occurrence among all the metadiscourse subcategories. However, within the interactional metadiscourse hedges had the highest frequency of occurrence in both groups. Also, in both groups the markers for announcing the goals of writing the text were non-existent. Within interactive metadiscourse, both Iranian and American writers used almost the same numbers of transitions, frame markers, endophoric markers, and evidentials. Within the interactional metadiscourse, boosters and attitude markers had almost the same frequency of occurrence in both sets of texts.

Concerning differences, the American corpus has more interactive, interactional and total number of metadiscourse markers. Regarding interactive metadiscourse, more similarities were noted than differences. This could suggest that Iranian EFL writers were as competent in using such devices as Americans. However, the subcategory of code glosses is worthy of note since the American writers made use of a greater number of such markers. This difference might be due to the fact that English is a writer responsible language (Hinds, 1987). Iranians' cultural background may hinder them from paying attention to this fact. Therefore, they do not recognize the need to provide the readers with much explanatory or additional information. Regarding the interactional metadiscourse, the results revealed that Americans used a higher number of hedges, self-mentions and engagement markers in their articles. This might be because of American columnists' more relaxed, personal and less formal style of writing.

With regard to persuasive powers of metadiscourse, the results revealed that metadiscourse markers generally have this function in texts. However, each category of metadiscourse is distinguished in the way it serves this goal. Interactive metadiscourse implicitly do this through making the texts more reader-friendly while interactional metadiscourse do this by drawing on explicit statements of the writer's attitudes and addressing the reader directly.

Transferring the above-mentioned findings to pedagogical grounds, I believe they can be used in several areas. In developing material for EFL classes, the experts can select texts with high frequency of metadiscourse so that the learners will be more exposed to the correct use of such devices. Metadiscourse can also be presented as separate items to be learned in text books. This can help raise students' awareness and as a result they will probably be better readers and writers.

The findings of the study might have been influenced by a number of limitations. Since this study was done on a corpus of opinion articles, future research should extend the study of metadiscourse to other genres for example advertisements, business letters or PhD dissertations and also other sub-genres of journalistic texts. The size of the corpus can be of importance in interpreting the results as well. Studying a larger corpus can lead to more reliable findings because it may include a greater number of representative texts of the genre under study and the researcher can have a sounder judgment about the frequency of occurrence of metadiscourse devices, especially some certain metadiscourse elements which are rare and will have a frequency of occurrence approaching zero in small-sized corpora.

Appendix. List of Selected Opinion Articles

A. Articles Taken from Iranian Sources

1. ISIL Game in Kobani, Anbar; 18 Oct 2014, *Iran Daily*
2. Fighting ISIL: A Pretext for Shaping New Middle East; 06 Oct 2014, *Iran Daily*
3. Reasons Behind Anti-ISIL Coalition; 17 Sep 2014, *Iran Daily*
4. US Should Decide!; 19 Sep 2014, *Iran Daily*
5. Gaza Genocide and Arab Fratricide; 01 Aug 2014, *Press TV Website*
6. Gaza Massacre Israel Rerun of Nazi Genocide; 03 Aug 2014, *Press TV Website*
7. America's 'Creative' Means for Extortion; 11 Jul 2014, *Press TV Website*
8. Has America Learned Anything From Negotiating With Iran? ; 10 Jul 2014, *Press TV Website*
9. Time for FATF to Revise Policies Towards Iran; 25 Jun 2014, *Press TV Website*
10. Russia Set to Nix NATO Expansion; 15 May2013, *Tehran Times*
11. Madness of Terrorism Destroying the Legacy of Humanity; 17 Jun 2014, *Tehran Times*
12. Iran Is Committed to a Peaceful Nuclear Program; 14 Jun 2014, *Tehran Times*
13. Sanctions Exemplify Hypocrisy in West's Claim about Being Standard-bearer of Human Rights; 23 Jun 2014, *Tehran Times*
14. Iran, Orientalism and Western Illusions About Syria; 06 Apr 2014, *Tehran Times*
15. Israel's Great Defeat in Gaza; 09 Aug 2014, *Tehran Times*
16. Key Factors Driving Iraq's ISIL Crisis; 16 Jul 2014, *Tehran Times*
17. In Memoriam of the Children of Gaza; 05 Aug 2014, *Tehran Times*
18. The September 11 and the Global Security; 11 Sept 2014, *Tehran Times*
19. When the Lawless Superpower Irks its Allies; 15 Nov 2013, *Tehran Times*
20. The Oil Angle of the Nuclear Deal; 30 Nov 2013, *Tehran Times*
21. Glaring Western Hypocrisy on the Notion of Human Rights; 24 Dec 2013, *Tehran Times*
22. Former Ambassador Acknowledges Israel's State-sponsored Terrorism; 06 Jan 2014, *Tehran Times*
23. Who Appointed the U.S. to Be the World's Policeman?; 10 Jan 2014, *Tehran Times*
24. Truth Prevails, Even if the Whistleblower Is Silenced; 15 Jan 2014, *Tehran Times*
25. Iran Calls for End to Foreign Support for Extremist Groups in Syria; 17 Feb 2014, *Tehran Times*
26. Unrealistic Demands Could Scupper Nuclear Deal; 23 Jun, 2014, *Tehran Times*
27. The Super Criminal of the Century; 22 Jul 2014, *Tehran Times*
28. Israeli Strike on Gaza: Recurrence of a Costly Mistake; 12 Jul 2014, *Tehran Times*
29. Dimona: Israel's Achilles Heel; 23 Jul 2014, *Tehran Times*
30. Fighting ISIS, NATO, and Syria; 06 Oct 2014, *Tehran Times*

B. Articles Taken from American Sources

31. Iran Nuclear Solution More Important Than Deadline; 24 Oct 2014, *CNN*
32. America's Fight Against Islamic State: It's a Stalemate; 24 Oct 2014, *Los Angeles Times*
33. How Big a Nuclear Arsenal Do We Really Need?; 16 Oct 2014, *Los Angeles Times*
34. Lessons From the Rise of ISIS; 18 Jun 2014, *New York Daily News*
35. A Syria Strategy that Might Work; 25 Sep 2014, *New York Daily News*
36. Obama Promises, Putin Delivers; 22 May 2014, *New York Daily News*

37. Obama's Policy of Retreat; 29 May 2014, *New York Daily News*
38. Try Realism in the Middle East; 02 Sep 2014, *New York Daily News*
39. How Putin Lost his Head in Crimea; 03 Mar 2014, *New York Daily News*
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