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ISSN: 2289-2737

*The International
Journal of Language
Learning and Applied
Linguistics World*

(IJLLALW)
(IJLLALW)

Volume 2 (1), January 2013

ISSN: 2289-2737



IJLLALW

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Authenticity and Sampling in C-Tests: A schema-Based and Statistical Response to Grotjahn's Critique

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ABSTRACT

The paper aims to respond to Grotjahn's (2012a) critique of Khodadady and Hashemi's (2011) paper "Validity and C-Tests: The Role of Text Authenticity" by employing reduced redundancy (RR) and schema theories. It counter argues that developing conventional C-Tests on several short texts and modifying their contents do not render them "genuine" for RR has nothing to do either with the number and length of texts to be chosen or with mutilating a set number of words constituting those texts. Without acknowledging, however, the conventional C-Test designers resort to the macrostructural view of schema theory to justify measuring "special knowledges" assumed to be conveyed in several texts. They do, nonetheless, utilize its micro structures, i.e., their constituting words, when they mutilate every second word from the second sentence and onwards. Based on the RR and schema theory as well as the texts selected and the data presented by several authors, the points raised by Grotjahn are discussed and suggestions are made for future research.

Keywords: Schema theory, reduced redundancy, sampling, authenticity

INTRODUCTION

Critiquing my joint paper "Validity and C-Tests: The Role of Text Authenticity" (Khodadady & Hashemi, 2011) [henceforth K&H] Grotjahn (2012a) announced that "it was severely flawed" (p. 12). Although the very time Grotjahn had spent on the critique necessitated appreciation, I found it rather surprising that he had not mentioned even a *single* strongpoint in the entire paper. As a language educator who has offered various courses in applied linguistics at both undergraduate and graduate levels in general and language testing in particular for over two decades to both native and non-native speakers of English, I have always done my best to help both language learners and teachers see the advantages of a research project, however flawed it might sound to them, before they focus on its possible disadvantages. Therefore, I appreciate Grotjahn's (2012) critical reading of my earlier paper as well, i.e., C-Tests: Method Specific Measures of Language Proficiency (Khodadady, 2007), which provides the necessary background for the points I will raise to address the *assumed* flaws. In contrast to Grotjahn, I will choose more *positive* headings in order not to activate unfavorable schemata in my reader's minds before they formulate their own on the basis of what they read. I will first focus on review of literature and then address the theoretical foundation of C-Tests and the authenticity of texts upon which they must be developed if they are accepted and employed as measures of language proficiency.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Grotjahn (2012a) claimed that “K & H’s literature review is incomplete” (p. 12). However, instead of referring to K&H to support his claim, he refers to Khodadady (2007). In addition to the fallacy of criticizing the content of one study on the basis of the content of another, what Grotjahn quotes from Khodadady is, unfortunately, removed from its context. Based on the decontextualised phrase “lack of research on C-Tests” quoted from Khodadady, he announces that “C-Tests are among the best researched testing instruments” (p. 21) and provides Eckes and Grotjahn (2006) and Grotjahn (2010, 2012b) as his chief references.

Since in his critique Grotjahn (2012a) might have unintentionally left out the paragraph preceding the quoted phrase, it is quoted below to provide the necessary context.

Although C-Tests were invented in 1981, they have received little attention in *English* language testing literature. For example, in his fairly comprehensive review of correlational studies conducted on C-Tests so far, Sigott (2004, pp. 61-65) could tabulate 28 among which only 11, i.e., 39%, have been in English. This is reflected in textbooks written for teacher training programs, e.g., Madsen (1983), Heaton (1988), Baker (1989), where C-Tests are not even mentioned. Similarly, there is no entry for C-Tests in the *Dictionary of Language, Teaching and Applied Linguistics* (Richards, Platt, & Platt, 1992). Bachman (1990), however, referred to C-Tests as variants of cloze tests in passing (Khodadady, 2007, p. 21).

Based on the reasons outlined above for the lack of long due original research papers written in *English*, which was originally italicized in the quoted paragraph to emphasize the variable of language in which the research projects need to be done *as well as* reported, Khodadady (2007) argued that

The overall public and expert inattention might be attributed partly to a lack of research on C-Tests and partly to their nature. Davies (1990) dubbed them ‘a particular and rather recondite use of the cloze test’ (p. 94) and thus obliged researches like the present one to contribute to those studies which have already shed some light on their internal, empirical and factorial validity (p. 21).

The first directly quoted paragraph preceding the phrase quoted in the paragraph above, i.e., a lack of research on C-Tests, is composed to draw the attention of testing experts and students alike to the very fact that there is still an urgent need to design and conduct research projects on C-Tests and report them in *English* so that scholars who write textbooks in English can include C-Tests as important, though method specific (Khodadady, 2007), measures of language testing. While I appreciate the attempt of designers of the site given by Grotjahn, i.e., www.c-test.de, to provide interested readers with open-access links on C-Tests, *even* that site falls short of providing diverse enough studies written in English to support his decontextualized argument. Out of 43 links, only 18 (41.9%) are in *English*, showing statistically that 58.1% of links are all in *German* not in *English*. Furthermore, C-Tests need to be developed in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish, to name a few. [This suggestion does not mean that I am unaware of the C-Tests designed in languages such as French and Japanese!]

Prescriptive Vs. Descriptive Approach in Testing

Grotjahn (2012) claimed that the K & H's C-Test developed on a single authentic text is not *genuine*. The claim is based on Klein-Braley's (1997, p. 65) belief that "because the C-Test consists of a number of different texts the sampling of content classes is better. Examinees who happen to have special knowledge in certain areas no longer have substantial advantages over other examinees" (p. 65). According to Grotjahn (2012a) the belief "implies that C-Tests *always* [Italics added] consist of several texts and that therefore a single long C-Test text with 180 gaps such as K & H's authentic C-Test (AC-Test) is not a genuine C-Test" (p. 21). With due respect, I disagree with Klain-Braley's belief and what it implies to Grotjahn. What she says is not an *absolute* rule to be followed by test designers. I strongly believe that the time for prescribing certain rules to be followed by everyone is long over. As a matter of fact, science established itself as an indispensable tool to understand the functioning of various variables when it questioned the validity of some beliefs held by authorities.

It is, for example, argued in this paper that Klain-Braley (1997) contradicted herself unconsciously when she employed reduced redundancy (RR) as a theoretical rationale for C-Tests but followed schema theory in practice. While the former has nothing to offer as far as the number of texts employed in C-Tests is concerned, the latter does address and necessitate the selection and inclusion of various texts by resorting to its macro structural approach. To support the argument, schema theory will be described, albeit briefly, and then C-Tests will be analyzed within an RR perspective.

Macro and Micro Structural Views of Schema Theory

According to schema theory, reading comprehension ability can be measured either macro structurally or micro structurally (Khodadady, 1997, 1999). A given text is viewed as a single schema or macro structure which requires "special knowledge" in Klein-Braley's (1997, p. 65) words or "a conventional knowledge structure that exists in memory" in Yule's (2006 p. 132) perspective. However, no one still knows, as Grabe (2002) put it, "how it would work for reading comprehension" (p. 282). Although cloze tests were developed originally as measures of readability, they were later employed in language testing as integrative measures of language proficiency assuming that test takers' would employ their language proficiency, not their "special knowledge" of *a* given text, to restore its deleted words on the basis of hypotheses they formulate as they read the text (Khodadady & Herriman, 2000). Klein-Braley, however, interpreted language proficiency as "special knowledge" of *a* given text and extended it to "*special knowledges*" of several texts. (Notice that the plural morph *-s* is deliberately added to knowledge by the present author.)

Although Klein-Braley (1997) subscribed to the macro structural view of schema theory when she emphasized "*special knowledges*" measured by several short texts, she violated one of its main principles when she developed her C-Tests on *general topics* assuming that these general topics are synonymous with *allegedly different* areas of human knowledge. In order to help the test takers activate their "special knowledge" of a certain text or schema test designers conventionally provide its title and leave its first sentence intact. However, Klein-Braley

employed Text 1, 2, 3 and 4 as the titles of the four piloted texts on which she developed her final C-Test. She did, nonetheless, leave the first sentences of these texts intact as the second principle followed by followers of macro structural/top-down approach of schema theory stipulates. (It must be emphasized that reduced redundancy cannot, by its very nature, say anything about providing the title and first sentences because its occurrence is based on randomness or probability. In natural settings any part of any text can go missing because of variables such as noise and distraction.)

Since there is no title for the texts employed by Klein-Braley (1997) to address the nature of “special knowledge,” the titles of the texts selected by Babaii and Ansary (2001) are given here. These conventional C-Test designers have been chosen because Grotjahn (2012a) seemed to have agreed with their selection of texts and reliability analyses. The titles are “A slip of the Tongue”, “the End of the World”, “A 50 Percent Thief”, and “Keep the Torch Burning”. These topics deal, according to the present author, with the usual issues encountered by almost all proficient English readers. It remains to be found out how Klein-Braley and Grotjahn would justify their claim that the “special knowledge” of a given test taker of C-Test developed on “A slip of the Tongue” will, for example, be different from, say, that of the second or third test taker?

Similarly, it remains to be explained by Grotjahn how, say, the first test taker’s “special knowledge” of “A slip of the Tongue” will be different from his knowledge of “The End of the World” or “A 50 Percent Thief”. This assumption violates Spolsky’s (1973) insistence on a *single* “knowledge of the language” (p. 7) based upon which a test taker can restore the missing parts of a message. In other words, *a single knowledge of the language* will be enough to restore the missing parts of *any* given text and thus assuming the existence of “*special knowledges*” on the part of test takers violates the principle upon which C-Tests are designed.

Interestingly enough Grotjahn (2012a), however, objected to K&H’s use of using *C-Tests* in plural and emphasized that Klein-Braley used its singular form, i.e., *C-Test*. As discussed previously, the use of *C-Test* is not only misleading but also flies against the results reported by Klein-Braley (1997) herself as shown in Table 1. In describing the table she wrote, “the reliability coefficients have been calculated for the *individual tests* [italics added] using KR-21” (p. 67). As can be seen, the descriptive statistics of C1, C2, C3 and C4 are reported as *individual tests*. Since Klein-Braley could not solve the self-created problem of using the singular C-Test for each of its four constituting tests, she employed C1, C2, C3 and C4. Khodadady (2007) simply referred to them as C-Test 1, C-Test 2, C-Test 3 and C-Test 4, respectively, and treated them as *individual tests* as Klein-Braley (1997, p. 67) herself did.

Table 1: Basic test statistics for the tests of reduced redundancy (Klein-Braley, 1997, p. 67)

Test	Mean	SD	P	$rtt_{(KR-21)}$	$rtt_{(DELTA)}$
CLOZE1	6.38	2.91	.32	.51	.71
CLOZE2	4.34	2.58	.22	.52	.58
C1	15.15	4.28	.61	.70	.68
C2	10.69	5.85	.43	.86	.66
C3	14.86	4.98	.60	.79	.53
C4	10.42	4.71	.42	.76	.45
MC1	16.32	3.31	.63	.46	.55
MC2	13.47	3.35	.56	.49	.61
CE1	14.10	4.89	.56	.72	.56
CE2	8.64	5.45	.35	.84	.45
DICT	31.36	12.54	.62	.94	.71
DELTA	83.40	22.07	.56	.93	1.00

It is further argued in this paper that the assumed “special knowledge” of a given text is based on macro structural school of schema theory adopted and operationalized by the designers of earlier IELTS modules (e.g., Clapham, 1996, Kelly, 1978). The assumption was that since the background knowledge required for understanding a given field such as humanities is different from another field such as engineering, the test takers wishing to continue their academic studies in engineering in English would be at a loss if their reading comprehension texts were chosen from humanities. What Klein-Braley (1997) and other designers of conventional C-Tests such as Babaii and Ansary (2001) did not notice was that neither titleless and numbered texts such as 1, 2, 3 and 4 nor texts dealing with general topics such as “a slip of the Tongue” and “the End of the World” are field-dependent and thus could not represent various types of “special knowledge”. Even if they did, studies after studies showed that proficient test takers having “special knowledge” of a given field did not necessarily perform significantly differently on the tests developed in their field than those possessing “special knowledge” in a different field.

C-Tests and Reduced Redundancy

Since providing an operationalized definition of “special knowledge” in terms of schema theory to establish C-Tests as macro structural measures of language proficiency is too difficult, if not impossible, Klein-Braley (1997) employed RR as a viable rationale to provide C-Tests with a theoretical foundation. Similar to her, Spolsky (1973) is quoted below in order to find out whether it can be applied to conventional C-Tests.

The non-native’s inability to function with reduced redundancy, evidence that he cannot supply from his knowledge of the language the experience on which to base his guesses as to what is missing. In other words, the key thing missing is the richness of knowledge of probabilities - on all levels, phonological, grammatical, lexical, and semantic - in the language (p. 17)

According to Klein-Braley (1997), Spolsky assumed that “knowing a language certainly involves the ability to understand a distorted message, to make valid guesses about a certain percentage of omitted elements” (p. 47). As can be seen, there is no indication of “special knowledge” of the distorted message neither in Spolsky’s nor in Klein-Braley’s quoted claims. Klein-Braley does, however, provide a lengthy review of literature dealing with cloze test as measures of RR without any indication of how “special knowledge” relates to RR and whether she has borrowed the concept from top-down models of reading or schema theory.

As discussed before, choosing a number of texts for the development of C-Tests is based on macro structural view of schema theory. If test takers coming from diverse fields such as humanities and engineering are going to take them as valid measures of language proficiency then choosing representative texts from their respective fields would be justified. However, it does not apply to the tests developed by Klein-Braley (1997) because they are not developed on any “special knowledge” which might be known to certain test takers, say those of humanities, and stay unknown to others, say engineering. It is, therefore, suggested that instead of choosing a number of short texts dealing with general topics, more C-Tests be developed on single authentic texts written for the literate English speaking public as K&H did. It is also suggested that C-Test

items be developed on first sentences to find out whether their being kept intact has any significant effect on test results.

Randomness and Reduced Redundancy

This paper attempts to show that RR has nothing to do with “special knowledge” upon which Grotjahn (2012a) questioned the development of an authentic (A)C-Test on a single text. It also tries to show that neither cloze tests nor C-Tests comply *fully* with the stated principle of RR as conceived by Spolsky. The concept of noise as the main cause of distortion in native speakers’ reception of messages in real life is based on *probability*, i.e., it occurs randomly and may affect any parts of an authentic text. Although Spolsky (1973) had observed the occurrence of RR, he remained quite vague in its description as far as the present author’s knowledge and experiences allow. Spolsky believed, for example, RR occurred “on all levels, phonological, grammatical, lexical, and semantic - in the language” (p. 17). It remains to be researched, for example, whether and how *semantic* is affected by RR. To begin with semantic is an abstract concept as is phonology. How would Spolsky himself and other believers in RR translate these ***abstract concepts*** into describing ***concrete missing parts*** of a distorted text?

Klein-Braley (1997) seems to be the first who translated Spolsky’s belief into practice *quantitatively* by announcing that “knowing a language certainly involves the ability to understand a distorted message, to make valid guesses about *a certain percentage* [italics added] of omitted elements” (p. 47). Along with her colleagues she developed C-Tests by mutilating *at least* 100 words constituting the second and subsequent sentences of texts. Grotjahn (2012a) offered “a practical advantage” as a rationale saying that “the raw scores do not have to be converted into percentages” (p.24). The present author could not, however, make out how “a practical advantage” can be used as ***a theoretical basis*** as K&H wrote, “there is no theoretically sound basis to establish a cut off number for the items comprising the C-Tests, i.e., 100, as Klein-Braley (1997) did” (p. 35).

The concept of randomness in RR is emphasized in this paper because it embodies several cardinal variables playing significant roles in language testing. Surprisingly however, Spolsky (2001) revealed his unfamiliarity with these variables when he preferred C-Tests over cloze tests simply because the results obtained on the former do not support his *vague* theory of RR. According to him,

By omitting words, which are *linguistic* [italics added] elements with certain properties a cloze test was biasing itself to testing certain areas of language ... the technique she [Klein-Braley] proposed as an alternative, the C-Test, used half words. A half word is much less linguistic - not a discrete item - and so much more information theory-oriented and integrative. Essentially, a C-Test was much closer to a noise test in the *randomness* [italics added] of the reduction of redundancy and so a purer example of an integrative rather than a discrete item test (p. 7).

What Spolsky (2001) stated in the quoted block above is self-condemning for several reasons/variables. *First*, how can deleting complete word be *linguistic* and *non-random* but their mutilation be *integrative* and *random*? If we consider integrativeness as an indispensable part of context, then the opposite will hold true. While it is impossible to restore any omitted word without having access to its context, Khodadady (2007) showed that out of 99 mutilated words comprising Klein-Braley’s (1997) C-Tests, 11 functioned quite well when they were removed from their textual context and presented as single mutilated words to be restored on the basis of

directions given in C-Tests. In other words, test takers could restore eleven percent of items on the C-Test without having any context!

Secondly, RR cannot specify which words/items, i.e., every second word, must be mutilated if they are chosen *randomly*, hence Spolsky (2001) contradicted himself by claiming that C-Tests are “much closer to a noise test in the *randomness*” (p. 7). Thirdly, noise can affect all textual units, e.g., words, phrases and clauses, and the advocates of RR need, therefore, to justify the nature of the missing items in terms of the “phonological, grammatical, lexical, and semantic” levels specified by Spolsky (1973). Fourthly, RR cannot endorse leaving the title and first sentence of a given text intact because these two textual units might also go missing when it takes place in reality. And finally noise distorts *authentic* texts which are produced and processed for *real* purposes in *real* places at *real* times and for *real* purposes.

Text Authenticity and C-Tests

This paper supports Khodadady (2007) and K&H’ view that authentic texts have *not* been used in the development of conventional C-Tests and questions Grotjahn’s (2012a) decontextualized quotations of K & H’s sentences in order to prove that the development of C-Tests on authentic texts is endorsed and brought up by Klein-Braley (1997) *first*. He writes

Although K & H on p. 31 explicitly refer to Klein-Braley (1997, p. 64), they only state “that between four to six carefully selected texts should be chosen”, omitting the qualification “preferably authentic”. (p. 21)

Grotjahn (2012a) quotes both K & H and Klein-Braley in an ambiguous way. His manner of quotation leads readers to the conclusion that K & H deliberately omitted the phrase “preferably authentic” from the sentence he quotes from K & H. In other words, the quoted *that clause* belongs to K & H, i.e., “that between four to six carefully selected texts should be chosen” (p. 31) whereas the phrase “preferably authentic” belongs to Klein-Braley (1997, p. 64). The following quotation provides the original context to which K & H referred to *indirectly*.

A number of texts, usually between four and six, are put together to make a C-Test. Because of problems with text difficulty, usually overestimated by the test constructor (cf. Klein-Braley, 1985b; 1994), one should begin with more texts than will be finally needed. The texts are ordered intuitively according to difficulty (Klein-Braley, 1997, p. 65).

Klein-Braley (1997) did suggest the selection of “preferably authentic” (p. 64) texts. However, she did not provide her readers with any specific definition of authenticity. Neither did she supply them with any references to verify her suggestion. For example, nobody knows what sources she used to select Texts 1, 2, 3 and 4 to develop her C-Tests from. In contrast, K&H employed “why don’t we just kiss and make up” (Dugatkin, 2005) published in *NewScientist* magazine whose authenticity can be verified by all interested readers. They chose this magazine because its articles are “more academic than ... articles in quality newspapers” (Clapham, 1996, p. 145) and they provide standard scientific texts for public readership.

Not only did Klein-Braley (1997) provide no references to find out what sample authentic texts she had preferred but also she believed that “no language test is *authentic*” (p. 48). She argued that “normal language is not produced in order to be assessed.” The present author, however, argues that English writers produce normal/authentic texts to be read. *Whatever texts which are produced to be read by the literate public are authentic*. This argument was employed to question the construct validity of the TOEFL by highlighting the fact that its reading comprehension texts are written by language testing experts in order to *test* reading comprehension ability (see Khodadady, 1997). Since the texts upon which the TOEFL is designed are not *authentic*, i.e., *they are not written to be read*, it lacks construct validity. The same argument was employed by K&H to show that the four texts employed by Klein-Braley (1997) were not *authentic* because they were not written to be *read*. If they were, she would have provided their sources or references.

Sampling Authentic Texts for C-Tests

According to Klein-Braley (1997), a number of texts need to be selected to develop C-Tests because their writers may face “problems with text difficulty” (p. 65) and thus may have to do away with some. Finding texts with appropriate difficulty is not only problematic for designing language proficiency tests such as C-Tests, it violates the principle of authenticity in that the authentic texts written to be read by literate public may have all levels of assumed difficulty. Furthermore, it poses a real problem which becomes more complicated and time consuming when the test designers realize that some of their chosen texts have functioned poorly in the pilot phase and they must, therefore, look for suitable substitutes. In Baghaei’s (2008) words,

For developing a C-Test battery the number of the texts used should be more than the number required since even native speakers cannot obtain perfect scores (95%) on some texts. They believe that native speakers should perform perfectly on language tests. To what extent this view is credible is another issue (p. 33).

The selection of texts written to be *read* by the literate public not only ensures authenticity and dispenses with the necessity of administering C-Tests to *native speakers* but also relieves C-Test designers from looking for a number of texts with appropriate difficulty levels. K&H, therefore, chose a single text whose C-Test items functioned as well as conventional C-Tests developed on four texts as will be discussed shortly. The only reason Klein-Braley (1997) provided for the cumbersome and theoretically questionable process of choosing a number of texts instead of a single authentic text is her adamant attempt to sample texts addressing “*special knowledges*”. This attempt is, nonetheless, misplaced because RR has little, if any, to do with text selection.

In addition to the fallacy of employing “special knowledge” as a synonym for a given area of knowledge such as humanities and engineering, the very necessity of choosing short texts in order to account for “*special knowledges*” fails to represent the types of texts proficient test takers are going to read when they enter higher education centers. If we take academic textbooks and articles as the most normal types of texts read by college and university students, none of these texts consist of a single paragraph! In other words, the C-Tests developed by Klein-Braley (1997) and her followers not only fail to accommodate authenticity in content and audience but also misrepresent academic texts as single short paragraphs!

Since Klain-Braely (1997) ***did not*** provide the sources of her texts so that their intended audiences could be objectively explored, those of Babaii and Ansari (2001) will be addressed as representative samples of conventional C-Tests. Their “eight excerpts were taken from two ELT textbooks, viz *Practice and Progress* (Alexander, 1968) and *To start you practicing* (de Freitas,

1974)” (p. 217). Out of eight conventional C-Tests developed on eight texts *written for teaching English*, only five were kept for final administration because three of them did not reveal Babaii and Ansari’s expected item characteristic indices providing further evidence to support the earlier argument made in this paper, i.e., developing conventional C-Tests entails the cumbersome process of choosing more texts and trying them out in a pilot phase.

Babaii and Ansari (2001) distorted not only the texts of their C-Tests but also the title of the first book they gave as one of the two sources of their selected texts. The full title is not *Practice and Progress* but *Practice and Progress: An Integrated Course for Pre-Intermediate Students* which was published in 1967, not in 1968. As the original title implies, the content of the textbook was written for *teaching* English; therefore, the passages developed in the textbook were not *authentic* in that no proficient English user was supposed to *read* them for the sake of comprehension. Furthermore, the stated level of its would-be users is *Pre-Intermediate* which renders the C-Tests developed on the texts of this textbook questionable if not invalid in terms of their construct validity.

In addition to choosing the texts of an inappropriate proficiency level, Babaii and Ansari (2001) simplified the texts Alexander (1967) had already modified the texts to teach English to *Pre-Intermediate Students*. Alexander himself did not state where he got the passages from. However, he did declare that “each passage contains examples of the language patterns the student is expected to master” (xv) implying that they were particularly *written* for teaching purposes because their constituting number of words also varied according to the students’ level of achievement. While the passages employed for Unit 1, for example, consisted of just one hundred words, they increased to 180 in Unit 4. The educational purposes of *artificially written* or *modified* passages is further emphasized in a section called “For Whom the Course is Intended”, Alexander identifies four types of students among whom are “students in need of remedial work: e.g., ... students who have begun English several times and never got beyond the point of no return” (p. xii)

From among the 26 passages presented in Alexander’s (1967) Unit 4, Babaii and Ansari (2001) chose “A Slip of the Tongue” for inclusion in their C-Test. They refer to this passage along with the other three as “excerpts ... *taken* [italic added] from two ELT textbooks” (p. 213). They do not, however, tell their readers that they have *modified* the “excerpts” as well. While the passage they have included in their C-Test consists of only 80 words, it comprises 181 in Alexander (1967, p. 217). In addition to shortening the text, they changed the constituting words of the passage. For example, the sentence “He *was obviously very* nervous ...” is changed to “He *seemed extremely* nervous ...” for no apparent reason. This means that conventional C-Test designers like Babaii and Ansari not only employ language *teaching* materials for *testing* purposes but also impose their own interpretations on what they choose. (The original passage developed by Alexander and the text simplified by Babaii and Ansari are given in Appendix.)

Content Representation and C-Tests

In contrast to the macro structural approach of schema theory which falls short of providing any objective and measurable unit of “special knowledge” (e.g., Grabe, 2002), its microstructural

perspective considers any word/phrase comprising an authentic text as a schema whose comprehension on the part of its readers depends on its meaning in relation to syntactic, semantic and discursal relationship it holds with other schemata. [Interested readers are referred to Khodadady (2012) for more details.] Since the comprehension of each and all schemata comprising a given text determines their comprehension and thus behave as its main unit, they must be employed as the *best* and *only* units to develop test items on.

Grotjahn (2012a) seemed to be following the microstructural approach of schema theory because he believed that choosing one authentic text to develop AC-Test would under represent content in terms of *lexis*. He wrote

What is new, however, is K & H’s use of a single long authentic text, calling this a C-Test. However, using only one text can lead both to content underrepresentation (e.g., with regard to lexis) and to (severe) bias and unfairness (cf. the quote from Klein-Braley), and, as a consequence, can jeopardize construct validity (p. 21).

Not only the first criticism dealing with the *alleged* content underrepresentation of AC-Test developed by K & H but also the second prescriptive criticism regarding the assumed “(severe) bias and unfairness” of the test are subjective because the data support the opposite as shown in Table 2. If we accept Richards, Platt and Platt’s (1992) definition of lexis as “the vocabulary of a language in contrast to its grammar” (p. 213), it is best represented by semantic schemata, i.e., adjectives, adverbs, nouns and verbs. As can be seen, Dugatkin (2005) employed 866 semantic schemata to write the single authentic text consisting of three parts. K & H reproduced its introduction section to develop their AC-Test.

Table 2: The frequency of semantic, syntactic and parasyntactic tokens comprising texts

Schema domains	Klein-Braley’s four texts		K&H’s single text		Dugatkin’s (2005) text	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Semantic	174	51.3	271	46.2	866	50.5
Syntactic	148	43.7	222	37.8	638	37.2
Parasyntactic	17	5.0	94	16.0	211	12.3
Total	339	100.0	587	100.0	1715	100.0

As it can also be seen in Table 2, the number of semantic schemata comprising the single AC-Test developed by K&H, i.e., 271, is greater than that of Klein-Braley’s (1997), i.e., 174. The Chi-Square analysis of frequency showed that the difference in the number is statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 21.144$, $p < .001$) and thus the AC-Test represents content/lexis significantly better than C-Tests. If we take content representation as a measure of fairness, then AC-Tests are fairer than the conventional C-Tests developed on short and modified texts. It is counter argued in this paper that these are the conventional C-Tests which are biased because their designers manipulate the texts syntactically, semantically and discursively to develop, pilot and select well functioning items. In other words, conventional C-Test writers *write* and/or *modify* a number of short texts dealing with general topics and pilot them in order to get their own desired response.

Internal Validity of Conventional C-Tests and AC-Tests

In addition to the statistically significant and higher representation of content, AC-Tests are superior to conventional C-Tests in terms of their internal validity. In order to support the

superiority, K&H followed scholars such as Baker (1989) and specified two indices which must be used *together* in order to establish it *statistically*. They announced, “for determining the discrimination power of items point biserial correlations (r_{pbi}) between the total test score and individual items were calculated and coefficient of 0.25 and higher were used along with acceptable *p*-values as indices of well functioning items” (p. 34).

Grotjahn (2012a), however, called the results reported by K&H “surprising in several ways” (p. 22). As one of the *allegedly* surprising results, he questions “the small range of item difficulties in the standard C-Test” of K & H which contradicts his “own extensive data sets and also to the data reported by Klein-Braley (1996), Jafarpur (1999) or Babaii and Ansari (2001)”. After focusing on the reported range, i.e., .37 to .73, he wonders “whether the difficulty values in the standard C-Test are correctly calculated.” Table 3, presents the frequency of correct responses given to each item on the conventional C-Tests. They were divided by the number of participants, i.e., 135, to get the *p*-values (PVs). As can be seen, the PVs are correctly calculated and reported. (The CRs were not given by K & H because they are conventionally considered redundant. Conventional C-Test designers like Klein-Braley (1997) do not, for example, provide their readers with their mean r_{pbi} let alone the r_{pbi} of each item.)

Table 3: Correct responses (CRs) given to each item on the C-Test and their *p*-values (PV)

Item	CR	PV	Item	CR	PV	Item	CR	PV	Item	CR	PV	Item	CR	PV
1	99	.73	21	75	.56	41	67	.50	61	52	.39	81	72	.53
2	91	.67	22	62	.46	42	83	.61	62	62	.46	82	70	.52
3	76	.56	23	75	.56	43	65	.48	63	67	.50	83	88	.65
4	74	.55	24	80	.59	44	79	.59	64	90	.67	84	61	.45
5	74	.55	25	65	.48	45	77	.57	65	59	.44	85	72	.53
6	78	.58	26	76	.56	46	56	.41	66	62	.46	86	88	.65
7	99	.73	27	58	.43	47	63	.47	67	68	.50	87	76	.56
8	89	.66	28	71	.53	48	77	.57	68	56	.41	88	64	.47
9	65	.48	29	83	.61	49	78	.58	69	80	.59	89	68	.50
10	90	.67	30	61	.45	50	71	.53	70	63	.47	90	50	.37
11	96	.71	31	70	.52	51	66	.49	71	77	.57	91	70	.52
12	75	.56	32	67	.50	52	83	.61	72	89	.66	92	57	.42
13	79	.59	33	75	.56	53	80	.59	73	61	.45	93	63	.47
14	75	.56	34	65	.48	54	75	.56	74	83	.61	94	84	.62
15	61	.45	35	53	.39	55	63	.47	75	64	.47	95	68	.50
16	87	.64	36	80	.59	56	81	.60	76	84	.62	96	75	.56
17	68	.50	37	58	.43	57	74	.55	77	78	.58	97	85	.63
18	92	.68	38	73	.54	58	81	.60	78	69	.51	98	78	.58
19	64	.47	39	89	.66	59	57	.42	79	57	.42	99	77	.57
20	80	.59	40	61	.45	60	79	.59	80	60	.44			

Grotjahn (2012a) also stated that K & H should not have generalized from the results obtained on the administration of a single AC-Test to all AC-Tests and their generalization is, therefore, another surprising result which must be treated as a flaw. This statement is questionable at best because all research projects are conducted to generalize their findings otherwise there would be no use for their publication. Klein-Braley (1997), for example, made similar generalizations about testing procedures other than C-Tests. After administering the conventional C-Test employed by K & H along with the tests specified in Table 1 she declared that “the C-Test shows superior performance over the other test procedures in the categories difficulty level, reliability, validity, [and] factorial validity” (p. 71).

Furthermore, Grotjahn (2012a) claimed that “the reported number of well-functioning items in the AC-Test is not correct (at least according to Table 4)” and based on this claim he concluded that “it appears that K & H have taken into account only the values for the discrimination index” (p. 23). Both the claim and conclusion are unfounded because the 97 well functioning items, i.e., 3, 5, 10, 11, 14, 17, 18, 19, 21, 24, 26, 28, 29, 30, 31, 35, 37, 40, 42, 45, 46, 47, 50, 51, 52, 55, 56, 57, 59, 60, 62, 63, 65, 66, 68, 69, 70, 73, 77, 81, 82, 86, 89, 90, 92, 95, 100, 101, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 110, 111, 112, 113, 115, 118, 120, 122, 124, 125, 126, 130, 132, 133, 135, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 153, 155, 157, 158, 160, 161, 163, 165, 166, 170, 173, 174, 179, and 180, all have acceptable difficulty *and* discrimination indices, i.e., IFs between .25 and .75 and IDs equal to or higher than .25, which can be checked in Table 4.

And finally, Grotjahn (2012a) expressed surprises other than those brought up in previous paragraphs. Since they are all based on the mere assumptions made on the indices employed to determine item functioning, they will not be addressed. (For example, without checking the 97 well functioning items given in Table 4 and enumerated in paragraph above, he announces that “It *appears* [italics added] that K & H have taken into account only the values for the discrimination index” and then based on this totally *subjective assumption* he surprisingly subtracts 12 items from 97 claiming that they “are acceptable with regard to discrimination but not in terms of difficulty.”) Aside from unfounded assumptions he bring up a peculiar objection regarding the standard deviations obtained on conventional C-Tests and AC-Tests which needs to be addressed separately.

Comparing Conventional C-Tests with AC-Test: Standard Deviations

In order to reject K & H’s adoption of standard deviations (SDs) as indices of comparison between standard C-Test and AC-Tests, Grotjahn (2012a) argued that SDs “clearly depend on the range of the scale and in comparing standard deviations, one has to take this fact into account” (p. 23). Based on this argument he concludes, “therefore the conclusion that the AC-Test distinguishes best among the test takers, because it has the highest standard deviation, is not sufficiently substantiated ...”. This conclusion stands in sharp contrast to its interpretation by authorities such as Thornkdike and Hagan (1977) who declared that the SD “is a measure of variability that goes with the arithmetic mean. It is useful in the field of tests and measurements primarily as providing a *standard* [italics added] unit of measure having comparable meaning from one test to another” (p. 46).

Grotjahn (2012a) brought up the range of a scale in order to reject K & H’s statement that standard deviations are “standardized by their very nature” (p. 35). He seems to have forgotten the fact that SDs are based on the arithmetic mean which derives their strength from normal

distribution and for this very reason SDs provide the best and simplest index to compare two measures such as conventional C-Tests and AC-Tests. According to Thorndike (2005),

This unvarying relationship of the standard deviation unit to the arrangement of scores in the normal distribution gives the standard deviation a type of *standard* [italic added] meaning as a unit of score. It becomes a yardstick in terms of which groups may be compared or the status of a given individual on different traits expressed. For example, if John's score in reading is 1SD above the mean and his score in mathematics is 2 SDs above the mean, then his performance in mathematics is better than his performance in reading (p. 49).

The results of language proficiency tests are used to reach educational decisions. As such they play a significant role in test takers' lives. According to the results obtained by K&H, while conventional C-Tests did not differentiate among many test takers because they obtained the same score, the AC-Test did accomplish the task because of its constituting items and higher magnitude of SD as shown in Table 4. As can be seen, seven test takers have, for example, scored 58 out of 99 on the conventional C-Test and their Z scores are all .40, indicating that they are of the same level of language proficiency. However, while only test takers four and five have obtained the same score on the AC-Test, i.e., 111 out of 180, test taker one's Z-score on AC-Test, i.e., 1.5, is over three times higher than his Z-score on the standard C-Test, i.e., .40, indicating that the former provides a much better measure of his proficiency as those of test takers 2, 3, 4, and 5 do. These differences are all reflected in the SDs of conventional C-Test and AC-Test, i.e., 11.358 and 21.589, respectively (see K & H's Table 2 on page 5 and 6).

Table 4: The scores of seven test takers on the standard C-Test and AC-Test

Test taker	Standard C-Test		AC-Test	
	Raw score	Z Score	Raw score	Z Score
1	58	0.40108	130	1.55498
2	58	0.40108	113	0.76754
3	58	0.40108	112	0.72122
4	58	0.40108	111	0.6749
5	58	0.40108	111	0.6749
6	58	0.40108	103	0.30434
7	58	0.40108	98	0.07274

Reliability Estimate of Conventional C-Test and AC-Test

As a pioneering designer of conventional C-Tests Klein-Braley (1997) employed Cronbach's alpha to explore the reliability of her conventional C-Test on the basis of its individual gaps as reproduced in Table 5 below. K & H applied the same reliability estimate to their data. Surprisingly, however, Grotjahn (2012a) named and criticized Khodadady (2007) specifically for using the estimate and declared that "K & H's reliability estimation for the C-Test and the AC-Test is flawed since the authors calculate Cronbach's alpha on the basis of the individual gaps" (p. 24).

Table 5: Basic test statistics for grouped test procedures reported by Klein-Braley (1997, p. 68)

Test	Mean	SD	P	$rtt_{(\text{ALPHA})}$	$r_{(\text{DELTA})}$
ALLCLOZE	10.72	4.79	.27	.66	.65
C-TEST	51.15	16.71	.52	.85	.70
ALLMC	29.90	5.44	.60	.51	.70
ALLCE	22.86	9.28	.46	.75	.65

As an alternative to Cronbach's alpha, Grotjahn (2012a) suggested several approaches whose descriptions run for five paragraphs! What the present researcher understands from the descriptions is that since there is a possibility of "local item dependence (LID) and correlated errors" (p. 24), conventional C-Test designers must employ different approaches whose application is as cumbersome as choosing a large number of texts to replace those which may not function as expected. These approaches are questionable as far as the present author is concerned simply because they are fundamentally utilized to overcome the problem created by *faulty items* and *associated errors*. Using statistics to overcome inherent problems with proficiency tests such as conventional C-Tests, it sounds both esthetically and logically unacceptable. The most feasible approach would be to use the alpha for the tests employed as K & H did or to discard their malfunctioning items and to calculate their alpha by employing their well functioning items as Khodadady (2012) did.

CONCLUSION

This study analyzed conventional C-Tests in terms of the texts chosen by their designers and contended that they are not based on reduced redundancy (RR) because their mutilation of words is systematic rather than based on probability. Neither is the selection of several texts justified in RR because it has nothing to do with "special knowledge" of a given unauthentic text as assumed by Klein-Braley (1997). The conventional C-Tests were developed originally to overcome the shortcomings of cloze tests as integrative/top down measures of language proficiency. They did, however, create shortcomings of their own when their designers adopted a prescriptive approach in their development.

Developing conventional C-Tests on several short and modified texts does not necessarily render them "genuine" as Grotjahn (2012a, p. 21) claimed it to do. Neither do conventional C-Tests measure "special knowledges" because they do not address schemata as macro structures. They are, instead, developed on single words and should therefore be viewed as offshoots of micro structural approach of schema-theory. It is, therefore, suggested that instead of choosing several short texts and modifying them to serve testing purposes, normal/ authentic texts written for being read by literate English users be selected to write theoretically strong and empirically superior C-Test as K & H did.

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Appendix

Alexander's (1967) original text and the text upon which Babaii and Ansari (2001) developed their first C-Test

A slip of the Tongue

People will do anything to see a free show- even if it is a bad one. When the news got round that a variety show would be presented at our local cinema by the P. and U. Bird Seed company, we all rushed to see it. We had to queue for hours to get in and there must have been several hundred people present just before the show began. Unfortunately, the show was one of the dullest we have ever seen. Those who failed to get in need not have felt disappointed as many of the artistes who should have appeared did not come. The only funny things we hear that evening came from the advertiser at the beginning of the programme. He was obviously very nervous and for some minutes stood awkwardly before the microphone. As soon as he opened his mouth, everyone burst out laughing. We all know what the poor man should have said, but what he actually said was: 'This is the Poo and Ee Seed Bird Company. Good ladies, evening and gentlemen!' (Alexander, 1967, p. 217)

A Slip of the Tongue

On a variety show presented by P. and U. Bird Seed Company, a funny thing happened. It came from the advertiser at the beginning of the program. He seemed extremely nervous and for some minutes stood awkwardly before the microphone. As soon as he opened his mouth, everyone burst out laughing. We all knew what the poor man *should* have said, but what he *actually* said was: "This is the Poo and Ee Seed Bird Company. Good ladies, evening and gentlemen!" (Babaii & Ansari, 2001, p. 217)

Goals of Reciprocal Teaching Strategy Instruction

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ABSTRACT

Reciprocal teaching strategy plays a crucial role in language use, language improvement and language learning. In the context of English language teaching (ELT), reciprocal teaching strategy is an integral aspect of communicative competence that can impact the desire to use the language as well as the quantity and quality of foreign language learning. Although there is a small and committed body of individuals who have worked to encourage the incorporation of reciprocal teaching strategy instruction in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes, reciprocal teaching still tends to be the neglected component of many language programs. In this paper, some important goals for RECIPROCAL TEACHING such as increased reciprocal teaching strategy research, focus on developing learners' communicative competence, focus on reciprocal teaching in teacher education, focus on comprehension strategies, focus on discussion and appropriation, and focus on studies about the goals of reciprocal teaching strategy, goals of reciprocal teaching strategy and benefit of reciprocal teaching strategy.

Key words; Communicative competence, reciprocal teaching, comprehension strategies, goals of reciprocal teaching.

INTRODUCTION

In the context of English language teaching (ELT), reciprocal teaching is an integral aspect of communicative competence that can impact the desire to use the language as well as the quantity and quality of reading comprehension development (Palincsar & Brown, 1984). Reciprocal teaching strategy instruction tends to be ignored in the language learning, and teachers need to be encouraged by the idea of teaching through reciprocal teaching instruction in their reading classrooms (Doolittle, Hicks, Triplett, Nichols, & Young, 2006). Yet, reciprocal teaching strategy instruction does not have a secure place in most language curriculums. Within the current trend in ELT, it is up to individual teachers to incorporate reading comprehension in their classrooms. However, a lack of formal training combined with an absence of program directives means that it is up to teachers to inform and prepare themselves for how to best meet their students' needs. Consequently, most teachers do not provide instruction at all and those few that have generally adopted a hit or missing approach rely on materials that lack grounding and the desired results.

Consequently, most teachers do not provide instruction at all and those few who have generally adopted a hit or missing approach rely on materials that lack grounding and the desired results. This condition is worsened by the fact that reciprocal teaching strategy and explicit teaching method is marginalized and treated superficially (Stricklin, 2011).

Therefore, it is important to understand that students are not receiving the training they need in this important aspect of linguistic competence. What would affect and improve reciprocal teaching instruction for English language learners? This study reviews several goals that are very important for teaching reciprocal teaching instruction.

Communicative competence is the purpose of reciprocal teaching strategy instruction teaching and learning (Foster & Rotoloni, 2005). It stresses the need for meaningful communicative tasks in the language classroom, including those which focus on reciprocal teaching strategy in reading comprehension. Reciprocal teaching strategy practices are related to daily use of English language learning including reading comprehension, for instance, small groups working.

Learners can become careful readers in their own reading task. This shows that learners need exposure to reading materials so they can understand different types of texts in comprehension. By using reciprocal teaching strategy instruction, instructors can give students meaningful exposure to variability in reading comprehension and improve their communicative competence (Rubin, 1987).

Why Reciprocal Teaching Strategy?

Firstly, reciprocal teaching strategy has caused a revolution in reading comprehension which has been advocated by Palincsar and Brown (1984). Reciprocal teaching strategy is an instructional model that improves students' reading comprehension (DEECD, 2008). It also enhances understanding of complex texts and thus facilitates readers to gain confidence and motivation to read (DET, 2006). Secondly, Alvermann (2001) recommends that students' perception of how competent they are as readers affects how motivated they are to learn in subject area such as reading comprehension. Alvermann goes on to discuss that engaging learners in various small groups and intervening tasks as a tool for learning is preferable to intervening task only as a repository of data to be memorized. Thirdly, learners need to be familiar with the reciprocal teaching model and to have experience in using and practicing its functions.

Reciprocal teaching is an instructional model based on helping and fostering practice. In this model, the teacher first models a set of reading comprehension strategies and then step by step transfers responsibility to the readers (Brown & Palincsar, 1985; Palincsar & Brown, 1984). Furthermore, reciprocal teaching strategy involves three main important factors, (1) the teaching and learning of reading comprehension strategies, (2) the dialogue among students and teacher where the teacher models why, when, and where to use these reciprocal teaching strategies, and (3) the determine of the teacher' role by the learners, that is, learners begin to model the reading comprehension model for other learners. Thus, the aims of reciprocal teaching are for readers to learn the reading comprehension strategies, learn how and when to use the strategies, and become independent in reading comprehension.

Reciprocal teaching strategy has the general methodology which consists of teachers and students, usually in small groups, reading a section of text. The teacher models appropriate reading comprehension strategies while leading a dialogue of the task. In the process of discussion and modeling, the teacher encourages readers to generate questions in the text and strategies. The teacher provides this discussion to facilitated both reading comprehension and strategic cognition (Palincsar & Brown, 1984).

This reading, discussion, and questioning continue in the process of the text reading. Moreover, as readers become more proficient with the discussion process and the reading comprehension strategies, the teacher begins to have readers take the role of teacher or discussion leader. As readers begin to lead the discussion process, the teacher plays the role of facilitator, rather than a leader. The teacher models and elaborates different parts of the text to readers only at the level each one of them is able to negotiate at any one time. However, as the students become more proficient, the teacher improves her/his demands, requiring participation at a slightly more challenging level. This changing from a teacher-centered model to a student-centered model is the goals of reciprocal teaching strategy and encourages students to be independent readers (Palincsar & Brown, 1984, p. 13).

Comprehension Strategies

According to Ahmadi and Hairul (2012), Palincsar and Brown (1984), along with discussion and the appropriation of the role of a teacher with the students of the reciprocal teaching strategy, the use of comprehension strategies is one of the important of three central pillars. Comprehension strategies are situated to provide better recognizing texts – to help the understanding of meaning during the reading process. Palincsar and Brown (1984) used four kinds of reading comprehension strategies which are explained in the following sections:

A. Questioning

The identification of information, themes, and ideas that are important enough to show further consideration is called questioning. And the main important information or opinions are used to generate questions that are used as self-assessment for the reader. Questioning provides a task for understanding the text more deeply and construct the meaning from writing texts.

B. Summarizing

The process of explaining the important information and opinions within a text and integrating these into clear and concise words that communicates the essential meaning of the text is called summarizing. Summarizing can be upon a single paragraph, a section of text, or an entire passage. It involves the motivation to create a context for recognizing the specifics of a text.

C. Clarifying

The elaboration and clarification of unknown, difficult, or unfamiliar aspects of texts are called clarifying. These aspects can include an awkward sentence or text structure, unfamiliar words, unclear references, or obscure concepts. Clarifying motivates readers to clarify confusion through re-reading, the use of context in which the text was written and/or read, and the use of external resources such as a dictionary or ask questions from peers or instructor.

D. Predicting

The combining students' background knowledge, current knowledge from the text, and the text's structure and pictures to create hypotheses related to the direction of the text and the author's intent message is called predicting. Predicting is an overall rationale for reading to confirm or reject self-generated hypotheses.

Palincsar and Brown (1984) explained these four reading comprehension strategies were taught during the discussion in which the teacher modeled the use of each of the strategies. Moreover, others have successfully taught the reading comprehension strategies prior to engaging in the dialogue process.

Discussion and Appropriation

According to Carter and Fekete (2001), reading comprehension strategies alone are not enough to reach the goals of reciprocal teaching. Discussion is also a main important factor achieving the goals of reciprocal teaching strategy. The discussion refers to the dialogue, questions and answers, and feedback that occur during the process of reading and recognizing the text. During the early steps of reciprocal teaching, the teacher interprets, in small groups, the overall nature of the reading comprehension strategies, why, what, when and how to use the strategies.

The teacher then selects a part of the text and the teacher and learners silently read that section. Typically, reciprocal teaching begins with the reading of short passages, for example, a paragraph or a page, and proceeds to longer passages. After that the teacher begins to model the reciprocal teaching process by generating and asking a question which the students assist to answer. The teacher may ask several questions before summarizing the section of text that was read.

According to Rosenshine and Meister (1994), following the summarization process, the teacher will clarify any difficult sentences, words, or grammar within the text. Then, through the use of text-based cues, the teacher will prepare a prediction for the next paragraph of text. As the teacher improves through questioning, summarizing, clarifying, and predicting, the readers are active and are encouraged to participate in dialogue. Particularly, readers' participation involves (1) explaining or commenting on other readers' summary, (2) recommending other questions, (3) suggesting on another's predictions, (4) asking clarification of material they did not recognize, and (5) trying to resolve problems.

This cycle of dialogical questioning, summarizing, clarifying, and predicting continue as a teacher-centered process until learners figure out the processes themselves. Gradually the teacher

transfers responsibility of the process to the students adopted the role of dialogue leader. These students then begin the discussion questioning, summarizing, clarifying, and predicting process, while the teacher assumes the role of guider and observer.

Similarly, it is concluded that the process of discussion begins with one student generating questions and others preparing answers and suggestions, one student summarizing and others preparing explaining and simplifications, one student detecting difficult sentences and others clarifying and obtaining relevant resources, and one student predicting the upcoming paragraph and others refining and provide alternative hypotheses. The use of this discussion, in conjunction with the reading comprehension strategies, leads to the satisfaction of the previously identified goals of reciprocal teaching. Readers learn the reading comprehension models need to learn what, when and how to use the models of reading comprehension strategies, and become independent in the use of these strategies (Hart & Speece, 1998; Rosenshine & Meister, 1994).

Foundations for the Use of Reciprocal Teaching Strategy

Vygotsky (1978) stated that the use of the reciprocal teaching strategy consist of reaching for the goals of reciprocal teaching and it is based on the literature and social constructivist philosophy and cognitive psychology theory. This is essential as it separates the reciprocal teaching strategy from other reading comprehension strategies and provides a particular model for its use.

Social constructivism, as a basis for reciprocal teaching strategy, emphasizes the social generation of knowledge. Every function in learners' cultural improvement has two parts; first, on the social part, and on the individual part (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 57). This social generation of knowledge involves three elementary assumptions: (1) knowledge and meaning are active creations of socialization; (2) knowledge and meaning are social creations and as such reflect social negotiation and consensus; and (3) knowledge and meaning are constructed for the goals of social adaptation, discourse, and goal achievement (Gergen, 1999; Prawat & Floden, 1994).

Reciprocal teaching is based on active socialization on these three assumptions, both teacher-centered and students-centered, where the knowledge that is constructed from the given text is negotiated within dialogue communities and is not merely transferred from teacher to student. Furthermore, reciprocal teaching focuses the instrumentalist supposition that knowledge should be useful. That is, reciprocal teaching focuses the role of language in communication, recognizing, and activities. While social constructivism prepares a solid philosophical for the use of reciprocal teaching, cognitive psychology prepares a solid theoretical foundation.

There are several empirical studies from cognitive psychology to prove the usefulness of reciprocal teaching in fostering reading comprehension. Rosenshine and Meister (1994) investigated a meta-analysis of sixteen quantitative studies emphasizing on reciprocal teaching strategy and the result showed that firstly, reciprocal teaching has an important effect on students' reading comprehension performance, secondly, reciprocal teaching has an important effect on students' reading comprehension performance relative to standardized tests. Accordingly, Rosenshine and Meister (1994) explained that reciprocal teaching is most important for poorer

readers. These results showed that reciprocal teaching strategy should be considered in different level of studies.

Studies on the Goals of Reciprocal Teaching Strategy

Palincsar and Brown (1986) explored that when reciprocal teaching was examined in a group of students from just fifteen to twenty days, the result showed that students' reading comprehension improved from thirty to eighty percent. Accordingly, Palincsar and Klenk (1991) found in their study that students not only increased their comprehensive proficiency at once, but students also kept the developed comprehension proficiency when tested a year later. Reciprocal teaching strategy is especially important when incorporated as part of a treatment for struggling students (Cooper et al., 2000) and it is used with low-performing learners in various situations (Carter, 1997).

Reciprocal teaching originally designed for small-group instruction with struggling students and has proved to yield positive and consistent results with different levels of students who are taught in groups working and affected their activities in reading comprehension (Cooper et al., 2000; Palincsar & Brown, 1984, 1986; Palincsar & Klenk, 1991, 1992). According to Rosenshine and Meister (1994), conducted sixteen studies of reciprocal teaching strategy in their investigations and explored that reciprocal teaching strategy is a model that develops reading comprehension. Similarly, Lubliner (2001) detected that reciprocal teaching strategy is an effective technique for teaching that can enhance on the kind of reading comprehension that is necessary not only for developmental test scores but also for an information age.

Lori D. Ockus (2003) explained that there is a need for readers to learn sophisticated reading skills that they can utilize in the workforce and in a world that is exploding with print materials and information. Readers need to be prepared to understand and monitor various complicated texts from books to electronic sources, and it is believed that the reciprocal teaching approach can facilitate achieving goals.

Goals of Reciprocal Teaching Strtaegy

Ahmadi and Hairul (2012), Ahmadi and Pourhossein (2012), McLaughlin and Allen (2003), Pearson, et al., (1992) interpreted that reciprocal teaching strategy was designed by Palincsar and Brown in 1984 with different goals and helps students reading comprehension at different grade levels. The goals of reciprocal teaching strategy are as follows:

1. To enhance learners' reading comprehension through four reciprocal teaching strategies (making prediction, generating questions, clarifying, and summarizing).
2. To frame the four reciprocal teaching strategies by modeling, helping, guiding, and, providing the strategies while reading.
3. To direct learners to become meta-cognitive and reflective in using the four strategies.
4. To assist learners evaluate their reading comprehension through reciprocal teaching strategy.
5. To utilize the classroom environment of learning to increase and frame reading comprehension.

6. To empower instruction in a different classroom environment, help students in reading comprehension.
7. To be part of the bigger framework of reading comprehension strategies that provide reviewing, generating questions, making predictions, evaluating, and monitoring.

Accordingly, McLaughlin and Allen (2002) and Pearson, Roehler, Dole, and Duffy, (1992) explained that reciprocal teaching strategy has different goals as follows;

- To promote student's reading comprehension through various kinds of reciprocal teaching strategy; predicting, questioning, clarifying, and summarizing and to make the four strategies by modeling, helping, and applying the strategies while reading and assist students to utilize metacognitive and strategy in their reading activities.
- To guide students control their reading comprehension and use monitoring strategy through four sub-sections of reciprocal teaching, to utilize the social nature of studying to enhance and scaffold reading comprehension.
- To empower teaching in different classrooms setting and to be part of the broader framework of comprehension strategies that comprises previewing, self-questioning, making connections; visualizing, knowing how words work, monitoring, summarizing, and evaluating.

Benefits of Reciprocal Teaching

Several investigations (Carter, 1997; Palincsar & Brown 1984, 1986; Palincsar, Brown & Campione, 1989; Palincsar & Klenk, 1991, 1992) have found that students who have been teaching with reading comprehension and are taught how to think about texts, in this way are able to feel comfortable to participate in dialogues and engaging with both fiction and non-fiction grade level texts. They understand how to make sense of what they are reading whether it is in the context of interest reading, classroom reading, social studies text, science text, or even in other word problems and their reading comprehension levels develop strongly.

According to Oczkus (2003), reciprocal teaching used in collaborative groups among students for three weeks and enhanced reading comprehension on assessments by thirty to eighty percent. Palincsar and Klenk (1991) explained that students developed reading proficiency immediately and also showed that they had maintained these proficiency on tests performed a year later. It can be concluded that reading comprehension was improved through the use of this instructional model and students who used reciprocal teaching strategy benefited from this strategy and improved their reading competency (Oczkus, 2003).

Allen (2003) elaborated that reciprocal teaching instruction for a while of two weeks was taught to the students prior to teaching it. Feedback was given to the students on a daily basis. The study

found positive changes in the students' abilities to generate questions, answer questions, and summarize information.

Hashey et al., (2003) stated that the instructors found improvements in students' confidence and success, in their recognizing and use of strategies, and in their enjoyment of literature. This study concluded, most of the students agreed that reciprocal teaching helps them understand the book more and facilitates their reading comprehension (Hashey et al., 2003).

Accordingly, a revised version of reciprocal teaching can benefit learners who try to comprehend not only mathematical vocabulary problems but also all the field of target language learning programs. The four components of this strategy as: clarifying, questioning, summarizing and planning (Van Garderen, 2004). In a reciprocal teaching math classroom, one learner is assigned to be the group leader. He or she leads the other learners through each of the four sub-sections of reciprocal teaching strategy. The group members first clarify any vocabularies or phrases that are not recognizable. Then the leader uses questions to help the groups in identifying the key parts of the problem. Next, the leader summarizes the purpose of the word problem and finally helps the group in creating a plan to solve the problem. Each person in the group takes a turn being the leader (Van Garderen, 2004).

CONCLUSION

Reciprocal teaching is a powerful teaching strategy which allows students to play different roles to practice prediction, questioning, clarifying and summarizing. These are important strategies for fostering and monitoring comprehension. To make it a success, it is important to find the right passage for students to practice these strategies and for students to practice these strategies regularly. Most teacher preparation programs can introduce some focus on reciprocal teaching strategy issues and that strategy can be better incorporated into language learning curricula and better assessed. We are now at a point where most EFL/ESL teachers recognize that there is nothing wrong with having an appropriate strategy in fostering EFL/ESL learning programs, and that programs should be the goals of reciprocal teaching approaches. Reciprocal teaching strategy in reading comprehension is advancing and there is a key role of virtual worlds and other sorts of practical opportunities informed by research. There are always students involved in real communication with texts and they need to try to achieve the goals of reading and comprehend the written message/messages, rather than putting all the responsibility on the shoulders of the teacher. Teachers in the field of study, teaching and research are the people best equipped to help students. For those of us who teach at universities and colleges, we can start with our own students. A major change in teachers' attitudes towards reciprocal teaching instruction is indispensable and it is their job to speed up change. By incorporating current research and its implications into their teaching practice, teachers can help learners gain the skills they need for effective improvement in English language learning activities. It must be borne in mind that teachers are the models for their learners, so first of all they should have a good strategy in their teaching; otherwise, they can harm their students.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The researchers would like to thank Mr. Abbas Pourhossein Gilakjani, Mrs sareh shaker haghghi for their extensive and insightful discussions.

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EGAP or ESAP? Towards Meeting the Academic English Language Needs of Undergraduates

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ABSTRACT

“Needs analysis” is an important stage in language curriculum design as learners’ language needs in the target literacy contexts can be determined. Nonetheless, many higher learning institutions overlook this component and hastily jump into designing a language course on an ad hoc basis due to the hassles of conducting it and a lack of awareness of needs analysis as a tool in curriculum development. The findings of this study offer a potential solution for institutions with similar contexts. Drawing upon two comprehensive needs analysis approaches – Target Situation Analysis and Present Situation Analysis, this study investigates the academic English language needs and language ability of the pre-university students at The University of Selangor, Malaysia. Data from multiple perspectives: students, ESL (English as a Second Language) lecturers and subject lecturers were collected via three sets of questionnaires. Empirical evidence indicates that the students had greater difficulty with the language rather than the content of subject matters. Besides that, another interesting finding is the differing opinions between the ESL and subject lecturers regarding the students’ ability in handling writing and listening tasks. The results also indicate that English for Specific Academic Purposes (ESAP) courses are more suitable to fulfil the students’ current learning needs as compared to English for General Academic Purposes (EGAP) courses. These findings have implications on curriculum planning and review, materials development and implementation of teaching methods.

Keywords: English for General Academic Purposes (EGAP), English for Specific Academic Purposes (ESAP), Needs analysis, Curriculum design

ENGLISH FOR ACADEMIC PURPOSES AND NEEDS ANALYSIS

At the tertiary level, there are three types of English language courses which are commonly offered to students – general English proficiency courses, English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) courses and English for Academic Purposes (EAP) courses. In the discussion of curriculum development for EAP, which is also the focus of the present study, “needs analysis” or assessing students’ language needs is always considered a crucial component and is fundamental to an EAP approach to course design (Tajino, James & Kyoichi, 2005; Jordan, 1997). Nonetheless, many institutions are lacking awareness of or have overlooked this important component in course design (Cowling, 2007) and due to this reason, Jordan (2002) criticised that the language support that is provided to university students tended to be on an ad hoc basis. Hamp-Lyons (2001, cited in Tajino et al., 2005) articulated that “EAP begins with the learner and the situation, whereas General English begins with the language” (p. 27). It is understood that the nature of EAP courses is different from other types of English language courses. Thus, institutions or course developers should consider the users’ voices (both lecturers and learners) when deciding on the course content.

The growth of EAP is derived from the awareness of ESP practitioners that all the tertiary level students possess different learning needs which is hardly to be fulfilled by teaching them the same type of English language (Soo & Tam, 2011). This view is in line with Sabariah and Rafik-Galea’s (2005) claim that the development of EAP is a result of dissatisfaction with the lack of generalizability of ESP courses. In a study conducted in Hong Kong to find out tertiary students’ English language needs, Evans and Green (2007) found out that most undergraduates actually need language support that is oriented towards academic rather than general English. Thus, the value of EAP cannot be ignored as it is closely associated with students’ academic success. There are two sub-strands under EAP - English for Specific Academic Purposes’ (ESAP) and ‘English for General Academic Purposes’ (EGAP) (Blue, 1988a cited in Jordan, 1997). The difference between ESAP and EGAP is that ESAP courses focus on the actual tasks that students have to carry out while EGAP courses select more general contexts (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998). To be specific, ESAP is the language required for a particular academic subject such as medicine and engineering, and its contents include the language structure, genres, vocabulary and the particular skills needed for the area of study. Whereas EGAP selects a more common or non-subject-specific type of language elements such as study skills and its main objective is to equip learners with the necessary skills to complete tasks in a general academic setting (Jordan, 1997).

With reference to what should be focused in needs analysis, Wei and Flaitz (2005) perceived it as something which is subjective as learners’ needs in several skills or only a specific skill can be examined. They also reported that in conducting needs analysis to identify students’ academic language needs, researchers can collect data to identify the tasks students will encounter in university content classrooms and also to analyse the skills the students need to perform those tasks successfully. The latter focus is actually concerned with the student learning styles and strategies which is seen as an important aspect in needs analysis by Kavaliauskiene and Uzpaliene (2003). Thus, needs analysis can be regarded as the process of establishing what and how of a language course (Mo, 2005).

To look more closely into this issue, Dooley (2006) speculated needs analysis as a very practical and the most effective way of identifying specific English language needs. It is considered practical because it is context specific and therefore the information used to design the curriculum is reliable which will then definitely match with the real needs of the learners.

Additionally, it is considered an effective way of assuring the value of the language programme because both students and lecturers will contribute in the needs analysis and this step could provide a more complete and comprehensible picture when deciding on the language course content. Therefore, the designing of any language programmes with needs analysis being conducted will help both instructors and learners to clear some doubts on the effectiveness of the language course.

After being aware of the fact that every individual, in the process of language learning, has certain needs to be fulfilled, institution or to be more specific the language course developers should not take things for granted by just putting in their own assumptions only to predict what might work best for the students. It is believed that the hassles that one might face while conducting needs analysis is the main reason that cause those involve in programme design abandon this important step. Although it is less time consuming and could develop and implement a programme in a shorter time, they will foresee a lot of other important aspects which are not possible to be predicted by any party except the target users. With such a concern, needs analysis is a good platform to elicit information on what the students want, need and already know using their perspectives. Due to this reason, Liz Hamp-Lyons (2000, cited in Jordan, 2002) noted that needs analysis is “fundamental to an EAP approach to course design and teaching” (p.74).

In view of the above, the purpose of this study is (1) to identify the difficulties encountered by the students in using English language in their learning tasks with regard to listening, reading, speaking and writing skills, and (2) to seek the views on the degree of importance of the various language skills in helping the students to learn.

METHODOLOGY

The theoretical aspect of this study is based on the Target Situation Analysis (TSA) and Present Situation Analysis (PSA) approaches (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998). The TSA approach is used to determine the learners’ academic English language requirements and the PSA approach is applied to assess the learners’ strengths and weaknesses in different language skills.

Subjects

Three groups of respondents participated in the study: 93 first year undergraduates, 10 ESL (English as a second Language) lecturers and 8 subject lecturers. This is in line with the suggestions that needs analysis should use multiple sources to increase its reliability and validity (Brown, 1995; Long, 1999; Witkin & Asltschuld, 1995; Keita, 2004). The students of this study were the second semester degree students from three faculties of the University of Selangor, Malaysia, and all of them were also post-foundation students in the same university. The inclusion of both ESL and subject lecturers in the study is considered important as their respective demands and needs pertaining to the students’ language needs could be different.

Therefore, this is an additional dimension to overcome the gap of responses derived from both lecturers as the use of multiple sources such as learners, teachers and domain experts (Long, 2005) can ensure that a wide variety of data can be gathered and compared.

Instrumentation

Questionnaire was selected as the instrument for the study because it can be used to collect data with large numbers of people and it is easy to administer and analyse if possible response are structured (Faiz, 2005). It is also the least consuming ways of collecting information, and this is why learners' needs are usually specified through questionnaires which enable researchers to determine long-term aims and short-term objectives (Kavaliauskiene & Uzpalienė, 2003).

In developing the questionnaires, several related studies on needs analysis were referred to, including Hutchinson and Waters, 1987; Dudley-Evans and St. John, 1998; Deutch, 2003; Saraswathy, 2003; Muhammad Nadzri, 2004; Banerjee and Wall, 2006; Evans and Green, 2007 and Cowling, 2007. Besides that, the researchers' own experience in teaching EAP courses in the university also contributed to the construction of the questionnaires. Although a number of questionnaires from previous works were used as reference, it had to be modified in a way where it can fulfil the objectives of this study especially after considering the focus of the study, institutional setting and more importantly the respondents of this study. A few shortcomings were detected in those questionnaires, for instance, the choice of language and terminologies used in the questions which were considered inappropriate and hardly understood by students who are not from language education or linguistics background. Three different questionnaires were used to collect the data for the study, one for the students, one for the ESL lecturers and a parallel one for the subject lecturers. These survey questionnaires consist of 71 close-ended questions or items and 8 semi close-ended questions. As Creswell (2008) states that semi close-ended question has all the advantages of close and open ended questions and while it also provides limited open-ended information to encourage responses, it does not overburden the researcher with information that needs to be coded. As these questionnaires were developed for the purpose of this study which was based on the specific need of the present research context, no assumptions were made about either the dimensional structure or internal consistency of the items. Instead, each statement or item was analysed individually.

Pilot Study

The student questionnaire was piloted on 34 students who were in their third semester and the lecturer questionnaire was piloted on 4 ESL lecturers and 2 subject lecturers. The students were chosen for the pilot study because they had undergone the same courses as the respondents of this study in an earlier semester. On the other hand, the lecturers were selected based on their experiences of teaching the students. They were invited to comment on the questionnaire layout, content, item wording, instruction and the constructions of questions in the survey. This was to test the comprehension of the items in the questionnaires and to eliminate misunderstanding and ambiguities when answering the questions. From the pilot study, it was found that the students faced problems in understanding some of the technical terms such as 'subject matter', 'organization of texts', 'abbreviations', 'supporting details' and 'scanning'. Besides that, they had problems in distinguishing the meaning conveyed by some of the questionnaire items. With the feedback, the researchers removed some of the difficult or technical terms and replaced them with simpler words. The researchers also combined similar items and rephrased them.

Data Collection and Analysis

The student questionnaires were administered and completed by the students while they were attending lectures in the classroom. Permission was obtained from the lecturers in advance before collecting the data. The researcher gave an explanation of the objective of administering the questionnaires and the way to answer the questions. The researcher was present throughout the session to help the students if they were facing any problems in answering the questionnaires and this was also to ensure the return of all questionnaires distributed. For the lecturers' questionnaires, it was sent to the lecturers by the researchers. They were briefed on the objective of the study personally and the importance of their involvement in the study. Descriptive statistics were used to report the analysis. The responses from the questionnaires were tabulated and analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Students' English Language Proficiency

Judging from the emerged responses, the students showed much more confidence in their receptive skills (reading and listening) than in their productive skills (speaking and writing), which reported higher percentage of students with average and lower proficiency level. The ESL lecturers, on the other hand, seemed to have negative perceptions of the students' ability in all the four skills. In their opinions, the students had only achieved average or lower level of proficiency in the four skills. The subject lecturers' responses were also relatively similar with the ESL lecturers' responses. In their view, the students seem incredibly weak in writing and speaking as compared to listening and reading skills. However, despite the strict feedback given by the ESL lecturers, there was still an obvious agreement between them and the students that the students' reading skill was better than the other skills and writing was the most serious problem among them.

English Language Ability in Reading, Listening, Speaking and Writing Skills

Although a greater number of students expressed some degree of ease in most of the reading sub-skills as compared to the others, they do face difficulties also in certain sub-skills such as to understand difficult words in reading texts, reading quickly to get the general meaning of reading texts, identifying main points and supporting details. The problem of understanding difficult words, which was claimed difficult by most of the students (44.1%), could be the main factor that directly causes them to face difficulties in other sub-skills. As Coady and Huckin (1997) believe that vocabulary acquisition is the central and the most primary in language learning. Thus, it could be inferred that their lexical competence has an impact on reading ability. The ESL lecturers also found that the students had difficulty (a lot and some) in sub-skills like understanding the content of textbooks, identifying main points and supporting details and skimming to get the general meaning of reading texts. Of all these, having to understand the content of reading materials like textbooks and journals was identified as the students' most serious problem. One lecturer commented in the questionnaire that "*the students will normally take a long time to finish reading just one-page long text*". Besides that, one lecturer also wrote that "*without an English-Malay dictionary, I don't think they can survive*" while another

mentioned that “*they feel bored whenever I ask them to do reading comprehension exercise*”. Thus, there is a need to strengthen students’ reading sub-skills.

In terms of listening, having to understand lecturers who speak fast in English was considered as their major difficulty (having a lot of difficulty and some difficulty - 53.8%). This is followed by difficulty in taking lecture notes (34.4%) and getting the important points of lectures (33.3%). In comparison with the students’ responses, the ESL lecturers reported that the students experienced the most difficulty in following a classroom discussion which is conducted in the English medium and in understanding lecturers who speak fast in English. For the first problem, it was perceived that the students struggled to understand the content of the discussion. One ESL lecturer wrote in the questionnaire that, “*It is hard to have classroom discussion with students especially when the issue discussed are beyond their existing knowledge*” while another also commented that “*It is hard to get them to respond in classroom discussion as they always look blur...in fact they are not clear of what is going on*”. However, the subject lecturers generally felt that their students did not face serious problems in most of the listening sub-skills.

As for speaking (Table 1), the students perceived that they faced a lot of and some difficulties in almost all the speaking sub-skills. At the top of the list is the ability to use correct pronunciation (58.1%). This is followed by difficulty in using suitable words and sentences (54.9%), getting ideas to speak (52.7%), speaking confidently (51.6%), speaking fluently (49.5%) and giving presentation in class (49.5%). This finding lends support to those presented by Evans and Green (2007), whose subjects reported that they find it difficult to speak accurately, communicate ideas fluently and present information orally. On this matter, Evans and Green advocate that students’ development in fluency and accuracy is probably impeded by the fact that subject lecturers place greater emphasis on content rather than other criterion.

Table 1: Students’ perceived difficulties when speaking and communicating in English (N=93)

Speaking sub-skills	A lot of difficulty	Some difficulty	Little difficulty	No difficulty
	Percentage (%)			
Using correct pronunciation	14.0	44.1	32.3	9.7
Speaking fluently	11.8	38.7	46.2	3.2
Speaking confidently	16.1	35.5	37.6	10.8
Getting ideas to speak	9.7	43.0	35.5	11.8
Using the right words and sentence patterns	6.5	48.4	38.7	6.5
Giving presentation in class	14.0	36.6	38.7	10.8
Asking and answering questions	7.5	37.6	39.8	15.1
Participating in small group discussions	5.4	18.3	40.9	35.5
Participating in large group discussion	4.3	32.3	38.7	24.7
Speaking with friends in English outside the class	8.6	30.1	33.3	28.0

Table 2: Comparison of ESL and Subject lecturers' perceptions towards the difficulties faced by the students while speaking and communicating in English

Speaking sub-skills	A lot of difficulty		Some difficulty		Little difficulty		No difficulty	
	Percentage (%)							
	EL	SL	EL	SL	EL	SL	EL	SL
Using correct pronunciation	60.0	-	40.0	62.5	-	37.5	-	-
Speaking fluently	100.0	50.0	-	50.0	-	-	-	-
Speaking confidently	100.0	50.0	-	50.0	-	-	-	-
Getting ideas to speak	40.0	62.5	60.0	37.5	-	-	-	-
Speaking grammatically correct English	70.0	50.0	30.0	50.0	-	-	-	-
Using the right words and sentence patterns	20.0	-	80.0	-	-	50.0	-	50.0
Giving presentation in class	60.0	-	40.0	-	-	62.5	-	37.5
Asking and answering questions	-	12.5	100.0	12.5	-	50.0	-	25.0
Participating in small group discussions	-	-	100.0	25.0	-	50.0	-	25.0
Participating in large group discussion	50.0	-	50.0	-	-	50.0	-	50.0
Speaking with friends in English outside the class	80.0	62.5	20.0	37.5	-	-	-	-

EL – ESL lecturers (N=10); SL – Subject lecturers (N=8)

As shown in Table 2, while some of the students rated themselves as facing only a little or no difficulty, all the ESL lecturers reported that all of their students, in fact, had either a lot of difficulty or some difficulty in all the speaking sub-skills. On this matter, some of them commented that *“the students are too shy to speak in front of the class”, “they are lack of confidence to present ... dare not to project their voice”, “they are unable to construct proper sentences and always use back the same words”, “they will never speak English with friends and the worst is they continue speak Malay to me although I only use English with them”* and one lecturer even wrote that *“when I ask them to speak in English, they always reply me by saying ‘tak pandai’ (not capable of).* The comments demonstrate that, besides having problem to speak grammatically correct English, the students are also not confident in using the language to communicate. Moreover, five of them also commented on the students’ poor pronunciation such as *“they pronounce English words just like their mother tongues”* and *“some of the students cannot pronounce or differentiate certain sounds like [th], [e] and [ae]”*.

Similarly, one subject lecturer stated that *“the good ones are ok and not so bad, but the weak ones will always use English with Malay”* while the other one wrote that *“they can’t present and talk smoothly if they don’t refer to papers”*. Apart from this, one of the lecturers realized that although the students were able to give a presentation but they were unable to organize and deliver their ideas or points clearly. He wrote that, *“The way the students present are so not organized... they love to jump from one point to another without linkage...sometimes I also can’t*

get what they mean”. Overall, the above findings are borne out by Jordan (1997) who speculates that the most persistent problem encountered by the students (in most of the surveys conducted) is the lack of ability to express themselves adequately in the spoken language. Moreover, participation in academic discussion has also been noted by him as an area of major difficulty especially in comprehension of spoken English (e.g. when speakers speak too fast and use difficult vocabulary), the pressing need to formulate a contribution quickly (e.g. cannot think of what to say) and inability to formulate an idea in English. In conclusion, the students need be given more opportunities to practise group discussion in order to acquire good oratory skills.

Table 3 below demonstrates the students’ difficulties in writing skills. Among the major difficulties (either a lot or some) encountered by the students are writing grammatically correct sentences, using a variety of sentence patterns and words, using correct punctuation, writing bibliography, writing body section, organizing points and getting ideas to write. The findings, similar to those in Evans and Green (2007), suggest that the students perceive themselves as experiencing greater difficulty with the language rather than the content or structure of academic texts. One of the ESL lecturers commented that “*the students have serious problem in planning for writing...there is no flow in their writing*”. Another lecturer also added that “*It is hard for the weak students to think of idea to write and elaborate points*”. Besides that, one of them stated that “*the students always use direct translation from Malay or Chinese language in composing*” and the other one mentioned that “*they use the same function words throughout... they are very weak in using tenses, subject-verb agreement and preposition*”.

Table 3: Comparison of students and ESL lecturers’ perceptions towards the difficulties faced by the students when writing in English

Writing sub-skills	A lot of difficulty		Some difficulty		Little difficulty		No difficulty	
	Percentage (%)							
	S	EL	S	EL	S	EL	S	EL
Using correct spelling	4.3	-	34.4	50.0	49.5	50.0	11.8	-
Using correct punctuation	5.4	-	43.0	100.0	44.1	-	7.5	-
Using suitable words	6.5	60.0	32.3	40.0	49.5	-	11.8	-
Using varieties of words	5.4	50.0	45.2	50.0	43.0	-	6.5	-
Writing grammatically correct sentences	14.0	70.0	44.1	30.0	40.9	-	1.1	-
Using a variety of sentence patterns	8.6	60.0	45.2	40.0	37.6	-	8.6	-
Linking sentences in a paragraph	2.2	90.0	33.3	10.0	46.2	-	18.3	-
Getting ideas to write	6.5	60.0	34.4	40.0	41.9	-	17.2	-
Organizing points/ information when writing	5.4	-	38.7	100.0	37.6	-	18.3	-
Writing introductions	4.3	-	25.8	100.0	48.4	-	21.5	-
Writing body sections	6.5	-	39.8	100.0	39.8	-	14.0	-
Writing conclusion	5.4	60.0	34.4	40.0	43.0	-	17.2	-
Rewriting other’s ideas using your own words (citation)	7.5	80.0	29.0	-	46.2	20.0	17.2	-
Using suitable format in writing e.g. letters and reports	7.5	-	30.1	80.0	44.1	20.0	18.3	-
Writing bibliography	7.5	-	40.9	60.0	38.7	40.0	12.9	-

S – Students (N=93); EL –ESL lecturers (N=10)

Contradictory to what the students and ESL lecturers had perceived, surprisingly, all the subject lecturers reported that their students did not face a lot of difficulties in most of the writing sub-skills except for citation. A plausible reason for this is that they only require the students to achieve sufficient level of communicative competence or only focus on the subject matter or content and not so much on the writing skills or style of writing. This is affirmed by Weir (1988, cited in Jordan, 1997) where the subject tutors are more concerned with content than with mechanical accuracy features, and their criteria of assessing written work are on the relevance and adequacy of the subject content, the clarity of message and the arrangement and development of written work. On the same matter, Jordan (1997:48) criticises that “the subject tutors are often linguistically unaware and cannot always distinguish a poorly conceived idea from an idea that is expressed through inadequate English”.

English Language Needs

Generally, most of the students (around 90%) and all the subject and ESL lecturers seemed to indicate support for the relative importance of all the listening tasks as they ranked all the listening tasks as either very important or important to the students. This is closely matched with their perceptions with regard to the students’ listening ability discussed above. The important tasks were listening to understand lectures, to follow discussions, to follow instructions, to understand social conversation and to understand presentation. With regard to this, one ESL lecturer stated that “*the students have to deal with different people such as lecturers, peers and officers from different departments to solve different kind of academic and non-academic matters*”. Similarly, another lecturer also wrote that “*In learning, the students have to engage in various conversations with individuals of different background especially in obtaining information*”.

More than 80% of the students ranked all the speaking tasks as ‘very important’ and ‘important’. The responses, following the degree of importance, were participating in discussion, communicating with lecturers inside and outside of the classroom, presenting written assignments, making suggestions, communicating with other students inside and outside of the classroom and communicating with people in different social situation. Similarly, the ESL and subject lecturers’ responses towards the importance of various speaking tasks were also quite parallel. All the speaking tasks were regarded as either very important or important by them especially in the need to communicate with people in different social situation. In addition, a few lecturers suggested the inclusion of negotiation skills in the English language course.

Similar to the responses gained pertaining to aural and oral needs, an impressively high number of students also viewed the identified reading tasks as being ‘very important’ and ‘important’. These include reading lecture handouts, reading and making own notes, reading newspaper articles and reading technical materials such as journal. According to the perspectives of the ESL lecturers, all the reading skills were considered either ‘very important’ or ‘important’ and the subject lecturers placed the greatest emphasis on the task - reading and understanding technical material where all of them rated it being ‘very important’ to the students.

Overall, the students mainly had the same perceptions when judging the importance of various writing tasks where most of the tasks were ranked 'very important' and 'important' to them. Topping the list of the perceived important writing tasks is taking lecture notes. This is followed by project-writing, summary-writing and report-writing. According to the results, writing daily journals and writing proposals were given the least emphasis. This was probably due to the perception that these tasks were not relevant to their course of study. Conversely, unlike some students' responses, the ESL lecturers considered all the writing tasks as 'very important' and 'important'. In contrast with the ESL lecturers' opinions, writing daily journals was deemed as the least important writing skill by the subject lecturers. The same responses were also obtained from the students. Besides that, the subject lecturers also did not see the importance of summary-writing and presenting visual data.

CONCLUSION, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study has identified first year undergraduates or post pre-university students' difficulties in performing various language tasks and perceived needs in EAP learning. This is predominantly helpful to the students as English is the main medium of instruction in most of the courses conducted in the Malaysian higher learning institutions and different demand of the language is required in their learning. The findings of this study in part concur with those revealed in Muhammad Nadzri (2004), Siti Hamin and Ismie Roha (2005), Evans and Green (2007) and Yeoh (2006). It appears that the students encounter a number of serious problems in the four language skills. Although most of the sub-skills are covered in the present English courses conducted in the university, the responses revealed that they were still not proficient enough in using the language in their study. In this regard, the current syllabus of the language courses should be enhanced or improved so that the students can be exposed to sufficient input of language. With the recommendations to revise the current syllabus, the mismatch between the EAP courses and the students' actual learning needs could be reduced. In other words, designing an EAP course which can cater for the students' real learning needs and the development of learner ability to transfer language knowledge (Kavaliauskiene & Uzpaliene, 2003) would be the current implication for successful EAP teaching and learning.

Some implications with reference to the conduct of needs analysis were also drawn from the current study. The nature or the type of English language courses which are to be offered to the concerned groups of students has to be studied at a wider level where a joint effort should be initiated among the related stakeholders. Most of the previously conducted needs analysis was the initiation of the English department. Although some of the researches involved both the students and the content instructors in giving responses or feedback, they, especially the content instructors, were excluded when writing the language course syllabus. In most situations, the syllabus was written by the English language instructors based on the generalization made from the responses obtained. As a consequence, some important insights which could be derived from the mismatch or discrepancies in opinions might be ignored.

As students' academic language needs should not be restricted to only a specific learning situation (Kavaliauskiene & Uzpaliene, 2003; Wei & Flaitz, 2005), it is also vital to look at the possibility in which the students will engage in any activities or functions that require them to use the language in the institution. This will, then, determine the design of the needs analysis especially in the scope of analysis and the selection of approaches and data-collection instruments.

Some recommendations pertaining to the design of academic language tasks and EAP course delivery are made based on the findings in this study. At the course level, more listening activities that involve taking down notes, identifying main points, understanding social conversation and following a classroom discussion should be carried out in the language class as these are the major listening difficulties encountered by the students. In addition, the ESL lecturers should always be alert of their speed of speaking in class as most of the students and ESL lecturers stated that the students had difficulty in understanding the lecturers when they speak fast in English. Furthermore, as the majority of the ESL lecturers stated that the students had a lot of difficulties in understanding the content of discussion, it is recommended that pre-tasks such as brainstorming should be conducted before the real listening task as it could provide an overview of the issue discussed and also to trigger the students schemata. Besides that, short pauses and recapitulation by the language instructors in between the session would also be helpful to recover the students' memory load. This is rather helpful especially for the low proficiency students.

More speaking activities and time should be allocated in the language class in order to boost the students' confidence to speak in English especially to overcome their language anxiety. The students also need to be given more opportunities to involve in group discussion in order to acquire good oratory skills. In addition, the finding also suggests that the students need to be exposed to some training in phonetic transcription so that they are able to discriminate between consonants, vowels, homophones, etc. The students need the knowledge of how letters and combination of letters are to be sounded as the students perceived that they faced the most problem in using correct pronunciation. Besides that, there is also a need to enhance the students' negotiation skills and ability to converse in different social contexts. This can be done by involving the students in drama activity such as simulation and role-play where the students will engage in various conversations with people of different situations and events. This is also a good method of training students in decision-making.

The establishment of a programme for vocabulary enrichment is another strategy to help the students to expand their vocabulary. The content of the programme could be worked out with the cooperation between the language instructors and content experts. This is in line with the students' major difficulties in understanding difficult words and the content of textbooks. It is believed that the programme could also help the students to improve on other language skills. As Coady and Huckin (1997) believe that vocabulary acquisition is the central and the most primary in language learning, thus, it could be inferred that lexical competence has an impact on learner's overall language ability.

The finding also suggests that ESAP (English for Specific Academic Purposes) courses are more suitable in fulfilling the students' current learning needs as compared to EGAP (English for General Academic Purposes) courses. This is confirmed as the majority of the respondents expect the students to learn the language in a content-based environment where the instructional materials used in the language class should be relevant to the students' course of learning. With

this, it is strongly recommended that, when assigning the students into language classes, they should be streamed according to their respective programme or academic department.

The findings of the needs analysis are predominantly helpful in developing an understanding of the students' learning preferences and provide implications in the process of course development, classroom preparation, curriculum planning and review, material writing and implementation of teaching methods.

One limitation of the present study lies in the research instrument. The data of the needs analysis was obtained using the questionnaires administered to the students, ESL lecturers and subject lecturers. The researchers did not use a combination of methods to collect the data. Besides that, there was no classroom observation and investigation into the materials used in the current language courses. Thus, the outcomes of the needs analysis were fully relied on the perceptions, comments and suggestions of the respondents. Additionally, the present study also did not incorporate any form of tests to examine the students' real ability of handling different language sub-skills. Their strengths and weaknesses in various sub-skills were identified via the perceptions given by the stakeholders in the questionnaires administered. Besides that, the study also did not analyse to what extent the students' level of proficiency in the four language skills were actually matched with their perceived ability in performing the sub-skills. Lastly, more valuable data pertaining to the students' language needs may be attained if all the students and more subject lecturers were involved in the study.

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An Investigation into Topic Oriented Opinions in Iranian EFL Teachers

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ABSTRACT

The present study aimed to explore whether EFL teachers' opinions based on classroom topics can affect the teaching and learning process. To this end, upon filling in a revised teachers' opinion scale, formulated based on Rumpf's (2010), 15 male and female Iranian EFL teachers at a language institute were assigned to three opinion groups; namely, positive, moderate and negative. Cluster analysis of the scores indicated that Iranian EFL teachers were mostly moderate as far as their opinions about teaching were concerned. A Kruskal Wallis test also approved of the significant differences among the three teacher groups which laid further proof on the validity of the used scale.

Key words: teacher opinions, topic orientation, mental process

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

It is hard for educators to remain totally unbiased while teaching; especially in Teaching of English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) classes. Because language, in this case English, is important to every individual in various ways. It is clear that teachers' opinions on the subject matter affect the atmosphere of the classroom in positive and sometimes negative ways.

Within the classroom context, some teachers stand out as more excited than others. This is, maybe, because their own personal interests and tastes were being reflected on how they taught certain subjects and topics (Rumpf, 2010). A critical question, thus, is what teachers can do to guarantee that their personal opinions do not influence students learning in a negative way. Teachers must be conscious of the outcome of their opinions on the presentation of the material. They have to see what the students see and get as an objective third party. If a teacher does not really enjoy a topic, they should still teach it as if they are eager about the topic.

The issue of learners' performance as influenced by other factors has been discussed in several previous English teaching studies, contexts and societies. (e.g., Cates, 2000; Rumpf, 2010; Niemi & Niemi, 2007; Heafner & Friedman, 2008). Not only English language but also other areas of social studies have been discussed within this framework. However, different variables other than teacher opinion have been discussed. Such previously discussed variables consist of anxiety, motivation, technology, duration, and atmosphere.

Focusing on what affects learning; the mental processes of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers, topic oriented opinions in this study, is beneficial and helpful in many respects especially for reaching educational aims. Therefore, a significant step taken in this study is looking for the existence of the teachers' opinions as a crucial factor in determining many other subsequent events in the learning environment.

RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

The result of this study will be primarily helpful and effective for EFL teachers because they notice how important their opinions and attitudes are in learning contexts. Therefore, they would try to monitor their opinions more closely using various strategies by themselves or asking their colleagues for help. Teachers may also want to reflect on their opinions to maximize students learning.

Students who are directly in contact with learning that is influenced by the aforementioned effects can also benefit a more organized teacher opinion with regard to the learning process. Thus, teachers' eagerness may create a positive impact on students' learning, comprehension, problem-solving and analyzing the material in the best possible way.

Teacher opinion seems to be a significant individual characteristic in English as a Second Language (ESL)/EFL teaching and learning contexts. Thus, studying this variable in its own right and also in relation to language skills would yield beneficial results to both learners and teachers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There has not been much literature on teacher opinion in the field of TEFL or applied linguistics; however, most of the studies conducted in this regard have focused on the impact of teacher opinion on several learning styles, factors and consequences. Rumpf (2010) believed that teachers might want to reflect on their opinions to maximize students' learning in the social studies classroom. Whether a teacher likes or dislikes the topics they are teaching to the students there are impacts on the classroom. When a teacher enjoys the topic has positive impacts on the students sparking enthusiasm and interest. The opposite is when a teacher does not enjoy the topic they are teaching. The quality of learning for the student is not the same when a teacher does enjoy the topic.

Niemi and Niemi (2007) tried to determine how teachers would state their opinions in the classroom, as well as how they let students express their ideas in such an environment. The results stated that teachers expressed their ideas in the classroom, and repressed students' opinions. This was a main factor of students' shortage of incentive and hindrance in the classroom. The research was done through interviews and classroom observations over a course of two months. Through these methods it was concluded that the teachers were expressing their opinions in a more negative manner which was actually creating negative outcomes for the students.

A study done by Fredricks, Alfeld, and Eccles (2010) sought to determine the motivation of students and how their environments increased or decreased their interest in the subject matters. This related to the topic of teachers' opinions which made it obvious that interest on the side of teachers is understood as an advantage to the students.

Rumpf (2010) conducted a study on the influence of teachers' opinions on teaching and learning. The results showed that teachers' enthusiasm created a positive impact on students' learning and the converse was also true. This study was done through a questionnaire, interviews and observations. The population in her study was social studies teachers at the secondary level. There were 14 participants from the middle and high school of one region. These teachers were chosen by a convenience sampling. All participants were white-skinned, middle class teachers between the ages of 30 and 50.

In Niemi and Niemi's (2007) study, teachers were stating their opinions and repressing those of the students. This was in both a conscious and unconscious way. In Rumpf's research the teachers admitted they were not causing negative feeling about topics in the students, but it is obvious that this data contradicts the previous study done by Niemis. Teachers' opinions can have negative effect on the students based on Niemis' study which was not what the participants in her study thought was occurring. So educators really need to be aware that their opinions factually impact the students. Fredricks, Alfeld, and Eccles (2010) mentioned that passion for school is more probable to happen when students felt supported and teachers' model enthusiasm and cause enough learning challenge. This would be similar to Rumpf's study where the results specified that enthusiasm was much more common when teachers liked a topic personally. When the teachers enjoyed a topic they reported such manner and therefore it was seen in their teaching

habits, methods and general classroom experience. The researcher's expectation is that the findings of the present study will correlate with the findings of the studies done by Rumpf (2010) and Fredricks, Alfeld, and Eccles (2010).

Gönen and Kocakaya (2006) sought to evaluate opinions of high school physics teachers on instructional activities and the content of physics textbooks. Effective learning is the chief goal of all educational activities and textbooks are very important for achieving this goal. Textbooks also have an important role in specifying teaching and learning activities in the class. Textbooks not only provide information, but also contribute the improvement of imagining and memory abilities, and intelligence and reading habits (Lockheed, Vail, & Fuller, 1986; Lockheed & Verspoor, 1991). Well prepared textbooks help teachers use the time effectively in lessons and make positive contributions to student achievement. However, if not prepared carefully, descriptions and figures in textbooks may cause misunderstanding.

Ardasheva and Brown (2011) conducted a qualitative study about content-area teachers seeking ELL preparation which discovered the relationship between content-area teachers' ideas, beliefs, and professional experiences and their decisions to seek planning in working with English language learners (ELLs). They administered the survey on six full time teachers, who registered in a graduate-level Sheltered Instruction course at a large U.S. Midwestern university, and interviewed them regarding their enrollment choices. The findings only partially supported the first theory that pre-existing positive ELL attitudes guided the teachers' decisions. Although different across individual teachers, motivational reasons for registration were at first based on (a) expected success in the learning experience (b) the perceived value of ELL preparation for quick and future professional goals and (c) consistency with teachers' self-concepts.

RESEARCH QUESTION

More particularly, the present research will answer the following research question:

How are the Iranian EFL teachers categorized based on their topic oriented opinions?

METHODOLOGY

As the study was concerned with questionnaire data, a descriptive correlational study using survey methodology was employed.

Participant

The population targeted for this study consisted of 15 EFL teachers (both male and female) with B.A. or M.A. qualifications in English. The participants were selected through convenience sampling from the teachers at Shamim Arghavan Language Academy in Shiraz, Iran where Touchstone series was taught. All participants were middle class teachers between the ages of 25 and 35. The demographic information about the participants is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographic information about the participants in both phases

Demographic variables		Number	Frequency %
GENDER	Male	6	40
	Female	9	60
AGE		15	Mean (30) SD (1.89)

As Table 1 illustrates, of the 15 teachers, the majority were females (Females: 9 – 60% vs. Males: 6 – 40%). The teachers had a mean age of 30.

Instruments

The scale used in the study was mostly developed and formulated based on Rumpf’s (2010) Teachers’ Opinion questionnaire which embedded eleven questions used for collecting the data in the first phase of the study. As far as the validity of the scale was concerned, it was expert validated. Three university lecturers gave their feedback on the scale. Such university lecturers came from a different setting from the institute in which the study was conducted; therefore, it guarantees a greater amount of objective feedback. As for the reliability of the scale, Cronbach’s alpha was applied to the scale. A number of 15 teachers teaching at a different institute took part in the reliability verification process. Table 2 shows the reliability of the newly formulated Teachers Opinion questionnaire checked through Cronbach’s alpha.

Table 2: Reliability estimate for teacher opinion questionnaire

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	15	100.0
	Excluded ^a	0	.0
	Total	15	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.963	11

As can be seen in Table 2, the reliability of teachers' opinion questionnaire equals 0.963 which was a satisfactory value.

It took the participants about 10 minutes to fill in the questionnaire to determine whether the teachers are interested in the specific topics or not. The questionnaire included 11 items with a three point Likert scale (see Table 3). The questions were Likert-like. Each response had its value ranging from 1 to 3 (Yes=1, Sometimes=2, No=3). The teachers were asked to rate themselves on a scale from yes to no in order to indicate what their opinions were like during teaching. A pilot questionnaire was sent to a few selected teachers. Such initial responses enabled the researcher to edit and remove the confusing or bad items as well as to adjust and reword questions which were leading to missing data.

Data Collection Procedure

The study was carried out at a private language institute called Shamim Arghavan Language Academy in Shiraz, Iran, where Touchstone series was taught at adult level. The data were collected in the spring term of 2012. The first phase of data collection incorporated a descriptive design i.e., survey research based on questionnaire data. In the data collection session, the participants were given a consent form that assured their confidentiality. They were also told that participation was voluntary and they could withdraw from the study any time without penalty. The participants were told about the objective of the study in their native language (i.e., Farsi). Thus, when a participant agreed with an item it was a sign of positive opinion. Any value below the borderline of 2 would point to positive opinion while above the borderline would suggest negative opinion on the side of the participant.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

This section depicts the results of the teachers' opinion questionnaire analysis based on the scores the participants obtained in the 3 point Likert scale which incorporated 11 questions. It presents the results in two sections. First, the individual item and composite analysis of the questionnaire mean scores followed by the SPSS cluster analysis of the participants were done in order to group the participants in different opinion groups. A further Kruskal-Wallis test was run to see if the finally formulated groups were distinct from each other.

The participants were reminded before filling in the scale, that the items within the scale were intended to check for their attitudes towards the specific topics, therefore choosing 'Yes' was taken to be the sign of positiveness. Likewise, a mean of 2.00 which equaled the inserted anchor of 'Sometimes' could be interpreted as the borderline of positiveness vs. negativeness. This way, values below the borderline of 2 would show positive teachers' opinions while those above it would indicate negative teachers' opinions. This, of course, depends on their distance from the

mean score of 2.00. The study takes both individual and composite score of teachers' opinion into consideration. That is, individual items of the scale as separate indicators of teachers' opinion and the composite score as an overall sign of their opinions was taken into account. Table 3 presents the participants' mean scores from the scale along with total means of all items.

Table 3: Scores from the Teachers' Opinion scale

Item	N	Mean	SD
1. As a teacher of Touchstone textbook 3 do you find the unit topics interesting?	15	1.73	.884
2. Do you feel you teach the topics better because of your personal interest in them?	15	1.60	.737
3. Do you like spending a little more time on the topics during class?	15	1.87	.834
4. Do you think that your enthusiasm for the topics rubs off on the students more than if they were topics you were uninterested in?	15	1.73	.799
5. When you teach your favorite subjects do you see a difference in the grades of your students?	15	1.67	.816
6. Do you like your students to get better grades when you like the topics more?	15	1.80	.775
7. Do you feel that you convey the meanings better than other teachers because you like the topics more?	15	1.80	.862
8. Do you ever try to teach the topics you like using different ways when you find the material difficult?	15	1.73	.799
9. Do you ever try to teach the topics you like using different ways when you find the students bored?	15	2.07	.884
10. Do you think that you can manage the Touchstone-based classes (esp. Touch 3) better than others?	15	1.87	.743
11. Do you find yourself energetic and interested enough to teach the topics?	15	1.67	.816
Total	15	1.7758	.69733

As Table 3 indicates, a classification can be made through the calculation of each teacher's scores and putting him/her in a teacher opinion group ranging from positive to negative. An item-by-item analysis of the scale revealed a mean range between 2.07 and 1.60, and the total score of 1.77, so participants could be categorized according to their kind of opinion; namely, positive, moderate and negative. Thus in order to place the participants in the possible three teachers' opinion groups, a further K-means cluster analysis on SPSS was performed. The results indicated that the participants could be categorized into three distinct clusters according to their scores. Tables 4 and 5 present the results for the identified clusters of teachers.

Table 4: Clusters according to the individual item mean of the questionnaire scores

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
positive	4	1.0000	.00000	.00000	1.0000	1.0000	1.00	1.00
moderate	7	1.6494	.21274	.08041	1.4526	1.8461	1.45	2.00
negative	4	2.7727	.11736	.05868	2.5860	2.9595	2.64	2.91
Total	15	1.7758	.69733	.18005	1.3896	2.1619	1.00	2.91

Table 5: Participants grouping illustrated in percentage of each cluster

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Positive	4	26.7	26.7
	moderate	7	46.7	46.7
	negative	4	26.6	26.6
	Total	15	100.0	100.0

Table 4 presents three groups (i.e. clusters) of teachers according to the mean of their scores on the scale. The total mean and standard deviation of the group are 1.7758 and .69733 respectively. This indicated that the participants’ scores were mostly scattered around the mid-point which was thought to be the borderline of teachers’ opinion, so the participants were mostly oriented toward the mid-point. Table 5 further illustrates participants’ grouping based on the percentage of each cluster.

Table 4 indicates that there are three different groups of participants based on the mean scores of individual item responses that participants marked in the three point Likert scale of teachers’ opinion. As Table 4 shows, four of the teachers that participated in the study were clustered into the positive group as their mean score was below the point of “two” which was the borderline of teachers’ opinion. As was expressed before, items on the scale elicited different opinions on the side of the teachers; thus choosing “yes” for each item was the sign of positiveness, so the mean of 1.00 could cluster four of the participants into the positive group.

Likewise, seven participants, i.e. the greater proportion of teachers, were placed in the moderate group (Mean: 1.64) who mostly chose anchor two (sometimes) to react to the items on the scale. The remaining four participants were placed in the negative group (mean: 2.77) because of marking anchor 3 (no) which was above the borderline two (sometimes) and indicated negativeness. Table 5 shows the same grouping based on the percentage of each cluster of participants; namely, four participants in positive group equaled 26.7 % while seven in moderate group equaled 46.7 % and four (26.6 %) belonged to the negative group.

Differences among the three clusters of teachers’ opinions

An additional Kruskal-Wallis test among the three identified groups further confirmed that the obtained clusters of participants were distinct from one another. Therefore, the differences were

significant enough to think of the formulated clusters as distinct from each other. These differences can be seen in Table 6.

Table 6: Differences among the three clusters of participants

	group	N	Mean Rank
Teacher	positive	4	2.50
	moderate	7	8.00
	negative	4	13.50
	Total	15	

Test Statistics^{a,b}

	Teacher
Chi-Square	12.410
Df	2
Asymp. Sig.	.002

a. Kruskal Wallis Test

b. Grouping Variable: group

As Table 6 illustrates, the differences among the three clusters of participants were significant ($p > .000$). This would further prove that the participants' responses to questions within the scale have appropriately categorized them into the three groups of positive, moderate and negative which were distinct enough from one another. The results of data analysis so far suggest that the participants reported a total mean of 1.77, i.e. almost at the borderline, actually mildly below it.

Descriptive statistics combined with cluster analysis and Kruskal Wallis Test led us to three different groups of teachers according to their scores. An important proportion of participants ($f = 7$; 46.67%) exhibited moderate group of teachers' opinion (mean = 1.64), a lower proportion ($f = 4$; 26.67%) had positive opinions (mean = 1.00) and finally another low proportion ($f = 4$; 26.67%) had negative opinions (mean = 2.77). This implies that, expectedly, there are variations among Iranian EFL teachers' opinions and they will not always have the same opinion toward the topics they teach. So the proportion of participants in positive and negative groups were the same while the moderate group incorporated the greatest number of participants. The frequency in each group further clarifies the differences among participants in their opinion; thus, laying further proof to the fact that Iranian EFL teachers didn't have the same opinion and were mostly of moderate type. In order to determine the place of this significant difference among the three groups, a further Scheffe test was applied to the mean scores of the three groups (see Table 7).

Table 7: Scheffe test to locate the place of difference among the groups

(I) Teacher	(J) Teacher	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
positive	moderate	-.64935*	.10121	.000	-.9315	-.3672
	negative	-1.77273*	.11418	.000	-2.0910	-1.4545
moderate	positive	.64935*	.10121	.000	.3672	.9315
	negative	-1.12338*	.10121	.000	-1.4055	-.8413
negative	positive	1.77273*	.11418	.000	1.4545	2.0910
	moderate	1.12338*	.10121	.000	.8413	1.4055

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

Teacher Scheffe

Teacher	N	Subset for alpha = 0.05		
		1	2	3
positive	4	1.0000		
moderate	7		1.6494	
negative	4			2.7727
Sig.		1.000	1.000	1.000

Means for groups in homogeneous subsets are displayed.

As Table 7 shows, positive and moderate groups were more similar to each other unlike the negative group (mean: 2.77). This similarity between positive and negative groups is better illustrated in Figure 1.

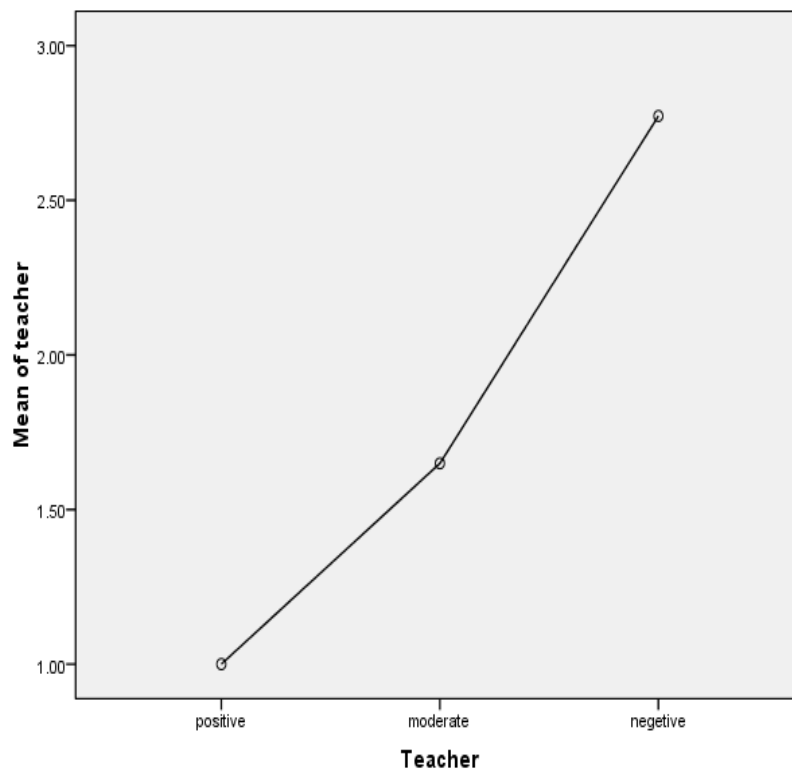


Figure 1: Similarity and differences among the three group means

As Figure 1 illustrates, the mean score of the positive group (mean: 1.00) and moderate group (mean: 1.64) exhibited more similarity to one another as compared to that of the negative group (mean: 2.77). So the variance is observable in the mean score of negative group.

DISCUSSION

This piece of research aimed at investigating the Iranian EFL teachers' topic oriented opinions in educational contexts. In order to answer this question, 15 teachers (9 female and 6 male) filled in a questionnaire of 11 items. Upon analyzing the results, 4 positive, 7 moderate and 4 negative teachers were selected regarding their opinions on teaching topics. The cluster analysis indicated that the three groups of teachers' opinion were formed according to the analysis of participants' mean scores which were also proved to be distinct enough from one another through a Kruskal Wallis Test.

Fredricks, Alfeld, and Eccles (2010) determined that passion and enthusiasm for school are more likely to occur when students felt supported and teachers' model enthusiasm can create an adequate learning challenge. This would go hand in hand with the present study where the results determined that enthusiasm was much more common when teachers enjoyed a topic personally.

When the teachers enjoyed a topic they reported being more enthusiastic and therefore it was seen in their teaching methods, teaching habits, and overall classroom experience.

In Niemi and Niemi's (2007) study, teachers were expressing their opinions and muffling those of the students. This was in both a conscious and unconscious manner meaning sometimes the teachers were not even aware they were doing so. According to Niemi's study, teachers' opinions can have negative impacts on the students which showed congruence with the findings of the present study. Therefore educators really need to be aware that their opinions do in fact affect the students.

Rumpf (2010) conducted a study on the influence of teachers' opinions on teaching and learning. The results showed that teachers' enthusiasm created a positive impact on students' learning and the converse was also true. Whether a teacher liked or disliked the topics they were teaching to the students, there were impacts on students. The present research almost totally correlates with the findings of this piece of research.

CONCLUSION AND PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this study may lead to some general conclusions and implications regarding teacher opinion in EFL contexts. First, teachers' opinion proved to be different in Iranian EFL teachers working at intermediate level; namely, they did not have the same topic oriented opinions. That was why three different groups were formed. Also, it was concluded that the Iranian EFL teachers were mostly shown to have a moderate level of opinion in language teaching. Cluster analysis also approved of this finding where the majority of the teachers were placed in the moderate group and the positive and negative groups were both in the second rank. Thus indicating that the same number of the participants were of positive and negative opinions. Therefore, it can be suggested that teachers in an EFL context like Iran are generally moderate in their teaching opinions.

Second, an important factor which was once again highlighted within this study was enthusiasm. When a teacher is personally interested in the material they can create an individual enthusiasm which shows up more strongly during the teaching of the topic. This enthusiasm helps spark students energy and interest in the material because they are curious as to why the teacher has become excited. Another point that the obtained result indicated was that teachers would tend to spend extra time on topics they were interested in rather than those they did not take a liking to. That is why when they were asked if they would spend more time on something they liked most of them answered 'yes'.

Third, this piece of research implies that teachers' opinions can act either as a kind of hindrance or encouragement in the process of language learning so teachers as influential members in learning contexts are expected to play a role in assisting learners in their efforts to reach greater success in language learning.

Finally, English teachers who participated in this study were mainly found to be moderate as far as their opinions were concerned. As teachers are logically expected to assist their students learning, it turns out to be quite essential for them to improve their opinions positively by, for example, observing the teaching of other classes with more positively-oriented teachers.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The present study could be said to suffer from the following limitations:

1. Although the topic under investigation was probably such a common story amongst all teachers and students in every age and level of education, scope of study incorporated teachers at institute level only.
2. Due to manageability concerns, the researcher applied a sample of convenience to the design of the study. The majority of the sample was middle class teachers aging from 25 to 35 years old. With a wider and more diverse sample of teachers to include in the future studies, the results would be more supported and show a wider area of experience by these teachers. Thus one would need to focus on larger samples from various educational contexts.
3. A single teachers' opinion scale was employed in the present study while it would yield interesting results if the subjects were exposed to other scales of teachers' opinion measurement and a comparison is made among the scales for EFL teachers of other academic levels.

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Fundamentals to Improve English Language Teachers' Performance in Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to develop theoretical foundation for the researchers for empirical analysis in this field. This paper points out the fundamentals that are helpful for improving English Language Teachers' performance. The study is qualitative in nature. A lot of literature has been read by the researchers to find out some basic principles that are necessary for the better performance of English Language Teachers. The researchers have investigated the barriers that obstruct English Language Teachers' performance. It becomes essential to investigate barriers to reach some principles that are useful for increasing English Language Teachers' performance.

Keywords: Fundamentals, Improve, English Language Teachers and Performance

INTRODUCTION

After reviewing the literature, the researchers concluded that the factors like knowledge sharing, knowledge creation, knowledge use, job satisfaction and leadership style play a vital role for

improving English Language Teachers' performance in Pakistan. If the teachers are satisfied with their jobs, their performance will be increased. Job satisfaction of teachers comes with positive and encouraging attitude from heads of educational institutes. Conducive leadership style of heads of institutes enhances the teachers' performance. If the teachers are at liberty to share and use their knowledge, the knowledge will be created that will ultimately improve English Language Teachers' performance.

USE OF KNOWLEDGE FOR BETTER PERFORMANCE

Proper use of knowledge increases English Language Teachers' performance. Knowledge management practices ensure the best performance of the teachers. Managing knowledge includes three key processes: creating, sharing and exploiting knowledge. Block and Cameron (2002) opine that knowledge management shows a concern for considering the fact that knowledge possessed by individuals is a valuable asset. They are of the view that the knowledge is an intellectual asset and it must be developed and transferred to others. Liss (1999, p. 1) defines that "knowledge management is a formal, directed process of determining what a company has that could benefit others in the company and then devising ways to making it easily available." Bonner (2000) explains that there are few organizations that use the explicit and tacit knowledge of their employees effectively. Sternberg (1997) defines tacit knowledge as a highly personal and objective form of knowledge that can be only inferred from the discussion of others. Hansen et al. (1999) describe that explicit knowledge is academic data that is described in a formal language. Explicit knowledge needs an academic understanding that is achieved through formal education. Knowledge sharing and knowledge creation are interlinked. Knowledge sharing and its implementation provide solutions to many problems faced by organizations. This process is called knowledge creation. The process of knowledge sharing, knowledge creation and knowledge use is obstructed at the individual level and at the organizational level at the same time.

Siddiqui (2007) opines that the assessment system deeply influences the educational set-up of Pakistan. It does not allow the teachers to utilize their potential for using their knowledge. It is also concluded that nothing has been done to improve this system. Burgess et al, (2002) and Fisher (2004) conclude that prescriptive curriculum and tightly defined assessment system damage teachers' professional autonomy and creativity. Teachers are always bound to follow the instructions given by the heads of their organizations so they cannot use knowledge independently. They have to seek permission from higher authorities at every step. Hanke (2002) believes that if the curriculum and assessment system are not flexible for the teachers, the natural potential for the use of knowledge will be constrained. Scholte (2001) demonstrates that the teachers must enhance the competitive abilities of their students by using a number of technologies. In this way the learning of the students can be made better. It becomes necessary to have well equipped classrooms for using technologies. Less equipped classrooms cannot provide an environment in which the teachers can use their knowledge with ease. Here in Pakistan, lack of resources is an obstacle in making classrooms well-equipped. Crystal (2001) suggests that the

teacher should adjust their curriculum plans to meet the demands of society. But the situation in Pakistan is quite pathetic as far as the curriculum is concerned. The prescriptive curriculum does not allow the teachers to use their knowledge independently. The teachers are always bound to follow this well-defined curriculum. So, this situation is a hurdle for teachers to use their knowledge in classrooms. Heller (2005) agrees that the decentralization and deregulation of English curricula make the schools and teachers more autonomous in using knowledge. But in Pakistan, nothing has been done to change the curricula so the teachers are unable to use their knowledge freely. Smith (2008) says that the institutions are becoming autonomous in developing curriculum. In this way, teachers are free to teach whatever they want according to the taste of students. But in Pakistan, teachers are still bound to teach according to prescriptive curriculum. It hampers the teachers to use their knowledge. Al-Otaibi (2004) is of the view that motivated learners can pay high cost and even make sacrifices to achieve their goals in learning foreign language. It was also found that motivated learners can learn language more effectively. The assumption can be made that de-motivated students themselves are a great hurdle for teachers in using knowledge.

KNOWLEDGE SHARING AND KNOWLEDGE CREATION FOR BETTER PERFORMANCE

If the process of knowledge sharing and knowledge creation is smooth among the teachers, the performance of the teachers will be increased. Leonard-Barton (1995) gives his opinion that an organization is both the storage of knowledge and creator of knowledge at the same time. Storage of knowledge is in the form of employees replete with unique skills and expertise and some formal knowledge in the explicit form. Knowledge creation starts after knowledge sharing. Shared knowledge of employees puts forward solutions to problems faced by an organization. Problem solving is one of the major knowledge creating activities. The positive role of an organization is very important in the effective process of knowledge sharing and knowledge creation process. Nonaka and Takeuchi (1997) are of the view in their knowledge conversion model that knowledge creation happens when there is the interaction between explicit and tacit knowledge. Knowledge conversion activities include externalization, internalization, combination and socialization. Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) also explain that tacit knowledge gets converted into tacit knowledge by sharing experiences. Tsai and Ghoshal (1998) demonstrate that the interaction built through socialization among the employees of the organizations facilitates the knowledge sharing activities. So it can be concluded that the absence of socialization in the organization hinders the knowledge sharing and knowledge creation process. Lin (2008) explains that knowledge sharing behavior of the employees in organizations is very important in order to transfer the knowledge of an individual to many individuals to make the organizations successful. Jiacheng et al. (2012) agree that knowledge sharing behavior among employees creates cooperation for mapping out the fortunes of the organization. Szulanski (1996) suggests that some individuals are unwilling to share their knowledge because they feel that it will bring others to their level and their promotions will be disturbed. Abrams et al. (2003 p. 65) point out that “trust leads to increase overall knowledge exchange, makes knowledge exchanges less costly, and increases the likelihood that knowledge acquired from a colleague is sufficiently understood and absorbed that a person can put it to use.” Tsai (2002) gives his view that decentralized structure of the organization promotes communication and causes increase in employees’ motivation and satisfaction. Damanpour (1999) considers decentralized structure of the organization facilitative to the success of knowledge management activities and methods.

ROLE OF LEADERSHIP FOR BETTER PERFORMANCE

Leadership directly influences the performance of the employees. If the leadership is conducive for the employees, the employees' performance will be improved. Leadership is a way to influence the groups' behavior and direct them towards achieving the defined goals (Robbins, 2003, P. 314). There have been discussions about leadership and leaders since man started working in group. A Leader can be defined as a person who has managerial authority and can influence others. Leadership is simply what the leader does. Leaders should have the qualities like drive, desire to lead, honesty and integrity, self-confidence, intelligence, job-relevant knowledge and extraversion. Leaders influence the behavior, feelings and performance of their subordinates. Performance of subordinates is improved if they are positively influenced by their leaders. Researches have been conducted to explore the leadership styles to find the most effective one for both the quality and quantity of work. The autocratic style, the democratic style and laissez-faire style and their impact on employees' performance have been deeply researched. In autocratic leadership, work methods are dictated to the employees not involving them in decision making process. In laissez-faire leadership, the leaders let the group make decisions and complete the work in whatever way it saw fit. In democratic leadership style, the employees are involved in decision making. It is concluded that democratic style is the most effective to make employees' performance better. Recently, the researches are being carried out to investigate the influences of transactional and transformational leadership on employees' performance. Burns (1978) opines that transactional and transformational leadership styles are more prominent among leadership styles. Transactional leaders give rewards and punishments to encourage performance, making the leader/worker relationship essentially an economic transaction (Bass, 1985). Transactional Leaders work with their team members exchanging rewards with them and being responsive to their immediate interests. Transformational leaders are active leaders that have four distinguishing qualities: charisma, inspiration, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration (Bass, 1985 & Conger, 1999). Charisma is the extent of pride, faith and respect leaders encourage their workers to have in themselves, their leaders and their organizations. Inspiration is the ability to motivate followers through communication of high expectations. Intellectual stimulation is the frequency with which leaders encourage employees to be innovative in their problem solutions. Finally, individualized consideration is the degree of personal attention and encouragement of self-development a leader imparts to the employees (Bass, 1985 & Bass, 1990).

ROLE OF JOB SATISFACTION FOR BETTER PERFORMANCE

Factors like job security, job autonomy, workplace flexibility, handsome salary and soothing leadership style ensure job satisfaction among English Language Teachers. Job satisfaction is a factor that plays a significant role for improving English Language Teachers' performance. Locke (1976) defines the job satisfaction as a positive and pleasing emotional state from the appraisal of one' job or experience. The very definition suggests that the employees' attitude towards their jobs is formed by their behaviors, beliefs and feelings. According to Galup, Klein

and Jiang (2008), successful organizations ensure their employees' job satisfaction realizing the fact that poor job satisfaction can cripple an organization. Kalleberg (1977) suggests that job satisfaction includes two components. These are intrinsic (referring to the work itself) and extrinsic (representing the facets of the job external to the task itself) job satisfaction. Lashbrook (1997) is of the view that leadership style plays an important role in influencing the employees' job satisfaction. Bogler (2001) demonstrates that the different leadership styles engender different working environment and directly influence employees' job satisfaction. Emery and Barker (2007) state that transformational leaders motivate and encourage their followers to take on more responsibility which increases employees' sense of accomplishment and job satisfaction. Castaneda and Nahavandi (1991) indicate that the employees are more satisfied with both relational and task-oriented behaviors exhibiting simultaneously by their heads.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to point out some fundamentals that can improve English Language Teachers' performance. The problems that hinder English Language Teachers' performance have been investigated in this study.

Proper use of knowledge increases English Language Teachers' performance. Knowledge management practices ensure the best performance of the teachers. Managing knowledge includes three key processes: creating, sharing and exploiting knowledge. If the process of knowledge sharing and knowledge creation is smooth among the teachers, the performance of teachers will be increased.

Leadership directly influences the performance of the teachers. If the leadership is conducive for teachers, the teachers' performance will be improved. Factors like job security, job autonomy, workplace flexibility, handsome salary and soothing leadership style ensure job satisfaction and job satisfaction improves English Language Teachers' performance.

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Communication of Language Attitudes: An Exploration of The Ghanaian Situation

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ABSTRACT

Attitudes towards languages in Ghana are influenced by historical, sociological and cultural factors, the most prominent of which is a long period of British colonial rule (1821-1957), leading to the establishment of English as the most prestigious and the only official language of the country. In communicating language attitudes in Ghana, people are affected by the functions that English and the local languages perform as well as their potential use in a range of linguistic domains. As Ghana has not taken a definite stand on the national language issue, English performs many communicative functions; it is the language of the media, education, religion, government, judiciary, commerce and social interaction. Measures to promote indigenous languages have often been unsuccessful as knowledge of such languages generally does not confer any appreciable economic advantages. The present paper explores how Ghanaians communicate their language attitudes and reveals the current trend where Ghana's indigenous languages are being relegated to the background.

Keywords: Language attitudes, indigenous languages, English, multilingualism, communication.

INTRODUCTION

Ghana has a uniquely complex linguistic landscape. The number of indigenous languages that are spoken has been estimated between 50 and 80. Different scholars have given varied figures for the number of languages of Ghana in view of the difficulty in classifications of varieties as either language or dialects (Bodomo, 1996, 1997; Dolphyne, 1988; Agbedor, 1996; Dakubu, 1988; Laitin, 1994; Gordon & Grimes, 2005). It is worth noting that eleven of the indigenous languages are government sponsored. These are Twi, Fante, Nzema, Ewe, Ga, Dangme, Dagbani, Dagaare, Gonja, Kasem and Gurunne. These government sponsored local languages are supported by the Bureau of Ghana Languages. During the periods when Ghanaian languages were used in primary education, these were the languages which were employed for instruction in schools.

Before formal education was introduced into Ghana, traditional education was conducted in the indigenous languages. With the introduction of formal education and the subsequent use of English as the medium of instruction, the indigenous languages were relegated to the background (Bamgbose, 2000). The situation, however, changed with the arrival of the missionaries who resorted to the development of the local languages in both their educational and missionary efforts. The use of the indigenous languages during the pre-colonial period (1529-1925) survived even during the time when the British Colonial government took over the administration of education in the country. During this period, a systematic pattern began to emerge with regard to both education and language use. The first legislation on the use of a local language in education was promulgated: An indigenous language was to be used as the medium of instruction while at the lower primary levels with English used thereafter (MacWilliam, 1969; Graham, 1971; Gbedemah, 1975). The policy was reversed and became unstable when the administration of the country came under the jurisdiction of indigenous Ghanaians in 1957. Since independence, the use of a Ghanaian language as the medium of instruction at the lower primary level has had a check-like history (Owu-Ewie, 2006). It is worth noting that the rise of nationalist movements in the Gold Coast was hardly linked with the development of the common language argument. What these Ghanaian nationalists had in common was a foreign language, English, which they used to condemn colonialism both on the political platform and on paper (Boadi, 1971). At present, the policy states that English should be used as the medium of instruction from primary one, with a Ghanaian language studied as a compulsory subject to the senior high school (Ameyaw-Akumfi, 2002). While post-independent governments appear to be making language policy, most of the time, they are only perpetuating colonial language policy (Bamgbose, 1991, 2000). Undoubtedly, if a country has had long history of contact with English, if in the multilingual situation it is the only link language among speakers of different languages, and if contacts with other countries through trade, industry and higher education are in English, it is logical that English occupies a central role in the language policy of the country in question. The main fact of language policy discourse in the world today is the role of English in relation to other languages. Language attitudes in Ghana tend to be affected by the functions that English and the indigenous languages perform in the everyday lives of Ghanaians. In comparison with the local languages, English has been used as an official language since Ghana was colonized by Britain and still enjoys an overwhelming position as the language of education and of mass communication.

LANGUAGE ATTITUDES OF GOVERNMENTS: FROM A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

After establishing trade contacts with the Gold Coast, the British colonial Government became more directly involved in administering the country and extending influence and jurisdiction beyond the coastal communities. The impact of some of the various social, political and administrative institutions that were established by British Colonial governments on the spread and influence of the English language was immense. During the reign of Sir Charles McCarthy (1822-1824), he made sure that English was more properly taught in government schools and English ways of life were more widely diffused among the local population. Not only did he order textbooks for use in the schools, he also introduced the wearing of European dress among the local people. By 1824, English was the only language spoken in the Cape Coast Castle School. This was in consonance with the report by the Education Committee of the Privy Council to the Colonial Office in 1847 which, among others, emphasized the need to disseminate a grammatical knowledge of the English language as the most important agent of civilization (Forster, 1965). Educational ordinances passed by the British Government in the nineteenth

century did not favour the indigenous languages. For instance, schools which used the indigenous languages as medium of instruction could not qualify for British aid. Lord Derby was reported to have said at the Colonial Office in Britain in 1883 that instruction in the native language may safely be left to the stimulus of self-interest and government subsidies are not required for its encouragement.

The rapid expansion in facilities and number of school attendants at both the primary and secondary school levels did not help the promotion of the use of the indigenous languages. Accelerated demands for education led to the appointment of a special committee in 1955, the Barnard committee, to investigate the possibilities of adopting English as the medium of instruction throughout the elementary school course. It is worth noting that it was an African government preparing itself for independence in 1957 that, in 1955, cast doubts on the use of the indigenous languages as medium of instruction by appointing the Barnard Committee (Sackey, 1997). Throughout the colonial period up to 1957, it can be realized that because Ghana had no common indigenous language which could serve as a national vehicular language for all the citizens, and also function as the language of government, law, education and social interaction at all levels, it was relatively easy for English assisted by the colonial government, to penetrate various spheres of life of the citizens. Out of the numerous indigenous languages in Ghana only four: Twi, Ga, Fante and Ewe were recommended for use in schools by 1927. Unlike most francophone countries which had French forced on them as medium of instruction through the Brazzaville Conference of 1944 and forbade the use of local language in schools (Djite, 2000), Ghana had the British, to some extent, lay a foundation for the use of the government sponsored indigenous languages as medium of instruction at the lower primary level.

As the language of formal education, English had to be learned at school. Without it, there could be no full participation in the social, economic and political life of the urban societies that were emerging. English became a language used for certain purposes by the educated Ghanaians. These eventually formed an elite group whose influence over the rest of society lay partly in their use of English and in the high degree of social advancement which this new status conferred on them. The educated elites varied widely in the areas of education, occupation and income. However, they were generally speaking, a cohesive group, cut off to some extent from their counterparts in traditional society by their status and use of English. Bilingualism became a hall mark of the educated Ghanaian. Nonetheless, political, social and economic prestige was attached to English alone. As the language of government, the legal practice and administration, English was socially sanctioned, especially in terms of political and economic benefits. It was the language used by lawyers and judges at courts above the level of those of the local councils.

The institutional structures making use of English did not cease after independence, they multiplied as many more people could read and write English. The English language today has to a large extent retained its pre-eminent position as the language everybody must learn if they are seeking employment in the civil and public sectors of the economy. However, there have been attempts made to challenge English as the official language. Since independence in 1957 there have been, at least, three institutional attempts from the political arena to raise the issue of a national language for Ghana. In 1961, the Convention People's Party (CPP) government opened

a debate in parliament on the national language case. Although Akan won some support, the government deferred its decision, arguing that Akan had not developed enough to handle high technical and technological issues.

In 1971, the national language case was again raised in parliament. Among the arguments raised were the widespread use of Akan in the country and the emotional satisfaction of using an indigenous language as a national language or lingua franca. The point was also made that the continued use of English prevented the vast majority of Ghanaians from participating in discussions of national matters. The parliamentary debate ended with the House adopting the motion that in view of the importance of a national language as a factor for national unity in Ghana, the House should take note of the necessity of a modern language or lingua franca. There was the admission that the English language was serving as a neutral binding force, and the choice of an indigenous language might raise opposition from speakers of other languages.

In 1992, the National Democratic Congress (NDC) Government had to deal with the national language issue in Parliament since not all Honourable members were in favour with the use of English as the language of debate or discussion. In September 1995, parliament resolved by standing order that the proceedings of the House shall ordinarily be conducted in the English language, except that, a member may exercise the option to address the House in either Akan, Nzema, Ga, Ewe, Hausa, Dagbani, Dagaare or other local language provided facilities exist in the House for their interpretation. This decision was not implemented because Honourable members who chose to use an indigenous language in parliament might be ridiculed. Another reason was that interpreters would have a difficult task interpreting technical terms in the indigenous languages.

LANGUAGE ATTITUDES IN THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

In Ghana, a minority of the populace are able to speak English, although a certain level of proficiency is required for occupying any public office and for involvement in many and diverse facets of national life. Series of opinions from the public compelled the government to publish cultural and other educational materials in the eleven government-sponsored indigenous Ghanaian languages (Ga, Dangme, Ewe, Twi, Fante, Nzema, Gonja, Kasem, Dagbani, Dagaare and Gurunne). The Bureau of Ghanaian languages and the school of Ghana languages have been charged with the responsibility of organizing teaching courses for both adult and children learners in the local languages. Diploma and degree programmes in some of the indigenous languages are currently run in the Ghanaian public universities and institutions of Ghanaian languages. However, it is worth noting that attitudes towards the use of the indigenous languages within the educational sector remain rather argumentative. Teachers of indigenous languages are not much sought after and, quite often, students do not consider them as proficient academically as teachers of other subjects (Bamgbose, 1991). Indeed, teachers of African languages often try to regain their image by ensuring that they are able to teach some other course as well. Students have very high respect and admiration for teachers and other people who are able to express themselves fluently in English; even teachers have great respect for their colleagues in the English Departments and indeed all those who are very proficient in the use of English (Andoh-Kumi, 1997). Guerini (2007) observed that in most Ghanaian universities, lecturers and professors teaching indigenous languages are looked down upon by their colleagues in the same faculty.

The use of English as the teaching medium within the educational system tends to be preferred to the use of an indigenous language. Some parents are disappointed when they learn that their children are learning their own languages at school. Such parents do not understand why they should pay fees only for their children to learn languages they already speak (Andoh-Kumi, 1997). For most parents in Ghana, the purpose of schooling is to learn and be proficient in the English language. Competence in English is a means to one's well-being and prosperity. English therefore consolidates its position as the only language suitable for use in the local educational system. Dakubu (2005) reports that in the middle of the 20th century, the German missionary, Rapp, noted that Ga teachers were not particularly interested in teaching Ga, but refused to teach Akan (which they all spoke) as a matter of ethnic pride, and consequently taught only in English. Colin Baker (1992) describes this linguistic situation as a language conflict attitude where languages in contact are in competition, with one language threatening, as it were, the other.

In 2008, the Ministry of Education Science and Sports, Ghana, in collaboration with the Ghana Education Service introduced a new instructional approach under the National Literacy Acceleration Programme (NALAP). The rationale behind the adoption of this approach is the overwhelming evidence that mother tongue based instruction is a powerful tool for the acquisition of literacy skills. The NALAP is a contribution to the implementation of the former official language policy which stipulates that the Ghanaian language prevalent in the local area be used as the medium of instruction at the kindergarten and Lower Primary Levels while English is studied as a subject and used where necessary. By Primary Four, English replaces the Ghanaian language as medium of instruction and the Ghanaian language treated as just another subject. The use of Ghanaian language at the Kindergarten and lower primary level serves as background or pre-existing knowledge upon which conclusions and predictions can be made to facilitate transfer (Saville- Troike, 1988). Although the use of the child's primary language at the early stages of education has been empirically confirmed to be beneficial, the policy was changed because students English language proficiency fell (Andoh-Kumi, 1994) leading to the abysmal performance in English and other subject areas. Other challenges the old language policy faced were the multilingual situation in Ghana especially in urban schools, the lack of teachers specifically trained to teach content subjects in the Ghanaian language and the prestige English enjoys as the official language.

Today, in some public Kindergarten Schools in Ghana, both the local languages and English are employed in communication but the latter has a higher percentage of usage. On the other hand, in private schools of the same level, only English is used in interaction. At urban areas, many pupils in Kindergarten can speak English since their parents speak English with them at home. Teaching children at that early stage of education in English is facilitated by the choice of English over the local language by parents. At the Basic School Level, English is the main language of instruction especially in urban areas. Teachers communicate in English with their pupils and encourage them to speak English always. Pupils are told to read the newspapers and story books in order to improve upon their proficiency and competence in English. It is at the rural areas that teachers occasionally combine English and the local language of the community in instructing their pupils. The Senior High Schools and the tertiary institutions in Ghana, really exhibit the official function of English as the language of instruction in education. At these levels students and teachers are

drawn from the heterogeneous ethnic regions of Ghana. Due to the multilingual nature of these educational institutions, English functions as lingua franca. The English language is sometimes code mixed with the local language in informal spoken discourse; where interlocutors share no common Ghanaian language, they are forced to use English (Torto, 2011). In these institutions English is used at all social gatherings. All notices and other forms of communication are in English. It is only in some rural Senior High Schools where occasionally the local language of the community is used concurrently with English at special functions like a durbar or Speech-and-Prize-Giving Day when many of the indigenous people are present.

LANGUAGE ATTITUDES IN CHURCHES

During the British colonial era in Ghana, the Wesleyan mission, more than any other, supported colonial language policy in education. Being an English mission, the Wesleyans were immensely favoured by the colonial governments. Until the 1880s, English was generally not only the medium of instruction in all Wesleyan schools but also the language of preaching in their churches. African preachers often spoke to their indigenous congregations through interpreters. Rev. Thomas Birch Freeman, the Wesleyan Methodist Superintendent, argued that the use of the English language in Wesleyan schools and churches was part of a programme of hope for the time when the English language will become the classical language of all the tribes and people (Freeman, 1841). In comparing Basel Mission policy of encouraging use of the indigenous languages with Wesleyan emphasis on English, Freeman saw advantages for Methodist youth in respect of job opportunities in the government sector. On the other hand, Basel Mission policy though disqualified its youth from occupying important government and commercial positions, protected them from the negative influences associated with English language education. In religion, English was largely the language of worship in the Christian churches. It was more particularly linked with Wesleyan, Catholic and Anglican missionary activities than with the Presbyterians. In general, the more urban the society, the more English that was used. On the other hand, the more rural, the less English that was used and the more of the indigenous languages.

In recent times, the charismatic or modern churches that have emerged at the urban areas of Ghana use English instead of the language of the community. The local languages are used in some of the charismatic churches in the delivery of sermons and for the dissemination of vital information. The greater parts of the religious activities are in English. Similarly, liturgical activities in some orthodox churches (Methodist, Anglican, and Catholic) at urban settings in Ghana are basically in English. For instance, the Catholic Chaplaincy at the University of Cape Coast, Ghana uses only English during daily and Sunday masses. This attitude is due to the linguistic heterogeneity of the university community. However, at the Pedu Parish, (a suburb of Cape Coast) both English and Fante (the language of the community) are used during worship. For instance, the Bible readings, the sermon and eucharistic prayers are in both languages. One would expect that the language of the community (Fante) would dominate in the religious discourse but English features more. In the Presbyterian Church in Ghana, the indigenous languages feature more in their worship than the other orthodox churches. In an urban area the Bible readings could be in different local languages. It is at the rural areas of Ghana that Christian religious proceedings are in the indigenous languages only but in the cities and towns English dominates.

Given the fact that in Ghana, literacy in English is acquired through formal education, and that a sizable percentage of children have no access to formal education, it is not surprising that the English-speaking population is not a large one. However, what English lacks in numbers, it makes up for in prestige, status and functionality. Hence, language policy discourse in Ghana incorporates the role of English as an official language. One consequence of making a language an official language is the status it confers on the language and its speakers. The official language becomes dominant and other languages become disadvantaged and policies affecting such official languages affect the viability and stability of other languages used (Herriman & Burnaby, 1996). As an official language in Ghana, English holds a dominant position over the indigenous languages. In practically all African countries colonized by Britain, English remains an official or co-official language. Attempts to promote the use of any other language as national or official have resulted either in failure or partial success.

In Ghana, English is consistently employed in television and radio broadcasts, in daily newspapers and magazines, in almost all the administrative and legal documents published within the country, as well as in all official transactions (Huber, 1999). In Ghana, English enjoys great prestige as it is seen as a language of power and security. Competence in English gives one the power to exercise authority; it is a key to one's advancement in society. A person who wants to feel secure learns English as it is one of the requirements for employment in many areas (Saah, 1986). Educated politicians who visit their constituencies would rather speak English than use the dominant language of the area and educated chiefs would speak English to their subjects whenever they have the privilege of a visit by a minister of state or the president of the country (Sackey, 1997). Under normal circumstances, it is unlikely that a student would choose to learn a language that does not offer the prospect of a good job or social advancement. Many parents in Ghana send their children to English-medium schools (Andoh-kumi, 1999). Some parents insist on their children speaking English at home without regard to the indigenous language of the community. The idea is to position the children for a good education and prospects of economic advancement. Given the prevailing attitude that English-medium education is best, it is not surprising that parents opt for it in the belief that the earlier a child is exposed to instruction in English, the better will be its chances of success in higher cycles of education. Speakers of other languages are, to some extent, responsible for the hegemony of English, particularly in terms of their attitudes to their own languages. A family that abandons the mother tongue in favour of English as the medium of communication in the home cannot at the same time complain that its mother tongue has been marginalized in other domains.

It is worth noting that there is a section of the Ghanaian populace who disregard the importance of English in Ghana (Saah, 1986). For them, the status of English as the only official language of the country is an explicit indication of its dependence on the British administration, both culturally and economically. Another section of Ghanaians also consider the indigenous languages more apt to express traditional values and cultural issues, rather than academic matters. On the other hand, English is associated with western style of life; it is connected to the ideas of

prosperity and economic development. A certain degree of competence in English is a requisite for holding important and remunerative national offices.

Among the indigenous languages in Ghana, Akan is widely spoken (Torto, 2000). Akan enjoys considerable prestige and is currently employed in television and radio programmes, religious ceremonies, in politics, within the judicial system and so forth (Guerini, 2007). Minority local language speakers in Ghana feel threatened not only by the hegemony of English but also by a vehicular language like Akan. Linguistic loyalty tends to arise from resentment against a dominant ethnic group like the Asantes', whose native language has been accorded widespread prominence and prestige since the period of colonial rule (Turchetta, 1996). The case of Akan as a nationwide vehicular language is in conformity with the domain theory in language shift (Fishman 1964, 1991): the idea that when one language gets an expanded domain of use over others there is the tendency for bilingual speakers to shift to it. Dakubu (2005) reports that there is a perception among the Ga people of Ghana that they are losing their land, culture and language. The Gas feel their language is dying. This feeling is the result of usurpation of the functionality of the Ga language by other ethnic groups that have migrated to the capital city of Ghana where the Ga language dominates. Such conflicting attitudes by speakers of the indigenous languages tend to generate a situation in which linguistic policy reforms are executed intermittently in order to avoid ethnic tensions.

In comparison with other parts of the world where English is spoken, the language still plays a prominent role. In South Africa, where nine African languages are recognized as co-official languages with English and Afrikaans, English stands out as the dominant language. Furthermore, compared with English-medium education, education in an African language does not confer any significant benefits, either in terms of social mobility or better economic prospects (Alexander, 2001; Kamwangamalu, 1997). Consequently, there is increasing rate in enrolment in English-medium schools, with the result that loyalty to the mother tongue by the younger generation is weakening and competence in the mother tongue is decreasing (deKlerk, 1999). Although it has been suggested that neither Afrikaans nor most of the indigenous African languages are in any danger now, the point has also been made that language shift towards English is clearly taking place at an accelerated rate, and the number of domains in which languages other than English can be used is rapidly declining (Reagan, 2001). In Japan, where English is not a central basis for deciding who has access to economic resources and political power (Tollefson, 2000); it is still the case that English is prestigious particularly in international business relations and communication. In other countries, where English is used for internal purposes, it is a major determinant of position and power. In Europe, where there are well-entrenched national languages, it is said that the popularity of English is also a looming threat (Dicker, 1996). It is reported that in Europe, English has become almost a lingua franca in, for example, Scandinavia and the Netherlands, and is the preferred first foreign language taught in schools in virtually all of Europe (Hoffman, 1988). In Switzerland, French Swiss are said to be more attracted to English than to German, while German Swiss also tend to favour English over French as a second language (Dicker, 1996). English has enormous prestige mainly because of its instrumental value. The impact of globalization has also accelerated the use of English in Europe. In Ghana, lack of familiarity with English constitutes one of the greatest impediments; it affects access to education, public services, jobs, political positions and effective functioning in society. The hegemony of English may be said to be beneficial when one considers its communicative and instrumental function, its role as lingua franca and its global attributes (Pennycook, 1994). However, the English language in Ghana poses a direct threat to the very existence of other languages (Pennycook, 1994) and to the country's linguistic and cultural diversity (Webb, 1996).

CONCLUSION

In communicating their language attitudes, Ghanaians place a high premium on the English language at the expense of the numerous indigenous languages. Today, the English language is the most prestigious and the only official language of Ghana, a privileged position that the colonial language has enjoyed since independence till the present time. Though the minority of the population of Ghana are literate implying that the non-literate function well in the indigenous languages, the use of English continues to dominate the social, political, cultural and economic circles of communication. In Ghana, the indigenous languages are used in fewer domains and speakers are becoming less proficient in their mother tongues leading to code-mixing and possibly language shift. The current situation is that the indigenous languages are being relegated to the background in many spheres of the lives of the people of Ghana and this poses a great threat not only to the culture and traditions, but also to the very existence of the people. While government is concern about the pedagogy and acquisition of English in educational institutions, the crucial role of Ghanaian languages in forging national cohesion should also be considered. The multilingual situation in Ghana should be managed properly in order to protect the nation's indigenous languages from potential threat of death.

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The Effect of The Involvement Load Hypothesis on Vocabulary Learning Through Synonyms, Definitions, And Exemplifications

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BIO DATA

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ABSTRACT

This article expatiates upon the full-fledged impact of the enlarged vocabulary on the overall dexterity in picking up L2s in general and reading comprehension in particular. The Involvement Load Hypothesis is counted as a prolific approach in heightening and broadening the vocabulary knowledge of L2 learners. To prove this, three approaches of L2 vocabulary learning that is, synonyms, definitions, and exemplifications are discussed. 180 male and female students participated as the participants of this study classified into 2 phases. In the first phase, these participants were divided into three 60 male and female subject groups (A, B, and C). Each group was supposed to have six classes during regular 50-minute English class sessions where they centralized on one of the three approaches, that is, synonyms, definitions, and examples, within the passages in order to learn new words in English. The findings based on the ANOVA test statistically unraveled that the participants who availed themselves of the definitions of the new terms did a better job on the test and excelled the other two. In the second phase, the 180 participants were classified into six 30 subject groups and got separate instructions on synonyms, definitions, and exemplifications. The results acquired through this phase were analyzed by a two-way ANOVA. The *F*-observed value for the interaction between the sex of the participants and the input modification on the performance of the participants on the posttest revealed that the input offered through giving definitions to the complicated words had a significant effect on the performance of the female participants only. Exemplification helped the male participants more than the female ones, and the passages along with the synonyms of the new terms helped the female and the male participants' performance to an equal degree. In the long run, the product of this study can broadly help L2 practitioners in the domain of teaching and materials development and the differences between the two sexes from the cognitive and metacognitive point of view in learning and teaching.

Key Words: definition, exemplification, involvement load hypothesis, language practitioners, synonyms

INTRODUCTION

Schmitt (2008) holds that for both second language teachers and learners vocabulary is obviously a top priority (p. 18). Having an extensive vocabulary is believed to help L2 learners to partly handle unpredictable communicative situations (Nunan, 1999, p. 103). For L2 learners, big words (i.e., content words) are indisputably the very elements that make it possible for them to figure out meaning (Vanpatten, 2004, p. 276).

Despite the importance of vocabulary in L2 learning, there has been conspicuously less theoretical headway in this domain. A growing number of studies in recent years have examined the effectiveness of several techniques to promote incidental vocabulary learning through reading, such as glossing (i.e., providing the meaning of obscure words in the margins of a text). Because texts offer learners rich input where lexical items are highly contextualized, the addition of some kind of lexical intervention might further nurture lexical development. However, studies investigating the effectiveness of different lexical intervention tasks during reading have led to conflicting results (Long, 1985, p. 89).

The notion of involvement load includes both motivational (e.g., need) and cognitive components (e.g., search and evaluation). They also state that incidental tasks with a higher degree of involvement load are more conducive to the type of processing that is deemed crucial for learning. This hypothesis has important pedagogical implications and it allows us to manipulate task features and predict what tasks will be more effective. However, more empirical evidence is needed in order to support it. In the present study, incidental learning is interpreted as a learning condition in which learners process an L2 for meaning rather than for form (i.e., their goal is text comprehension rather than vocabulary learning) and unintentionally learn L2 forms and/or their meanings. Within this framework, learners may or may not pay attention to words and become aware of them while they are reading for meaning. Therefore, the notion of incidental learning is distinct from the notion of implicit learning, which takes place outside of awareness. While implicit learning can be incidental only, explicit learning can be both intentional and incidental. This view is different from others, where incidental learning is considered to occur when the object of learning is not the focus of attention. Most studies that are premised on the role of involvement, attention, and depth of processing in incidental vocabulary learning have rarely employed process measures, such as think-aloud protocols (Grabe, & Stoller, 2002). While attempts are made to mull over different areas of SLA, this task still needs to be undertaken in studies on incidental vocabulary learning. Moreover, Jiménez (1997) assumes that many of these studies will be incidental if learners are not instructed to learn the words. On the other hand, studies on intentional L2 vocabulary learning (Kamhi-Stein, 1998) have showed that type of words such as concrete and abstract nouns might have an effect on vocabulary learning. This issue remains mainly unexplored and intact in incidental vocabulary learning areas; however (Laufer & Huljistin, 2001, p. 45-55). The Involvement Load Hypothesis, although not at first formulated in the context of form-focused instruction, claims that in incidental learning situations the retention of forms (i.e., words) depends on the manipulation of cognitive and motivational variables within tasks. This claim can arguably constitute a technique in form-focused instruction

that, in effect, is very different from the default position taken in vocabulary learning and (Swain, 1985, p. 231).

Sex Differences in Cognition and Metacognition

Haplern (1992) maintains that while it is clear that males and females are physically different, the question of whether there are clear gender differences in intelligence, personality, cognition, or behavior are more difficult to address. Males and females do behave differently in some instances. For example, they appear to think differently, in other words, some psychologists (Lavadenz, 2000) would argue that males and females differ in terms of fundamental cognitive processing.

Lavandez believes there are many stereotypes concerning gender differences, some are as follows:

1. Females are more caring and nurturing, and therefore become better teachers, nurses.
 2. Males are more suited for leadership, managerial roles in business and politics.
 3. Women have better verbal abilities, talk more, and are interested in social relationships and emotional issues.
 4. Males are less friendly, are more interested in objects than, and do not show their emotions.
 5. Females are poor in spatial skills, particularly if machines are involved (like parking a car), they cannot find their way easily and are hopeless at throwing.
 6. Males are better at science and math, while females are better at art and social science subject.
- (p. 25)

Evidence for Sex Differences in Cognition, Perception and Attention

Baker (1987) argues that all of our information about the world comes from our sensory systems, and the cognitive process begins with the ability to sense changes in the environment and to make some meaning out of this bombarding array of sensory stimuli. The first steps in the cognitive process are perception and attention, and possible sex differences in these earliest stages of information processing are interesting for two reasons:

This would provide a theoretical basis for sex-related differences at later cognitive stages. Perception and attention are two areas in which there are no sex-role stereotypes because we have little conscious awareness of the ways in which these systems function.

He also summarizes sex-related differences in perception and attention. Some examples are as follows:

- **Hearing:** Females are better at detecting pure tones.
- **Vision:** Males are better at detecting peripheral visual movements, while females have better acuity.
- **Taste:** Females have lower threshold for detecting sweet, sour, salty, and bitter substances.
- **Touch:** Females are more sensitive to touch on most regions of the body.
- **Attention Disorders:** Sex ratios for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) show a much greater proportion of males' suffers (Baker, 1987, p. 87).

General Intelligence

Winograd and Hare (1988) maintain that male brains on average are larger than female brains, but size is no guarantee of intelligence, and the common finding on standardized tests of general

intelligence (IQ) is that males and females show no differences. However, sex differences do emerge in terms of general knowledge. It has been found that males outperformed females in history, politics, geography, and science, while females only outperformed males in art (p. 94). More recently, it was unraveled that males performed better in sport, science, affairs, geography, politics, and history; whereas females outperformed males in cookery and medical activities (Robinson, 1995, p. 5).

Verbal Abilities

Chamot and O'Malley (1994) concluded that during the early school years, girls outperform boys in most aspects of verbal performance, for example:

1. They say the first word earlier.
2. They articulate more clearly at an earlier age.
3. They use longer sentences.
4. They are more fluent.
5. They learn to read sooner.
6. They perform better on tests of grammar, spelling and word fluency.

Anderson (1999) adds that differences in verbal ability are the first to catch the eyes among the two sexes. For instance, females aged 1-5 were more proficient at L2 skills than were males of the same age. There is also evidence that girls begin to talk earlier than boys, and when they do, they produce longer utterances with more advanced linguistic forms, and make fewer errors. McGuiness (2001) also conducted a large-scale longitudinal study on more than 9,000 children for 6 years and found that girls consistently scored higher on spelling, punctuation, language use, and comprehension. A strong female advantage in verbal abilities was taken for many years. McGuiness (2001) also found that all of the differences were very small, and an analysis by age showed no differences in the magnitude of gender differences. (Maccoby & Jacklin, 2004, p. 54)

Haplern (1992) also posits that females only seemed to outperform males in verbal fluency and synonym generation, and males outperformed on verbal analogies (p.216). Maccoby and Jacklin (2006) concluded that there was little evidence for a clear sex difference in verbal ability. However, some of the clearest evidence comes when we consider the lowest end of the verbal abilities distribution. Stuttering is overwhelmingly a female problem with a ratio of something like 4:1 in favor of females. Similarly, severe reading disabilities (i.e., dyslexia) are also a predominantly male problem with the severe forms of dyslexia occurring 10 times more often in males. Even boys who are not classed as language impaired are much more likely to show speech production problems and are usually slower at learning to read. Finally, after brain damage when language has been affected, males suffer more language impairment and take much longer to recover language skills compared to females who have suffered similar case (p. 47).

BACKGROUND

Synonyms

Newton (2001) holds that synonym is the derivative of the Greek word with the roots referring to the words that are different but have the same or similar meaning. AS a result, these words are called synonymous; for instance, *seek* is synonymous with *hunt*. They are found in all areas of speech including verbs, nouns, adjectives and others. Those who are involved with producing dictionaries posit that there are no synonyms that have the exact same meaning whether in social levels or context. This they say is because of phonic qualities, usage, and ambiguity of words. Some words just differ in seriousness; for instance, *cat* sounds more informal than *feline*. In the case of usage, some synonyms may have the same meaning when referring to one thing and not the same in others, for example *extended* and *long*. Synonyms are also an important resource for euphemisms that help in language usage. Synonyms can be used to reduce the repetition of certain words that reduces monotony of overusing a certain way. A thesaurus is a large database of synonyms and can be used to greatly enhance writing by offering a wide variety of synonyms. It is important though to understand a context before choosing synonyms. (p. 23)

He also goes on and maintains that different words with very similar or identical meanings are called synonyms. The words *beast* and *animal* are synonyms because they have very similar meanings. Similarly, the words *woods* and *forest* are synonyms. Words that are synonyms are said to be synonymous. In a figurative sense, two words having the same connotation are also said to be synonymous. Note that no word means exactly the same as any other word and, therefore, there are no exact synonyms with identical meaning in English. Certain words may convey the same general notion. For example, the words *slay*, *kill*, *murder*, *execute*, and *slaughter* all convey the same general idea. They are, therefore, employed as synonyms even though they are used in different senses and in different contexts. Words of any part of speech can be synonymous. But remember that if one member of the pair is a noun, the other member must also be a noun. Similarly, the synonym of an adjective will also be an adjective.

However, some words can have more than one meaning. For example, the word *pupil* can mean either student or the aperture in the iris of the eyes. Hence, *pupil* is not synonymous with *student* when it refers to a part of the eye. Similarly, the sentence *He expired* means the same as he died. Here the words died and expired are synonyms. But the sentence My passport has expired does not mean the same as My passport has died. The words expired and died are not synonyms in this context.

A good knowledge of synonyms will help you express the same idea in very many ways.

Definition

Clark (2002) believes that a definition is a passage that explains the [meaning](#) of a term (i.e., a [word](#), phrase, or other set of [symbols](#)) or a type of thing. The term to be defined is the [definiendum](#). A term may have many different senses or meanings. For each such specific sense, a definition is a cluster of words that defines the term.

A chief difficulty in managing definition is the need to use other terms that are already understood or whose definitions are easily obtainable. The use of the term in a simple example may suffice. By contrast, a [dictionary definition](#) has additional details, typically including an [etymology](#) showing snapshots of the earlier meanings and the parent language. Like other words, the term definition has subtly different meanings in different contexts. A definition may be descriptive of the general use meaning, or stipulative of the speaker's immediate intentional

meaning. For example, in formal languages like mathematics, a stipulative definition guides a specific discussion. A descriptive definition can be shown to be right or wrong by comparison to general usage, but a stipulative definition can only be disproved by showing a logical contradiction.

A precise definition extends the descriptive dictionary definition (i.e., lexical definition) of a term for a specific purpose by including additional criteria that narrow down the set of things meeting the definition. Stevenson (2001) has identified persuasive definition as a form of proper definition that purports to describe the true or commonly accepted meaning of a word, but in reality stipulating an altered use, perhaps as an argument for some specific view. Stevenson has also noted that some definitions are legal or coercive whose object is to create or alter rights, duties, or crimes.

Providing the definition of the new words is another effective approach to teach the words; it connects the words being taught with their context and with the learners' prior knowledge. Concept of definition reflects the idea that students need to have some understanding of what a definition is and how it works before they can give the meaning of a word on their own. The concept of definition shows common elements of a dictionary definition. These elements include (1) the category to which the word being defined belongs (*What is this?*), (2) some characteristics of the word (*What is it like?*), and (3) some specific examples of the word. Learners refer to context, their prior knowledge, and dictionaries to find the elements needed to complete the map. Teaching learners to recognize and use information from word parts such as prefixes, suffixes, and roots can be an especially effective word-learning strategy for use with content area texts. These texts can contain many words that are derived from the same word parts. Although words such as *misread*, *interdependent*, and *substandard* can often be figured out from the context, decomposing such words into known parts like *mis-*, *read*, *inter-*, *depend*, and so forth not only makes the words themselves more memorable, but, in combination with sentence context, may be a useful strategy in determining the meaning of unknown words. Learners can acquire the meaning of word parts by inference as they read. Although such a strategy may be part and parcel of normal reading, many learners are unaware that breaking words into their parts can be a way to determine their meanings. In addition, learners often do not know the meanings of common word (Stevenson, 2001, p. 114-117).

Exemplification

Stahl (1986) holds that through this approach readers have a full access to the detailed examples of the new words and expressions in different sentences right following each of the new words and expressions within the context, and it is a productive helping readers to catch on the real meaning of the new word (p. 23).

He also holds that examples help people to understand far more than explaining the concepts in a paragraph. It takes more work to create examples, but even the simplest examples put side by side aid your readers' understanding while helping you to ensure that you actually know what you are talking about (p. 25).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Comprehending and summarizing L2 passages has always been considered as a complicated task for L2 learners. The approach in teaching reading comprehension has been predominantly communicative that emphasizes implicit, incidental learning. The techniques used in comprehension teaching include inferring the meaning of lexical items from the context in which they occur using the dictionary, realia, etc. (Richards & Rodgers, 1996).

According to Sokmen (1997), the argument against implicit instruction to facilitate L2 learning comes from a number of potential problems associated with inferring words from context (p. 237). A large number of studies on teaching reading comprehensions have shown the ineffectiveness of just using explicit instruction and the need to accompany it with implicit instruction or in context explanation of the new words and expressions (p. 202). To promote better learning, the current reading comprehension instruction emphasizes both implicit and explicit learning. While there is now more emphasis on explicit learning, it has been argued that the comprehension development of an L2 is more likely to be generally implicit or incidental beyond a certain level of proficiency (Carter & McCarty, 1998, p. 95).

L2 teachers often believe that providing the appropriate synonyms for the new terms in the passages would help L2 learners to better grasp the clear meaning of the overall passage. On the other hand, there are many L2 practitioners who argue that preparing the definition for the new words would be more fruitful for L2 learners to catch on the widespread meaning of the passages. Notwithstanding, in the third camp some L2 teachers are persuaded that the exemplification of the new term works definitely better to let L2 learners become aware of the essence of the meaning of the passages.

This study attempts to explore the effect of synonyms, definitions, and examples, on L2 learners' reading comprehension ability. On the other hand, educational practitioners, syllabus designer and material developers are expected to differentiate the male and female's amount of reading comprehension when they are exposed to the three aforementioned inputs.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Do different kinds of teaching reading through synonyms, definition, or examples make any significant difference on L2 learners' overall reading comprehension?
2. Is there any significant difference between reading comprehension ability of those L2 learners who have been taught to employ synonyms, those who have taught to use definitions, or those who are provided with examples of the new words within the context?
3. Is there any difference between the male and female L2 learners to benefit from the three aforementioned approaches to comprehend the essence of the reading passages?

STATEMENT OF THE HYPOTHESES

In order to gain access to more or less convincing findings to remove the pertinent ambiguities following null hypotheses were suggested.

H₀₁: There is no significant difference between the amount of reading comprehension of the foreign language learners when they are exposed to synonyms, definitions or examples in the text.

H₀₂: There is no interaction of comprehension input – namely, synonyms, definitions, or examples in the overall comprehension of passages between the sex and the method.

METHODOLOGY

Participant

This study, conducted in June 2009, involved 300 Iranian university students, who were all freshmen. Among them, 100 participants who participated in the pilot studies were excluded from the main study. All were Iranian L2 students between 19 and 25 years of age enrolled in the Islamic Azad University located in Pishva city in Iran. On the basis of their scores on the TOEFL the participants who got more than 70% of the scores were selected as the participants of this study- 180 male and female students. The Levene's test was also conducted and their homogeneity was confirmed- that is, they were more or less of the same level. This study involved two phases. In the first phase the 180 participants were categorized into three groups.

- Group A was assigned to get the reading passages provided with the synonyms of the new words.
- Group B was assigned to get the reading passages along with the definitions of the new words.
- Group C was assigned to get the reading passages along with the examples of the unfamiliar words and inside the texts.

An ANOVA test was run to compare the difference among the means.

In phase two, the participants were divided into six subgroups- that is, 30 male groups and three 30 female groups. A factorial design was assigned to illuminate the interaction between sex and methods.

It is also expedient to mention that all the tests that appeared in this research study had been diligently verified in terms of reliability and validity through the proper statistical measures.

Instruments

Phase 1

In this phase the following instruments were employed:

1. Reading passages selected from TOEFL (Barron's, 1989)
2. Six intermediate piloted reading passages selected from the book titled *Developing Skills* (Alexander, 1967a) with the level of difficulty determined through the Fog index model.

Phase 2

In this phase hereunder instruments were utilized:

1. Six intermediate piloted reading passages selected from the book titled *Developing Skills* (Alexander, 1967a) with the level of difficulty determined through the Fog Index model.

Procedures

Pilot Studies

As a preliminary step, two pilot studies were conducted 4 weeks before the main study. The purpose of the first pilot study was to choose 6 out of 10 passages that were appropriate in difficulty and content for use in the main study to identify vocabulary and information that needed modification. After constructing the multiple choice comprehension questions test on the six reading passages thus chosen, it was pilot tested in order to identify and modify items that were too easy or too difficult. For instance, items that almost all the participants had answered correctly or incorrectly were revised to make them more discriminating.

Main Study

The main study was administered in two separate phases. In the first phase 180 participants were divided into three 60 male and female subject groups (A, B, and C). Each group was supposed to have six classes during regular 50-minute English class sessions where they centralized on the synonyms, definitions, and examples within the passages. Three types of test booklets were prepared, each consisting of only one of the three versions (A, B, and C) reading task and test. Within each class, the same procedure was followed. The participants were told to read and try to understand the six short passages and to answer reading comprehension questions (10 items) and 20 multiple-choice questions.

In the second phase the same 180 participants took part, but this time they were divided into six groups- that is, 30 female and three 30 male participants.

Sex	Synonym	Methods Definition	Example
Male Subjects	G1	G2	G3
Female Subjects	G4	G5	G6

In this respect, other different piloted passages in three forms with the same level of difficulty- six passages for each vertical group- were assigned. These participants had also six classes during regular, 50-minute English class sessions. They were also given three kinds of test booklet, each involving exclusively one within each class, the same procedure was followed. The participants were told to read the short six passages based on the three versions (A, B, and C) and try to answer 20 multiple-choice questions.

DATA ANALYSIS

Phase 1

The data obtained through the procedure described above were analyzed by the analysis of variance (ANOVA). Tukey's HSD tests were also used in post hoc analyses to examine which of the mean differences among the three subject groups were statistically significant. Statistically, it

was unraveled that the participants who availed themselves of the definitions of the new terms did a better job on the test and excelled the other two. Hence, the first null hypothesis was rejected.

Phase 2

The results acquired through the procedure described above in phase two were analyzed by the two-way ANOVA on the total comprehension scores. The *F*-observed value for the interaction between the sex of participants and the input modification on the performance of participants on the test revealed that the input offered through giving definitions to the complicated words had significant effect on the performance of the female participants only. Exemplification helped the male participants more than the female ones, and synonyms of the new terms helped the female and the male participants' performance to an equal degree. Thus, the second null hypothesis as there is no significant interaction between the gender of the participants and the methods of teaching on their performance on the test was rejected, and it could be claimed that there was a significant interaction between the two variables.

CONCLUSION AND THE PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

The major findings of the present study can be summarized as follows:

First and foremost, learners perceive their comprehension to be higher when they receive the modified input than when they receive unmodified one. Likewise, synonyms, definitions and examples within the passages have a more positive impact on the learners' reading comprehension than the intact reading passages. Elsewhere, examples input significantly enhance the reading comprehension of learners of the both sexes, but males are more benefited in this respect. Further, female learners benefit more than male learners when they are exposed to the definition input. On the other hand, definition helps the both sexes to better comprehend the essence of the passages. Last but not least, the sex of the learners and the type of input enjoy positive interaction.

Accordingly the findings of the present study suggest that the provision of any types of information in written input enhances reading comprehension. This study also unravels that female readers are cognitively and metacognitively different from male readers, and females are more sensitive and adoptive to the passages along with the definitions of the new words than the males. This trait of equality should also be taken into consideration in educational arenas.

On the other hand, Craik (2002) postulates that assessment is an essential part of the educational system (p. 120). In recent years, however, its importance has increased, and there are more assessments in schools. It also improves the instructional status of pupils and educational system as a whole. Because of this, it is crucially important that assessment is considered in terms of its fairness for the students of both sex as a measure of achievement. Put simply, the problem of equality and equity among male and female L2 learners should also be considered by test developers.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Despite the researcher attempted to conduct a sound study some limitations popped up in the current work as follow:

1. This study was administered in the Islamic Azad University, while the state universities were disregarded.
2. Specific range of the participants' age was utilized in this study, whereas other age ranges were ignored.
3. The participants were city dwellers, while the residents and students living in the remote rural areas were not considered at all.
4. There are absolutely other techniques to propel the vocabulary knowledge of the L2 learners, but nothing was stated in this respect.
5. The dexterity of the teachers in the area of teaching the pertinent techniques were not concerned whatsoever.

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IJLLALW

The next issue to be published on
February 2013