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June 2016 Foreword

By Paul Robertson and Rouhollah Askari Bigdeli

The present issue includes two qualitative and three quantitative studies. Assessment literacy of Iranian EFL teachers and the status of ELT in State and Payam-e-Noor Universities are the areas addressed in the qualitative studies. Curry's Onion Model, learners' noticeability of morpho-syntactic corrective feedback, and listening strategies are the focus of quantitative studies. In the first study, Alireza Ahmadi and Seyyed Bagher Mirshojaee explored the assessment literacy of Iranian English language teachers. 20 language teachers teaching English in public high schools and English language institutes took part in the study. The data were gathered through a semi-structured interview. The findings of the study showed that the issues like assessment bias, validity evidence, assessment reliability, alternatives in assessment, formative assessment, assessing students with disabilities, social consequences of assessment results, and students' involvement were the most problematic areas for the participants and were not covered in language testing materials. The issues like construction of selection and construction tests, scoring constructed response test items, interpretation of students' performance, high-stakes test preparation, the effect of testing on teaching, giving feedback to the students were familiar to the participants but their familiarity with these issues was not sufficient at both theoretical and practical level. Language assessment practices of the participants uncover most of the problems which Iranian teachers cope with and showed that language assessment issues should be included in the in-service training programs. The second qualitative study carried out by Elaheh Sotoudehnama and Nasim Kolbadinejad addressed ELT in two educational systems in Iran. They particularly focused on the presentation of speaking skill in the courses offered in State and Payam-e-Noor Universities. In doing so, they conducted semi-structured interviews with language learners and instructors of the two universities. Differences regarding what and how the speaking courses are presented are discussed from the perspectives of language learners and instructors. The results obtained from the study have the implications for language teachers, policy makers, curriculum/syllabus designers, and material developers at the State and Payam-e-Noor University.

Vahid Panahzadeh and Mahmoud Qaracholloo, involving 238 Iranian EFL learners in a survey analysis, examined the Curry's Onion Model in terms of its applicability and predictive pattern. The study provided empirical evidence for Curry's assertions regarding the stability of inner cognitive styles and instability of outer social interaction and instructional preferences styles. It was found that some facets of each layer of personality are casually associated with particular facets in other layers. The findings have profound implications for second language teachers by providing better insights into the influence of diverse individual learner differences on student learning. That is, through establishing a link between the more stable and the less stable learning styles, language teachers can make far more informed decisions in opting for teaching approaches in accordance with learners' specific approaches to learning. In the fourth study, Mohammad Amini Farsani and Maryam Beikmohammadi argued for the benefits of recast in the development of more accurate language in the EFL context. Involving 10 Iranian EFL learners and using two tasks, namely spot-the-difference and picture sequencing, the researchers investigated learners' noticeability of morpho-syntactic corrective feedback and the mode of recast. The findings of their study revealed that the participants tended to morpho-syntactic recasts and resultant recasts could be a source of corrective feedback. Also, the findings revealed the association between modes of recast, interrogative and declarative, and uptake/repair. In the last study, Karim karimzadeh investigated whether self-regulation, self-efficacy, and motivation can predict Iranian upper-intermediate EFL learners' listening improvement. 80 upper-intermediate EFL learners participated in the study. The questionnaire was used to gather the data. The results of the study showed no significant correlation between self-regulation, self-efficacy, and motivation with respect to the learners' listening progress. That is to say, the variables did not predict the learners' enhancement in listening skill. Also, the study revealed the significant impact of listening strategies on listening comprehension.

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Iranian English Language Teachers' Assessment Literacy: The Case of Public School and Language Institute Teachers

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Biodata

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Abstract

This is a qualitative study aimed at assessing the assessment literacy (AL) of 20 Iranian English language teachers, 10 working in public high schools and 10 working in English language institutes. All the participants had more than 5 years of experience, selected based on convenient sampling. The instrument used in this study was a semi-structured interview made up of 14 guiding questions focusing on AL concepts drawn from the literature. The results of the study showed that the participants' AL was not satisfactory in issues like assessment bias, validity evidence, assessment reliability, alternatives in assessment, formative assessment, assessing students with disabilities, social consequences of assessment results, and students' involvement.

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Keywords: Assessment literacy, Validity, Reliability, Assessment bias, Alternative assessment

1. Introduction

Assessment and teaching go hand in hand to make the educational goals of every pedagogical program achievable. If language teaching is to come to fruition, testing indicates whether it is the case or not. White (2012) sees assessment as a force that pushes learning. Assessment has many functions like "evaluating individuals and programs, holding particular groups accountable for some specified set of outcomes, informing instruction, either for individuals or whole classes, and finally determining who gains access to particular programs or privileges"(Sarroub & Pearson, 1998, p. 97).

AL was in the shape of test-wise-ness before, but now AL is an issue of great use for all stakeholders including personnel in national examination boards, academics and students engaged in language testing research, language teachers or instructors, advisors and decision makers in language planning and education policy, parents, politicians, and the general public (Taylor, 2009). Language assessment is also of crucial value in language pedagogy since it is "a complex social phenomenon and its practice changes lives" (Fulcher, 2010, p.1). Regarding the global appeal for language learning, "testing has become big business" (Spolsky, 2008, p. 297). Shohamy also lays great emphasis on the power behind tests by focusing on "the societal role that language tests play, the power that they hold, and their central functions in education, politics and society" (2001a, p. xiv).

1.1. Language Assessment Literacy

Fulcher (2012) deems Brindley (2001) as the first language tester to visit the topic of AL and the one who argued for a focus on curriculum-related assessment. Taylor (2009) holds the belief that language professionals, applied linguists and educational policy makers are in need of an expanded "AL" to make just decisions for language learners and institutions. This literacy will be about learning fundamental facts of writing better test items (Coniam, 2008), and establishing a core knowledge base (Inbar-Lourie, 2008), additionally about understanding the reasons why we test, why we test the way we do and how test use can enrich or destroy people's hopes, ambitions and lives (Fulcher, 2012).

Professionalization of language assessment and its practices by a large number of ethical codes, quality standards, and guidelines for good practices causes lots of stakeholders not to be able follow the current trends and not to make use of the breakthroughs of language assessment movements (Davies,2008; Spolsky, 2008; Taylor, 2009). Taylor (2009) joining force with other researchers (e.g., Inbar-Lourie, 2008; Stiggins, 1997; Stoynoff & Chapelle, 2005) believes that AL is what the constituency of language teachers and instructors needs to know about assessment matters. Fulcher (2012) came to the following working definition of AL:

> The knowledge, skills and abilities required to design, develop, maintain or evaluate, large-scale standardized and/or classroom based tests, familiarity with test processes, and awareness of principles and concepts that guide and underpin practice, including ethics and codes of practice. The ability to place knowledge, skills, processes, principles and concepts within wider historical, social, political and philosophical frameworks in order to understand why practices have arisen as they have, and to evaluate the role and impact of testing on society, institutions, and individuals (p.125).

Cladwell (2008, p. 23) considers four steps in assessment process as a) defining what to assess, b) collecting information or evidence, c) analyzing the evidence and d) making a decision. McMillan (2000) describes assessment as a process of professional judgment that can involve a variety of related activities such as writing questions, designing classroom assessments, creating rubrics, scoring student work, arriving at grades, and interpreting standardized test scores. According to Davies (2008), AL includes skills, knowledge and principles:

> Skills provide the training in necessary and appropriate methodology, including item-writing, statistics, test analysis, and increasingly software programs for test delivery, analysis and reportage. Knowledge offers relevant background in measurement and language description as well as in context setting. Principles concern the proper use of language tests, their fairness and impact, including questions of ethics and professionalism (p. 335).

Assessment competencies include “selecting assessments, developing assessments for the classroom, administering and scoring tests, using scores to aid instructional decisions, communicating results to stakeholders, and being aware of inappropriate and unethical uses of tests” (Fulcher, 2012, p. 115-6). McNamara and Roever (2006) and Inbar-Lourie (2008) invite the social and cultural dimensions to the AL literature asking for training in critical views of testing and its social consequences. AL has not seen much empirical research up to now. Previous studies were in search of materials assessment with regard to their effectiveness for training assessment literate teachers. Brown and Baily (2008) described the content of language testing courses by means of a questionnaire including the instructors' background, covered topics, and instructors' perceptions of the students' general attitudes toward language testing by means of the internet. They found lots of new topics in this study in comparison to their previous study (Baily & Brown, 1996). Jin's (2010) was a survey study covering a wide range of issues from teaching concepts to assessment issues and found the effectiveness of training of tertiary level teachers in China focusing on language teaching and assessment courses. The study showed that assessment and measurement issues received less attention in the training of the teachers. Fulcher (2012) conducted an internet survey study to find the assessment needs of language teachers. He used the results of the study for the design of new teaching materials. The contributions made by the study provide empirically derived content for AL and uncover the methodological problems with existing surveys.

In the Iranian context, English language teaching and English literature graduates have a two credit course of language assessment when they do their BA, and when doing their MA in teaching English as a foreign language, they have another two credit language assessment course. Because the materials covered in such courses like Farhady, Birjandi and Jafarpur's (1994) and Jafarpur's (2000) are mostly outdated and the time limitations, the practical aspects of language assessment are left to the teachers themselves. It is highly necessary to know about the status of assessment literacy of language teachers when they are in service and practice English language teaching. As far as our review of the literature is concerned, there is no study devoted to the assessment of AL of English language teachers using a qualitative method. This study is to answer the following research question:

What is the status of AL of Iranian English teachers at public high schools and language institutes?

2. Method

This study used a qualitative method to approach the AL of Iranian language teachers because of its exploratory standpoint. It aimed to delve deeply to the assessment related issues from the perspectives of language teachers and shed more light on the blind spots of assessment practices through the vantage point of those directly responsible for bridging the gap between high level decision makers and language learners and their parents.

2.1. Participants

Since the study was to explore the AL status of English language teachers from two language teaching milieus, public high schools and English language institutes who lived and worked in Sari, a city in the north of Iran, convenient sampling was used. All the participants had more than five years of service in an English as a foreign language context including ten language teachers working for the ministry of education, three BA holders, four MA students and three MA holders. Of ten teachers selected from Simin, Iran, Shokuh and Kish English language institutes, there were three BA holders, three MA students and four MA holders. Ten participants were male and 10 were female.

2.2. Instruments

To operationalize the concept of AL, some major concepts and assessment themes needed to be chosen from different studies. The main body of the AL instrument was extracted from Popham's (2009) considerations of the components of AL professional programs (items 1 to 11), McNamara and Roever's (2006) and Inbar-Lourie's (2008) concerns for social considerations of AL (item 12) and Shohamy's (2001, b) concept of democratic assessment (item 14). Brookhart's (2011) provides the idea behind giving feedback on students' work (item 13). Based on the mentioned works, we came to the interview questions each of which is allocated the themes of AL. Table 1. illustrates the major concepts of AL used in our study.

Table 1

Major Concepts of AL

1.Reliability of assessments
2.Validity evidence
3.Assessment bias
4.Construction and development of selection and construction tests
5.Scoring constructed-response test items
6.Developing alternative assessments
7.Formative assessment, and its procedures
8.Interpretation of students" performance on standardized tests
9.Assessing students with disabilities
10.High-stakes test preparation
11.The effect of test on teaching quality
12.Social consequences of test results

13.Giving feedback after assessment
14.Students' involvement in test construction

This study used two instruments; one was the pre-interview checklist which was in the format of a questionnaire. All of the AL concepts covered in the interview session were included in the checklist. Participants answered the items by showing their familiarity or unfamiliarity with the concepts. The responses ranged from mostly familiar to mostly unfamiliar concepts from the perspective of the participants. The second instrument was a semi-structured interview which was the major instrument which lasted half an hour including 14 concepts taken from the literature covering all the concepts of AL.

2.3. Data Collection

The interview was conducted by firstly making an arrangement with the participants, and making them sure about the purpose of the research and meeting the principles of confidentiality and anonymity. After arranging a time for the interview, the interviewer first started with pre-interview questionnaire to give the informants a picture of language AL and a self- assessment chance which also gave some clues to the interviewer of how to approach some questions. If the participants were not knowledgeable in some parts, those parts were illustrated in the pre-interview checklist to be reported in the analysis section. If the hints given related to unknown issues did not work to help the participants, those items were not included in the interview questions. An ice breaking question was raised firstly by asking the participants talk about their educational background to make the interview move towards the AL questions.

2.4. Data Analysis

The interviews were recorded. After recording the interviews, they were transcribed firstly manually and then typed to be analyzed. The transcript was read time and again to make the researchers familiar with the transcript and the ideas as much as possible, and to find the recurrent meaning units while using the left-hand margin to make notes on what was thought-provoking or noteworthy about what the participants said, and then the major themes were extracted from the data. A preliminary analysis of the transcript was conducted by reading it through for three times to get a general sense of the data and mark the issues of importance, then the data were analyzed manually. The transcript went through reduction process to reduce the data into themes by content analysis technique. Transcript data relevant to every assessment concept were categorized into a different file to find the general themes by considering the data transcript line by line and to figure out general recurring themes. A summary of the most important and recurring points was prepared for each theme and then the general the results were drawn from the transcript data.

3. Results and Discussion

In this section, the most recurrent themes found through the interview are presented in a concept by concept fashion.

3.1. Reliability of assessments

The participants' familiarity with the reliability was 78.75 obtained out of self-assessment checklist. Reliability was not known by some of the participants. When the definition was given to them, they said because they did not make tests, they did not need such a concept. This was the case with most language institute teachers in which the teachers did not make tests and used premade tests sent by the central branch of the institute to all other branches. Language teachers working for educational organization are also limited to the assessment framework and sample tests sent by educational organization.

Because the teachers are not involved in test construction process, they are not practically aware of the philosophy behind reliability and its importance. Although Iranian language assessment books met the concept of reliability in a very thorough way, the output of the study did not show a satisfactory knowledge base regarding the participants' familiarity with assessment reliability.

To support his lack of concern regarding the reliability issues, a participant (All participants' names are pseudonyms.) said that human being was not an object to be counted by mathematical formulas:

> *I don't like the mathematical parts and things related to numbers. And I think since language teaching is something related to human beings, numbers would not be the right criteria by which we assess the human beings' performance (Elham).*

This shows that the concept of reliability was reduced to only mathematical formula. As the literature showed reliability knowledge is in the realm of professionals and it is the fruit of the professionalism in language assessment (Taylor, 2009).

Among those who reported they were familiar with the concept of reliability, some could not remember the definition, when the definition was given; they mentioned that they did not need it because the educational office did not want them to have a report of the reliability of tests scores. Among those who were able to define reliability just one aspect of the concept was considered i.e. the consistency of the test scores across different administrations. They pointed out that reliability is time consuming, it is a complicated process and practically they are not able to do it. *To tell you the truth we don't have time to do this (Saleh).*

Mentions were made by some participants of the accessibility of reliable and standardized tests in the internet which could be used for classroom uses. The following excerpt shows that reliability is a fixed concept and it can be transferred from an assessment setting to another one which is not acceptable.

> *I tried to use some standardized forms of tests for at least some tests are not approved by other test takers and mostly because nowadays we have access to so many websites preparing reliable tests which would easily elicit responses from the students I think is something easy I try to use the web to stick to this concept (Reza).*

Popham (2003) considered assessment reliability as consistency which has three shapes: stability consistency, internal consistency and alternate form consistency. The participants were familiar with the first variant of the concept of reliability meaning stability of the scores. No sign of obtaining reliability was seen in the context of the study. Considering the importance of all of these three components of reliability and their function in determining the effectiveness of the tests, participants of the study did not have sufficient knowledge of the concept.

3.2. Validity Evidence

73.75 percent was the score obtained by the participants for their familiarity with the concept of validity and its different kinds. The participants considered a test valid when the test measures the content in a suitable way, and they were not familiar with different sources of validity. Raha while defining validity mentioned that it is "easier than reliability. According to the content, its content validity will be determined". The following excerpts show the common understanding of the concept of validity in the sample:

> *The exam covers things we teach during the term, the grammatical points, and vocabularies we teach in the class … the same things will occur in the final exam (Maryam). I try to use premade tests to increase the validity of the tests in class (Raha).*

The participants reported that they were not asked to prepare validity evidence of the tests results by the authorities. They saw validity as an important issue but it was not their concern in the educational settings they were working. Teachers were not involved in the testing process by the educational systems they worked and validation was not a requirement in the educational programs. Maryam indicated this problem by saying “in our education unfortunately we don’t use validity, to be honest”. Hossein mentioned that the content is the main focus of the educational authorities in public schools and continued that “They emphasize that the test content should be of the same type as the content of the books. They ask teachers but practically it is not done.”

Fulcher (2010), following in the footsteps of Messick (1989), defines validity as the soundness of the inferences made on the basis of test scores. He considers validation as an ongoing process indicating that scores are suitable and relevant to the decisions. There are three types of validity evidence in the literature: criterion-related evidence, construct related evidence, and content-related evidence (Popham, 2003). Regarding the concept of validity, the participants mostly reduced the concept of validity to content-related validity evidence, and they saw tests valid but not the inferences made based on the test. This problem is related to their lack of test making chances for language institute teachers and making tests based on the previous sample tests, and other easily accessible test papers by public school language teachers. Similarly, school and language institute authorities do not ask a report of validation argument.

3.3. Assessment Bias

The score obtained by the participants was 38.75 when they assessed themselves regarding their familiarity with assessment bias. Most of the participants were not familiar with the concept of assessment bias. When the definition was given, about half of them said that they did not do anything to remove assessment bias because the tests were pre-made and they could not do anything about the test construction phase. Some mentioned they did not see these issues in their experience, would construct multiple choice items which were more bias-free from their perspective than construction tests, did not pay attention to these issues, were not familiar with the ways of removing these problems or were not familiar with these issues.

Some participants saw power bias, relationship bias and disciplinary related bias. Power bias refers to the effect of powerful people on the results of assessment practices. Sima mentioned that the manager of the school put pressure on her to help one of the students pass the course; Reza said that social relationship caused some students got better scores, and he “was not able to say no” to the request of the others asking him about giving higher scores to some failing students. Other participants pointed to disciplinary related bias meaning that the problem students were punished by lowering their final examination scores. Bias refers to the differences made in the results of tests by factors other than tests themselves. No mention was made for bias review in item selection, test takers' social, racial and ethical characteristics. The assessment bias concept among the participants was mostly about after testing bias which is also important but as Fulcher (2010) points out the items should be checked before the administration of the tests. For the test items not to be offensive, discriminating among the testees not because of knowledge required for the test but because of unjust or unfair attitude taken in the test items. In Iranian language testing books (Farhady, Birjandi & Jafarpur, 1994; Jafarpur, 2000) no mention was made for assessment bias while the issue is of critical importance.

3.4. Construction and Development of Selection and Construction Tests

Self-assessment showed 76.25 percent of the participants' familiarity with the development of selection item types like True/ False, multiple choice, fill in the blanks and matching items and knew how to construct constructed response items like short answer and essay type items for language skills.

Participant teachers can be divided into three categories: those who must construct tests and really construct tests, those who must make tests but do not construct tests, and those who must not to make tests. The first group includes public school teachers who must construct tests. Some of the participants told that they always made tests on the basis of students' levels, the objectives and content of the books, and the criteria they have in their minds. Different item types were used by this group of the participants. The following excerpts were reports of the participants of this group:

> *We have some criteria in our mind the chapters covered, the book contents, the timing. I always make tests for my class according the students' level, and my teaching (Hadi). I use multiple choice, true/false items, matching, fill in the blanks. In my opinion a teacher should use all of them. In this way students are evaluated better …(Atefeh).*

The second group's members said that they were limited by the circulars sent by the educational organization imposing the format, item types and weights of different test parts. Consequently, they sheltered on the test papers of the previous years, one participant said they made a few modifications, one or two items are removed, the other participant mentioned that low testing knowledge made the teachers not construct tests and use the tests of other teachers.

Just the label of the tests is changed, Khordad (the final educational year exam date) becomes Shahrivar (the summer exam date) the same test is used again. Teachers don't even look at the tests items (Akbar).

The third group is made up of the participants who work in English language institutes who are not to construct tests because the institute administers tests sent by the central branches of the institutes using premade tests to assess the learning of the students so they did not do anything with respect to test construction issues. Popham (2003) divided classroom test construction into three steps: teacher's determining the instructional decision to be made by tests, identifying test-based inferences to support the decisions going to be made, and constructing tests which bring forth valid inferences. Participant teachers who constructed tests can practically be involved in the first two steps. With regard to language teachers working in the language institutes who do not make tests, the AL status will be endangered because of not having the chance of constructing the tests. This is the case with public school language teachers who do not construct tests and will not enjoy the three steps mentioned above in their assessment practices which are highly helpful for their professional development (Brindley, 2001).

3.5. Scoring Constructed-Response Test Items

The checklist showed 82.50 percent of the participants' familiarity with scoring constructed-response test items. The interview showed that the participants mainly focused on the formal aspects of the students' production. The criteria they had in their mind for the students' production like speaking and writing were pronunciation, intonation, vocabulary, grammatical structures and accuracy of what the students produce. They mostly focused on errors and mistakes in formal aspects of the language. Babak did the scoring of students' production of language "according to their intonation, fluency, accuracy, pronunciation they are natural parts of speaking". Mina asked himself three questions while the students acted out a dialogue: "How do they act out the dialogue? Do they act it out correctly quickly, fluently? How do they pronounce the words?" Only two participants mentioned that they focus on communicative aspects of the students' production. Saleh put this in the following way showing the movement beyond formal features of language to deal with discourse level features:

We have some key concepts like in writing we have task response, cohesion, coherence, vocabulary, grammar, some elements are provided to evaluate some students' performance.

Another noteworthy point mentioned by participants was paying attention to the level of the students; based on their level, the teachers expected the students to produce language. The student's background knowledge and the school context also play important parts in their language production. In response to how she scored the students' construction, Borzoo answered

> *It depends on the school you teach showing a picture to strong students and asking them: What it is, they may laugh at you but in other schools if they actually say what it is, I get happy. It depends on their level. The students who don't go to language institutes depend on just these two hour classes in a week.*

Bachman and Palmer (1996) and Douglas (2000) put forward a general taxonomy of the components of language ability composed of grammatical knowledge or knowledge of the fundamental building blocks of language, textual knowledge or knowledge of these building blocks to form coherent texts, functional knowledge or knowledge about how a language is used to accomplish a variety of functions and sociolinguistic knowledge or knowledge about how to use language appropriately in different social settings. The above mentioned taxonomy provides a framework for scoring constructed response items by language teachers and raters. The participants were mostly preoccupied with the first level of the taxonomy that is while scoring the spoken or written production of their students, they pay much attention to grammatical knowledge of the students in their speaking and writing performance. Only two participants mentioned that in their judgement about speaking or writing ability of their students paid attention to their communicative abilities which is in the second level meaning the functional knowledge and textual knowledge like coherence and cohesion. Ignoring higher level knowledge evaluation of the students' performance rings an alarming bell for assessment practices of the participants of the study. No participant considered the knowledge level above grammatical and textual knowledge.

3.6. Alternatives in Assessment

Alternatives in assessment methods including portfolio assessment, performance assessment, peer-assessment and self- assessment was the concept were areas that only 9 participants wanted to talk about. The results of for each kind of assessment come below. The least familiar assessment concept based on the checklist was portfolio assessment from the perspective of the participants. Only 36.35 percent of the participants were familiar with the portfolio assessment. In the interviews, portfolio assessment was not defined in a complete and sound way except for three participants. The definition of portfolio assessment was not given by the participants, and when they were provided with the definition, the following limitations for not applying the portfolio assessment were mentioned by the participants. They mentioned that because of time limitations in their classes, it was not possible for them to apply portfolio assessment even though they know it is a valuable assessment type, for instance Mina said: ‘I like to do this because I understand it is very useful and fruitful. But of course we don’t have enough time to do this in the classroom’. The participants put the blame on the students by saying that because students are not that active, using portfolio was not suitable in their contexts of teaching. Raha put the problem in this way “among 30 students in a class, five to ten students work with interest the other students don’t have motivation to learn anything. They don’t do their homework …” It was mentioned by some participants that portfolio assessment had no room in their teaching and assessment practices of the systems that they work.

Some participants considered portfolio assessment useful but inapplicable because of the reasons provided before. Other participants had a reduced definition of portfolio assessment in their practice. Two participants mentioned that they ask the students to write compositions “in every session or in every other session” but did not look at it “in the course of time” (Elham) and the students’ products were limited to that session. Another participant, after he was provided with the complete definition of the concept, mentioned that “I give the students some topics to write but I don’t gather them in a file” (Zeinab). Genesee and Upshur (1996, p.99) defined portfolio assessment as a purposeful collection of students” work that demonstrates their efforts, progress and achievements in given areas”. According to Gottleib (1995), portfolio has six attributes: collecting, reflecting, assessing, documenting, linking, and evaluating. The participants were mostly unfamiliar with this concept; in the case of those who were familiar, the definitions were limited to the collection of the students’ work not in the passage of time. Attributes of portfolio assessment were not known by the participants. In Iranian language testing training system, alternatives in assessment have not been introduced in language testing courses in BA level. The participants claimed that up to 62.5 percent they were familiar with performance assessment. Performance assessment was also an unfamiliar concept to most participants regarding the technical sense of the concept;some considered it as the class activities done by the students in the flow of the teaching session; some looked at the concept as an outside of the class activity or project.

> *I give them some topics. They research on it. I want them to find something new which is relevant to the books. They write it and some of them, if they want, talk about it (Asad).*

Fulcher (2010) defines performance tests as tests in which test takers are required to perform tasks that are shown on related tasks; in language learning contexts the tasks usually require the test takers to speak or write. Regarding the concept of the task which should be a real life like activity, no sign of a sound definition of performance assessment was found in the study. Performance was reduced to two productive language skills, speaking and writing by some participants. Some participants point to the limited activities in the classroom which make students act out as performance assessment but these activities are far from the real essence of the performance assessment defined above. The score obtained out of the checklist for the familiarity of the participants with peer assessment was 43.75 percent. The interviews showed that peer assessment was not mostly used in the classes of the participants, if used, it was deemed as group work at the service of teaching not assessment or doing the classroom question and answer by the students, giving feedback to each other on the part of the students about their own progress.

> *It is group work we use it most of the time in written and oral activities. We ask them to talk together most of the time for short stories a group of five students and the other group another story a different story they have time to read the story and each group clarifies the story for each other (Sobhan).*

Although the participants assessed their familiarity with the self- assessment concept up to 68.75, the interview revealed that self -assessment was not paid much attention by the participants. A few participants mentioned that they apply self-assessment in their practices. Practically speaking, the concept of self-assessment was seen as giving the students their own papers by telling “them to go home and mark their own pieces of paper” (Zeinab). One of the participants indicated that he did not use self-assessment because of students’ cheating; *To be honest, I don’t do this because of cheating of the students (Elham). Sometimes they want to cheat (Karim).*

Asking students to assess themselves and their peers are assessment practices which are at the service of learning. Fulcher (2010) informs the readers that self-and peer assessment work well when the teachers take time to train the students how to assess themselves and their equals. Keeping these points in our mind, we find that peer and self-assessment was not fully understood by the teachers in our study and those who are familiar did not know the procedures that should be followed in these assessment techniques.

3.7. Formative Assessment

The participants' self- assessment score was 83.75 percent according to the pre-interview checklist. The participants' viewpoints of formative assessment can be categorized into three groups:

a) classroom activities for learning like memorizing and acting out dialogues, giving a summary of the dialogues or the reading passage in the class, asking questions and giving responses during the class, students' performance during the class, written tasks which are at the service of the students' learning were found in this category. b) test-based class work was thought by some participants could meet formative assessment objectives. They administered mini-tests for each part that they taught written exams for the covered part and the whole unit covered. Some administered quizzes of four skills. Some had speaking assessment in the classroom. Challenges: Some participant teachers said that they did not pay attention to the classroom assessment scores for the final exam report; Sima put it in the following way:

> *I don't pay attention to classroom scores I want just to put them in the class notebook and make the students active but in the final I don't pay attention to them at all and most of the time the students turn against me for this.*

Milad believed that the class time does not allow the teachers to have formative assessment. He said *the class time is not enough. It should be at least four hours a week*. Popham (2011, p. 5) defines formative assessment as "a planned process in which assessment elicited evidence of students' status is used by teachers to adjust their ongoing instructional procedures or by students to adjust their current learning tactics". According to Popham's (2008) classroom assessment framework, the following procedures are followed: students 'learning progressions, teachers' instructional adjustments, student's leaning tactic adjustments, and classroom climate shift and school wide implementation.

In the present study, classroom assessment was devoted to the classroom activities done by the students and tests administered during the course and participant teachers did not deem classroom assessment as an important part of the class time. The main responsibility of the participants are covering different parts of the book in a period of time without finding the evidence related to the progression of the students and adjusting their teaching methods to the learning tactics of the learners. Classroom assessment is mainly a learning means not a testing device but it was considered as a testing tool to measure the learning of the students. Formative assessment was not taken into consideration as an important means for students' assessment report by the teachers, so the sad fact is that students do not pay much attention to this assessment technique.

3.8. Interpretation of Students' Performance on Standardized Tests

The pre-interview checklist showed that the participants' familiarity with the interpretation of students' performance on standardized tests was 62.50 percent. Regarding the interpretation of the scores, the interview revealed that different teachers related to the settings that they worked, answered differently. In some institutes the report card was given to the students to be aware of the scores and the interpretation of the score was also included in the report card. Some participants who worked on the IELTS just interpreted their scores by means of the IELTS interpretation form, and the public school teachers provided the students with their interpretation of the scores ranging from zero to 20, and they attributed some descriptors to the students according to these scores. At institutes the score ranged from 0 to 100, and at schools it ranged from 0 to 20. The participants mostly said that they provided the students with the interpretation of their scores in the feedback session. Popham (2009) explains that since students' performance is of great importance to their teachers and their parents, teachers must have a good grasp of the most commonly used techniques to report the students' scores of standardized tests and give the meaning of the score and its components parts. With regard to giving the meaning of the scores, all the participants mentioned that they gave the meaning of the scores to the students and tell them which score range is good, which score range is acceptable and which score range is not acceptable. In the score report of the institutes the scores of each component parts of the final report were given.

3.9. Assessing Students with Disabilities

In their self-assessment the participants scored their familiarity with the assessment of the students with disabilities 47.50 which was low. The interviews showed that most of the participants weren't familiar with the assessment of the students with disabilities. Among those who had the experience of having these types of the students; they tried to help them by their own intuition. They did not go through any type of training or even they did not have even a hint in their training period or university studies of this type of assessment. In response to the question that whether they had had courses relevant to the assessment with disabilities, Ali replied "*no never. Students with disabilities were never the topic of studies*".

The point worthy of mention is that most of the participants had students with disabilities but they did not know how to cope with this problem. They tried by means of trial and error to be of help for the disabled. Reza who had a visually impaired student, said that “teaching those students depends heavily on how emotional the teacher is. You feel some sort of being compassionate and you say this guy is visually-impaired; you need to be a bit lax about this student”. The other participants mentioned that they gave specific materials to these kinds of students. Atefeh who was a public school teacher had a visually impaired student. She said it was her first experience and it was difficult to help that specific student while all the students are able to see and tried to adapt her style of teaching to an audio mode. Although most assessment issues serve all types of the students, some considerations must be taken in the case of students with disabilities to meet their needs. Fulcher (2010) dealt with the issue of assessing the students with disabilities under the issue of administering the tests. He advises that all disabilities should be considered, ranging from the most common ones like visual and hearing deficiencies to “dyslexia, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and physical disabilities” (p. 263). He puts forward the following recommendations:-additional testing time, additional rest breaks, reader (to read text or instructions), audio, amanuensis (provision of a person to write answers), sign language interpreter, Braille test/writer, printed copy of spoken instructions, large print/screen magnifier, additional space or special furniture, omission of one or more parts of the test, small group or single test administration (p.263). Although the participants had students with disabilities, were not familiar with the issue of assessing students with disabilities, and it is completely ignored in the language testing books.

3.10. The Effect of Test on Teaching Quality

The score obtained by the participants in their self-assessment for their familiarity with the effect of test on teaching was 70 percent. Testing was seen by the most participants as a means, by which they learned how to teach, understood which parts of the materials needed more emphases and deserved more attention and time, change their teaching strategies towards the objectives of the assessment, felt that they teach for real life as it happened in the case of an institute teacher who prepared the learners for IELTS:

> *Since I turned to be an IELTS professional, I came to the conclusion that how effective teaching could be as far as students’ life is concerned (Adel).*

Some participants looked at the issue of the effect of testing on teaching from the results' angle. They mentioned that if assessment results are desirable, it will show our teaching was successful, we were effective in our job, and we were of use for our learners. Some saw the results from the lens of the learners saying that if they had good scores, they would make progress and get motivated to continue their learning route as the following excerpt shows:

… if the student gets a good score, she wants to continue and be encouraged to study better, so that is the effect (Zeinab).

Other participants thought that by means of assessment they could see the weak points and strengths of their learners and could find out which areas need more time and practice and which areas need to be taught again. Assessment gives the teacher "the weakness and the strengths of the students. They try to look at those parts and see which parts need more work on their part and students need more help (Maryam)". Washback or backwash refers to the influence of testing on teaching and learning (Alderson & Wall, 1993), and has become an increasingly prevalent and prominent phenomenon in education-"what is assessed becomes what is valued, which becomes what is taught" (McEwen, 1995, p. 42). Fulcher (2010,p. 277) listed a number of questions set out by Alderson and Wall's (1993) "washback hypothesis" showing a test influences what teachers teach, how teachers teach, what learners learn, how learners learn, the rate and sequence of teaching, the rate and sequence of learning, and the attitudes to the content, method, etc. of teaching and learning. The study showed that the same is the case with the participants of the study and it was in line with the ideas illustrated above showing that assessment knowledge of the teachers and their teaching efficiency go hand in hand.

3.11. High-Stakes Test Preparation

Most participants prepared the students for high stakes tests while they were teaching by a variety of ways to make students familiar with the test items and help them to become successful in their examinations. They did so by providing the students with as many premade test items as possible, choosing some test items relevant to the specific lessons they teach, highlighting on points which were among the most frequent test items in recent years' university entrance examinations, giving information to make the students familiar with the procedures and the content of high stake tests, devoting time to prepare students to cope with test items, and using a series of workbooks to cover the content and test items. The following excerpts are indicators of them:

I pay a lot of attention to university entrance exams in grade 3 and 4 of the high schools …While teaching I point out to the students that this is the point that has most frequently been among the final exam test items. While teaching I will tell them which items are the most frequent ones in recent years. I try to tell the students all the key points necessary for university entrance exams (Ali). … because we are quite familiar with the concepts of IELTS from day one, we focus on the materials and the procedures we work on to end into students' success (Karim).

Some participants directly did not work on high stakes tests but indirectly gave the students information and strategies of test preparation if asked, or they tried by teaching English well help the students for high stakes test preparation.

there are high school students here. They have to take university entrance exam. I said your vocabulary knowledge is under the specific level you should try to improve it. I introduce them some books like Oxford Word Skills or some other vocabulary books to improve their vocabulary knowledge. Actually, I don't have to focus on those skills (Hasan).

The main concern of the teacher was improving the students' general English proficiency. In this regard, Maryam said:

The priority is to teach them general English I don't know whether they can use it in IELTS, TOEFL or university Entrance Exams. Maybe they learn English to waste their time to spend their time, maybe they have some bigger goals I don't know. But I do my best to teach them good English (Maryam).

Other participants don't take care of the high stakes tests because they teach low level students. According to Popham (2009), the pressure of making the students get the best scores on high-stake tests cause teachers to use inappropriate test-preparation practices. In Iran there are two types of teachers, those who are involved in the private university entrance test preparation courses and ordinary teachers who are involved in teaching in public schools and language institutes without an eye to private teaching. Private teachers do whatever they can to make students pass the university entrance exams at the price of gaining large amounts of money. The participants of this study were not private teachers but they had some concerns for high-stakes tests in their teaching. The participant teachers who worked in language institutes devote no attention to high-stakes tests except for those who taught for IELTS courses. Public school teachers paid attention to high stakes tests when needs arise and do their best to make students familiar with the test items and the areas which are the sources of the questions but time limitation does not allow them to meet all the issues raised in high-stakes tests. In Iran it is the job of commercial teachers to prepare the students for university entrance exams for BA, MA and even PhD preparation courses.

3.12. Social Consequences of Test Results

The score obtained out of pre-interview for the familiarity of the participants with the social consequences of language testing was 58.75. The consideration of the social consequences of assessment results from the viewpoints of the participants can be categorized into three main categories: societal consequences, financial consequences and psychological consequences. Participants' ideas pointed that assessment results were affected by the family members of the students and their behavior towards the students' scores, the members of the class behavior's towards the other members on the basis of their scores, and the influence of managers of schools and educational authorities over the result of the scores could change the consequences of assessment. Three excerpts below indicate each of these factors respectively:

> *I am influenced by the conditions of the students. I had a case the one of the student's father beat her daughter in a way that her body got livid and the same student got a failing mark in the final exam. I wondered what to do because the last time she was beaten badly and she felt very bad. I tried to help her by raising the score of her class assessment. Unfortunately we have a lot of students of divorced families I think of these consequences on the basis of evidence and conditions (Borzoo).*
>
> *You know actually in my classes I try to announce the marks individually not publicly because I don't want to make some students sad or others may make fun of them when they get a bad mark. I say it is your mark look at your paper and get it back to me (Raha).*
>
> *To be honest, the educational organization puts pressure on the teachers who give bad marks, to the students and the school masters (Hossein).*

Participants considered the financial consequences of assessment results to be very great. These consequences were seen from both happy and sad sides. From the happy side, they said if the students passed the exams, their future life and education would be easier, and they would communicate with foreigners well, on the other hand they would become sad as a result of assessment, their life would be endangered, and their family could not support them financially to compensate for the failure.

> *When you speak of IELTS it means people's future or life because you are preparing them for that let' say challenge for business, job, education …. if they succeed they will get the*

kind of job they want, they have the best opportunity in their educational life. If they fail, there will be some drawbacks (Hasan).

Some students because of financial problems, of high tuition of the institute, some students say if I don't pass I won't go on (Mina).

The psychological consequences mentioned in the words of some participants by saying that the assessment results could have distressing consequences as well as joyful outcomes.

Tests can be devastating sometime …(Elham).

If the students get good scores, I think they want to continue and to study better they will be encouraged to study better, so that is the effect (Zeinab).

Test interpretation and use have intended and unintended social consequences (Messick, 1989). McNamara (1996) also holds the view that "High priority needs to be given to the collection of evidence about the intended and unintended effects of assessments on the ways teachers and students spend their time and think about the goals of education" (p. 22). It is the job of the test constructers to search for the intended and unintended consequences of test results. When the test results are announced, one of the burdens of the test takers is to answer the relatives, friends and classmates' questions about his or her score. It has a positive effect when the result is good, but when the result is not acceptable, it can create lots of social problems. Most families spend high sums of money on the language education of their siblings, this expenditure will be worthwhile when the test results show success and it will be futile when the test results show the failure. With regard to psychological problems, if there is no force outside to endanger the calm of a failed test-taker, internal pressures will come to the scene to make him or her gloomy.

3.13. Giving Feedback after Assessment

The participants' familiarity with the concept of giving feedback after assessment from their own perspective was 78.75. The participants gave feedback to the students after the final examination or written tests by different techniques like checking the scores of the students, doing all the items in the session after the examination day, giving the interpretation of the students' scores, helping the students to find their weak points and strengths, and doing some of the most problematic test items for the students. In response to the question: "Do you give feedback to the students after assessment?" two of the participants answered:

Of course I do it but after the test we will cover some of the items that were hard for the learners but in classroom activities no (Hadi).

Yes, we talk about the questions that most of the students answered wrongly; we understand that there is something wrong with this. So you can teach again that part or give them more examples about that part. This is feedback (Hasan).

Having a face to face oral feedback about the performance of the learners in the session was seen in one of the participant's response showing he used feedback as a result of formative assessment. Saleh said "*mostly my feedback devoted to actual face to face speaking*". Some participants mentioned that they did not provide the students with feedback because they did not have time to devote on feedback in the classrooms, they had large classes of 30 or more students which made it difficult to have feedback individually, the parents want to increase the scores of their kids and they don't have any concern for their children's learning, they did not give feedback after the final examination since they did not have the chance to meet the students; they give feedback if one of the students want them to do so. In this regard, Atefeh said *"but believe me having a class once a week it is impossible to do all testing and giving feedback and teaching"*. Hossein mentioned that *"after each test I work the test paper in the first term we can do it but in the second term it is not possible"*.

Effective teacher feedback on student work is typically descriptive and includes comments on the task per se and the process used to do the task (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). According to Brookhart (2011), effective teacher feedback provides the students with information about their work using the criteria for good work that were expressed as part of their learning targets and shared with students. Effective formative feedback is elaborated but not too complex, is specific to the work, avoids general praise, and is different for different learners (Shute, 2008). There is considerable work required to be able to write (or speak, for oral feedback) feedback well. For many, writing good feedback amounts to communicating in a new genre, and as with any complex skill, writing clear and effective feedback requires much practice. Teachers' intentions for their feedback sometimes are not realized in their actual comments to students (Lee, 2009).

The participants provided feedback after final examinations in language institutes and there was no room for providing feedback after the final examination in public schools. Their feedback was mostly choral and for all the students of the class and was devoted to answering the questions of the test for the students or providing the students with the responses of the most problematic areas. All of the techniques of giving feedback were after the formal assessment sessions and oral while no case of written feedback were told to be provided to the students.

3.14. Students' Involvement in Test Construction

The participants' familiarity with the concept of students' involvement in test construction was 55 percent. Most of the participants believed that it is not good to involve the students in test construction. They thought that there is no place for the students involvement in Iranian assessment culture which is teacher-centered in public schools and the institute-centered in English language institutes which doesn't allow language teachers to make tests in a situation in which the teachers were not powerful enough to make tests, it is far from possible to involve the students in the test construction process. Maryam said "*unfortunately it has no place in Iran. Kids usually like to have multiple choice items as teachers we cannot rely on the students*". Zeinab believed *that "because our tests are premade, there is no place for the involvement of the students in test construction and also in test scoring. I am not sure about their capability to make tests"*.

Some considered students incapable of constructing tests because they are not able to make tests, hence endangering the quality of the tests, they are not capable of item selection, and they use mostly multiple choice items which are easy to cheat, the students cannot come to a unanimous decision over item types and content coverage leading to assessment chaos and ultimately to unfairness, the students are not able to take into account cultural, pedagogical and affective factors in test construction. The following excerpt is one of those remarks:

> *It is not possible to involve the students a lot. Unless you have an eye on their culture, background and interests and include them in the tests, they don't have anything to do with item selection if I do this, we cannot meet our goals and the students cannot come to a unanimous decision about the items types and the items and this leads into chaos. If we do this some students think that the teacher commits injustices (Hasan).*

Some participants favored an indirect sort of student involvement in test construction by using the students' tests for class activities, getting their choice of test types and scoring systems, and making use of their mistakes in test items. Although some deemed the idea of involving the students in assessment process a good one, with regard to its practice, there was no sign in the data. Looking at language assessment from a democratic perspective, Shohamy (2001, b) pointed out that tests are designed by authorities as a means of discipline and a hidden means of manipulating educational systems and enforcing the plans of those in authority. She suggests principles for democratic assessment, one of which is "the need to conduct and administer testing in collaboration and in cooperation with those tested (P.376)". She criticized the test-takers' weak place in language assessment content selection and decision making, and the interests of those in power over the content and practices of assessment. This study showed that the assessment culture in Iran is a centralized, authority dominated practice in which teachers don't have much to do, let alone the students. Teachers in language institutes are not responsible for test construction and language teachers in public schools are limited to the guidelines provided by the educational offices to construct test on the basis of the framework provided to them by the educational offices in a centralized fashion. Practically for classroom practices the teachers tried to involve the students but not for the final examinations.

4. Conclusion, Implications and Limitations

AL status of English teachers studied in this research showed that some issues like assessment bias, validity evidence, assessment reliability, alternatives in assessment, formative assessment, assessing students with disabilities, social consequences of assessment results, and students' involvement are the most problematic areas for English language teachers. These issues were not covered in language testing materials widely used in Iranian universities which are responsible for providing the assessment materials for would-be language teachers. Issues like construction of selection and construction tests, scoring constructed response test items, interpretation of students' performance, high-stakes test preparation, the effect of testing on teaching, giving feedback to the students are issues which are familiar to the participants but their familiarity with these issues was not sufficient at both theoretical and practical level. Language assessment practices of the participants uncover most of the problems which Iranian teachers cope with and showed that language assessment issues should be included in the in-service training programs because AL is a matter of professional development. Language assessment material developers can gain insights from this study to cover the problematic issues in their assessment issues and they need to bridge the gap of AL for English teachers. Language institutes need to provide language teachers the chance to construct the tests to reap the fruits of AL. Validation and reliability of assessment need to be taken seriously by the educational systems and teachers need to be asked for validation and reliability of test result reports. Some social issues were uncovered by this study which needs to be met by teachers, parents and policy makers. Because this study did not cover a wide range of the participants as its sample and did not have participants from a wider range of Iran, the findings are not generalizable. This study invites other studies with quantitative and/ or mixed methods design to reveal other hidden parts of the issue of AL and needs to be replicated in other contexts to shed more lights on the assessment problems. Future researchers can gain insights from the present study for further researches.

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ELT in State and Payam-e-Noor Universities: Language Learners' and Instructors' Perspectives on Speaking

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Abstract

In Iran, there are two major kinds of universities: State and non-state ones. Payam-e-Noor University is one of the latter types, and in fact a large number of language learners study English at these universities in order to develop their proficiency especially speaking skill. Since Iranian language learners do not have access to a situation except the classroom setting to speak English, the present study is designed to investigate the language learners' and instructors' perspectives on the presentation of speaking related courses in these two educational systems which in its own turn requires investigating *what* is presented and *how* is presented. To this end, 49 English language learners and four instructors from a Payam-e-Noor and a State university in Tehran were selected to take part in the study. Based on the students' scores on the Test of

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Spoken English, through a purposeful sampling, a semi-structured interview was conducted with some high and low proficient ones, and with their instructors. Some important results, based on students'/instructors' interviews (e.g., changing the methodology of teaching speaking courses, having up-dated books, decreasing the number of the students, taking decisions based on educational policy and students' needs) are discussed and some suggestions are provided.

Keywords: State University, Payam-e-Noor University, Communicative competence, Speaking ability, EFL, ELT

1. Introduction

There are different educational systems in Iran, admission to which is mostly based on the results of the National Entrance Examination (*Konkur*). The State and Payam-e-Noor University, as the main concerns of the present study, are two major types of universities with two different types of educational systems which have large acceptance of students for higher education. The purpose of both universities is to graduate students that will be teachers in the future. One of the basic prerequisites of such teachers is to be proficient enough in speaking to be able to convey their knowledge to their future students. Although the syllabus for TEFL students is the same in both universities, the system of presenting it is different because of the educational system. Since learners and instructors are the two major addressees in any educational system, there was an attempt to investigate the language learners'/instructors' perspective on the presentation of speaking related courses in these two educational systems which in its own turn requires investigating *what* is presented and *how* is presented in speaking related courses.

2. Review of Literature

2.1. Educational System in Iran

Education in Iran is highly centralized and it is divided into primary and higher education; the former includes Elementary, Middle (Guidance), and High school education, and the latter includes Bachelor, Master, and PhD degree (Rahnamai, 2004). Higher education is supervised by the Ministry of Science, Research and Technology which is in charge of educational planning, financing, administration, curriculum, and textbook development (Education in Iran, 2013).

In Iran, universities are divided into two main categories as the state and non-state universities. Based on this classification, there are several types of higher educational systems such as the State University as a state-run university, Azad, Private, Applied-scientific, and Payam-e-Noor University as the non-state universities (Aghazadeh, 2004). Admission to the university is based on the results of the National Entrance Examination (*Konkur*). The number of students who are willing to continue their higher education has increased, and admission to university remains extremely competitive and very difficult (Farhady, Sajadi-Hezaveh, & Hedayati, 2010). Therefore, some students attend the State Universities; others attend different kinds of non-state universities. Rasian (2009) declared that from 3.5 million university students in Iran in 2009, about 1 million were studying in Payam-e-Noor universities, 1.2 million in Azad universities, 0.5 million in Applied-Scientific universities, and the rest in the state-run universities.

As mentioned above, one of these non-state universities is Payam-e-Noor University (PNU), which is known as an Open and Distance Learning (ODL) or Long Distance University, with the headquarters based in Tehran (*Payam-e-Noor University*, 2013). PNU as a unique ODL institution, with many branches in Iran, was established in 1986 by the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution of Iran (SCCR) and enrolled the first group of students in September 1987 (Payam-e-Noor University, 2013). PNU, as a distance learning system in Iran, tries to achieve the objectives of higher education without the limitation of location and time, and provide opportunities for everyone to obtain higher education everywhere, and every time. “PNU is trying to create a significant learning system to be accompanied by the appropriate means for being sustainable, accessible, equitable, and of high quality” (Payam-e-Noor University, 2013, p. 4).

Schlosser and Simonson (2006) regarded distance education as “a generic, all-inclusive term used to refer to the physical separation of teachers and learners” (p. 65). Distance education or distance learning is a kind of educational system that focuses on teaching methods and technology with the aim of delivering teaching. In the relevant literature survey, it is observed that the terms *distance education*, *distance learning*, *distributed learning*, *correspondence education*, *virtual learning*, and *online learning* are used interchangeably while there are distinct differences between these terms. Daniel (1990) believed that in distance education, classroom sessions are not the primary means of education. Guri-rosnblit (2005) added “distance education is mostly homework, with occasional work in class; whereas conventional education is mostly classwork with occasional work at home” (p. 470).

With regard to the Iranian context, distance learning is classified into distance learning programs in virtual and conventional universities; in the former, all the necessary training is offered by the use of the internet, and in the latter the students can benefit a limited number of optional and face-to-face tutorials during the term (Payam-e-Noor University, 2013).

On the other hand, the State University is a state-run university whose policies and criteria are administered by the Supreme Council of Educations and Ministry of Science and Technology (Aghazadeh, 2004). These universities are divided into “first time/tuition free” and “second time/with tuition”; the former is supported by the state funds and are tuition free, but in the latter the students have to pay tuition (Education in Iran, 2015).Table 1 demonstrates the outstanding number of Payam e Noor University in comparison to others.

Table 1.
The Number of Universities in Iran

Universities & Educational Institutions Affiliated to the Ministry of Science	Higher Education Institutions Affiliated to the Ministry of Education	Higher Education Institutions Affiliated to other Executive Agencies	Payam-e-Noor University	University of Applied - Science	Private University	Azad University	Medical University & Colleges Affiliated to the Ministry of Health	Total
119	274	28	550	581	295	385	44	2276

The number of universities throughout the country up to 2011, (Ministry of Education, 2015)

The total number of universities throughout the country are about 2276 centers (up to 2011), among which Applied-Scientific has the most university centers, and then Payam-e-Noor University stands with the total number of 550 centers. In 2012, National Organization of Educational Testing Statistics reported the number of the accepted students in the State (including first time/tuition free& second time/with tuition) and Payam-e-Noor University. In the following table (Table 2) this information is illustrated in details:

Table 2.
The Number of Accepted Students at State & PNU

University	Foreign Language Major
State University (first time/tuition free	2664
State University (second time/ with tuition	944
Payam-e-Noor University	7074

The number of accepted students at the State & PNU in foreign language major (Iranian University Students News, 2015)

The statistics (Table 1 & 2) show PNU has gradually increased its population by having the largest share of acceptance comparing to the State universities. This is in line with increasing the number of the students for continuing their higher education.

There are some similarities and differences between these two types of educational systems. First of all, an academic year in both kinds of universities begins in September and academic year is divided into two terms (i.e., Autumn & Spring). The State University students spend more class hour instruction than PNU. In addition, participation in the class for some courses in PNU is optional, while there is a strict obligation to participate in the classroom for all courses in the State Universities except some limited and acceptable number of absences. Therefore, the State University students have the opportunity of receiving more instruction, classroom practice, and are more dependent on their instructors' instruction.

Instructors usually have freedom in practicing their syllabus, and courses are introduced by their option, thus different State Universities might have different books or instruction even for one course. But instruction in PNU is based on the same books that should be taught in all Payam-e-Noor Universities which are provided by the headquarters (Department of Social and Cultural Affairs of Payam-e-Noor University, 2013). On the one hand, PNU students sit in coordinated exams at all PNU study centers since there are specified sources for each course at each study field. On the other hand, the State University students participate in the specific exam, which is developed by their instructors at each university since there are different sources for each course.

The system of instruction in PNU is based on several mediums the most important of which is self-study textbooks developed for independent study. Therefore, as courses hold a limited number of optional tutorials during each term, there is a strict constrain for instructors' instruction; they should plan their instruction based on pre-determined books in limited class hours (Majidi & AbbasBandy, 2000). Ebrahim Zade and Heydari (2008) maintained that the educational system in Open and Distance Learning is learner-centered while it is teacher-centered in the State University.It seems that students in PNU have more freedom in their study time because they spend less time in the classroom and have more free time during a term. But PNU students should manage their study and find out strategies in order to cope with their study problems to compensate for the shortcoming of face-to-face class time.

The objective of this study was to explore Iranian English language learners' and instructors' perspectives on speaking in Payam-e-Noor and State Universities.For this aim, the study was mainly concerned with finding the answers to the following questions:

1. What are Iranian English language learners’ perspectives on speaking in Payam-e-Noor and State Universities?
2. What are Iranian English language instructors’ perspectives on speaking in Payam-e-Noor and State Universities?

3. Method

3.1. Participants

The participants of the present study were 49 B.A. English Literature students (from a State and a Payam-e-Noor University) among whom 10 students at each university, based on their TSE scores, were selected for the main analysis. The other participants of this study were four English language instructors, two from each of the universities (the State and Payam-e-Noor University).

3.1.1. Student Participants

Two groups of B.A. English Literature students were selected; one group of students at Payam-e-Noor University from Tehran (group 1) were at the end of the fourth term of their education, including 22 participants (20 females, 2 males, age range: 23 - 44 years) and the other group of students at the State university (group 2) were at the end of the third term of their education including 27 participants (27 females, age range: 19 - 38 years). The purpose behind this decision was to include the participants who had passed their speaking courses including Language Lab 1, Language Lab 2, and Oral Reproduction of Stories. It is worth mentioning that while Oral Reproduction of Stories was offered in the third term at the State University, it was in the fourth term at PNU.

3.1.2. Teacher Participatns

There were four female English language instructors (two from PNU and two from the State University) who taught the courses related to the speaking skill (i.e., Language Lab 1 & 2, and Oral Reproduction of Stories). One of the instructors at PNU had more than nine years of teaching experience at Applied-scientific and Payam-e-Noor University and had received her MA degree in Teaching English as a Foreign Language from Azad University of Tehran. The other one had more than eight years of teaching experience at Applied scientific, Azad, and Payam-e-Noor University and had received her MA degree in Linguistic from Azad University of Tehran. One of the instructors at the State University had 6 years of teaching experience at Applied-scientific, Azad University, and the State University and had received her PhD in

Teaching English as a Foreign Language from the State University. The other one had twenty years of teaching experience at the State Universities and also received her PhD in Teaching English as a Foreign Language from the State University.

3.2. Instrumentations

3.2.1. Test of Spoken English

In order to measure the students' speaking skill, the test of the TSE was administered. The questions were based on the TSE (Test of Spoken English) produced by TOEFL Program Services and Educational Testing Services, Princeton, NJ (2001). The primary purpose of this test is to measure the ability of non-native speakers of English to communicate orally. Each test-taker was given a score ranging from 20 to 60 according to the TSE scoring guide.TSE consists of 12 items, each of which requires examinees to perform a particular language function, such as narrating, recommending, persuading, and giving and supporting an opinion. In fact, every task of this test checks all four components of communicative competence. Brown (2003) mentioned that the tasks on the TSE are designed to "elicit oral production in various discourse categories rather than in selected phonological, grammatical, or lexical targets" (p. 163). To evaluate the validity of the TSE test design, Hudson (1994) reviewed the degree of congruence between the test's theoretical basis and the test specifications. This analysis suggested a generally high degree of concordance. As a means of validating the TSE test content, a discourse analysis of both native and nonnative speaker speech was conducted by Lazaraton and Wagner (1996). The analysis indicated that the language functions were reliably and consistently elicited from both native and nonnative speakers, all of whom performed the same types of speech activities. In the same vein, Clark and Swinton (1980) examined the performance of teaching assistants on the TSE in relation to their classroom performance as judged by students. They reported that the TSE test is a valid predictor of oral language proficiency for nonnative English-speaking graduate teaching assistance.

3.2.2. Interview

A semi-structured interview was conducted to compare the State and Payam-e-Noor University courses and books on speaking skill and time allocated for these courses (see Appendix A). The interview questions were developed in a way to reveal a more complete picture of what goes on in oral classes in these two kinds of universities. Interview questions aimed at finding those factors which have affected students' satisfaction or dissatisfaction about their educational system. It is worth mentioning that in order to gain a more in-depth and detailed picture of the issues under investigation the researchers compared these two kinds of educational system considering speaking courses in terms of their syllabus, course materials and books, class hour instruction, and universities' attendance rules and regulations.

3.3. Procedure

First the students were evaluated on their ability in speaking skill. The questions were based on the TSE (Test of Spoken English, 2001). The questions were asked verbally and individually and two raters evaluated the students' performance based on the TSE scoring guide from 20 to 60. It should be mentioned that neither rater knew the scores the other rater assigned. Based on the TSE rubric, the score of 60 deserves the one who can effectively communicate in English and can answer completely all eleven tasks; since none of the participants were able to answer these tasks without any errors, none of them were scored 60 and the highest score given to each component was 50.

Finally, after collecting and analyzing the results of the Test of Spoken English, a semi-structured interview (see Appendix A) was conducted with twenty students and their instructors to compare the State and Payam-e-Noor University courses and books on speaking and time allocated for these courses.

Selection of the students for the interview was based on the results of their scores on the TSE. Five of those whose TSE scores were in the range of 40-50 and five within the range of 20-35 were selected for the interview as *high proficient* and *low proficient* ones respectively in each of the two universities. Therefore, ten students at each university were interviewed. Also, a semi-structured interview was conducted individually with two instructors at PNU and two instructors at the State University who taught courses related to speaking skill at each university.

The interviews were conducted in Persian, English or both, depending on the situation and preference of the interviewees. It should be mentioned that for the purpose of convenience all the Persian interviews were translated into English. Moreover, some of the interviews were conducted via telephone and the length of the interviews with both students and teachers were different, ranging from 20 to 30 minutes. All the interviews were recorded and transcribed word by word for analysis. In particular, the data were analyzed through three steps of familiarizing and organizing, coding and recoding, and summarizing and interpreting (Dörnyei, 2007).

3.4. Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted qualitatively and it was more of descriptive nature (Braun & Clarke; 2006) and a thematic analysis was adopted to categorize qualitative data. Boyatzis (1998) mentioned that the thematic analysis is a process of "encoding qualitative information" (p. vii). It is worth mentioning that the data was retrieved from a number of different sources to form one body of data. In other words, data triangulation was used (Flidk, Kardorff, & Steinke, 2004). The interviews from two different sources, students and teachers were transcribed to develop a general idea. Also, for gathering the more complete picture, the notes, including their syllabus, course materials and books, class hour instruction, and university's rules were used.

4. Findings

4.1. Interviews with Students

To check the B.A. English language learners' view point toward their educational system, first the students were asked "*Why did you select this educational system (i.e., PNU or State University)*?" In response to this question, the most three concepts which were answered by PNU students were: optional class participation; good way of continuing one's study when one has a job; have no better chance based on the results of the National Entrance Examination (*Konkur)*. On the other hand, the State students' responses were: preference to study in a well-known university for getting valuable certification and being in touch with the most knowledgeable instructors.

After this familiarization with students' reasons for choosing their educational system, interview questions were followed (see Appendix A). It is worth mentioning that for shortening the text some abbreviations were used, i.e., HP and LP (high and low proficiency, respectively). The final themes elicited from the students' interviews are:

- *They preferred to have a better teaching methodology rather than the more or less number of sessions.*

The majority of the students at both universities mentioned that instead of increasing or decreasing class sessions, it is better to change teaching methodology. They believed that the method which was used by their instructors in these classes (i.e., Language Lab 1 & 2, and Oral Reproduction of Stories) did not help them enhance their speaking ability.

> *-Usually, we have to present lectures with these courses, it is just memorizing not speaking,…so increasing the number of the sessions has no better result* [LP, PNU]

> *-If the number of sessions were increased, there would be no beneficial impact because we do nothing useful in the class.* [HP, PNU]

> *-I think, we need to have more sessions to improve our speaking skill because speaking is an important skill, but if teaching methodology doesn't change, increasing the number of the sessions will have no effect on the students' progress.* [LP, PNU]

> *-These classes aren't useful for high proficient students and even worse, these classes aren't helpful for Low proficient ones either, since this method of teaching, for example presenting lectures, is not helpful for improving speaking skill.* [HP, State]

> *-Increasing the number of the sessions is not the case; the important issue is the method of teaching. Therefore, either five or thirteen sessions with this way of teaching there will be no useful results.* [LP, State]

- *They preferred more up-dated books.*

Several number of students at both universities preferred having up-dated books. The majority of the students mentioned that it doesn't concern them who selects these books, but they prefer to read well-known books. Moreover, most of the State University students mentioned that they preferred having assigned books for Language Lab1 and 2.

> *-I don't care who chooses the books we study, I mean either teacher or the university; I just want to read up-dated books with the modern way of teaching/learning English language. So if the way of teaching is not appropriate for me, I can study and learn it on my own.* [HP, PNU]

> *-I don't have any problem with the fixed or predetermined books, because I can study them on my own, but I prefer to read new and modern books whose topics are in line with our world breakthrough.* [LP, PNU]

> *-It was possible to use better new books; our teacher assigned a book for Language Lab1 that we didn't work on in the class and it was useless for me, it adds nothing to my knowledge.* [HP, State]

> *-The sources?..to me reading well-known books are important, but the teachers play important and key roles too. It is important to read modern books, but I think, the best book might lose its effect if it is taught by the worst teacher.* [HP, State]

> *-Our teachers didn't teach from the book in Language Lab 1 & 2. I think, if the teacher prefers having free discussion or watching movies in the class, they could introduce well-known books for our further reading to improve our speaking.* [LP, State]

- *They believed it was better to have some books on how to improve their speaking skill.*

After reading students' interviews several times, it was revealed that at both universities there was a tendency for having a course that teaches them how to improve their English skills, especially speaking one. Both university students thought if they were taught how to improve their English skills, they would be more successful in their education.

-Most of the students have problem with this skill, as you know, it is really difficult to learn…., speaking is not just being able to discuss a topic, but you should have a good knowledge of pronunciation, accent, and intonation which, of course, there isn't enough consideration to teach them. We have one course about phonology in the third term, but it is taught just theoretically not practically. I preferred there was further attention to teach us how to speak. [HP, PNU]

-These books are not helpful for those students who are not good at speaking. I wish we had some books that taught us how to improve our skills. More importantly speaking skill, since perhaps we can enhance our reading, writing, or listening, but as you know speaking is an important skill and the most difficult one too, I think. [LP, PNU]

-For language Lab1 & 2, we didn't have any books and our class activities, I think, it had effect just on my listening skill,…..this issue pushed me to participate in a private institute. I think it was better if we were assigned a book for these courses to teach us to improve our speaking skill. [HP, State]

-It was taken for granted that we should be good at speaking English. If these courses are designed for improving speaking skill, I think they didn't have any effect on my speaking ability. For example, we watched movie in these classes, I think, first of all we should learn how to speak and express our thought. [LP, State]

- *They felt the courses related to speaking skill were not enough, especially for low proficient students.*

The majority of the students at both universities noted that courses related to speaking skill, in comparison to other courses which should be studied during their BA education, are not enough, particularly for low proficient students. Both university students somehow agreed with having more courses for improving their general proficiency and English skill before starting reading technical courses.

-The courses related to speaking skill are not enough, especially for those students who are weak at speaking. Maybe, some optional units can be added in our curriculum. [HP, PNU]
-Courses related to speaking skill aren't enough for improving my speaking at all. My speaking didn't change after passing these courses. I preferred to have more courses for enhancing my general knowledge at the beginning of my education. [LP, PNU]

-Absolutely aren't. I think there should be at least twelve units for improving speaking skill at the beginning of the first year. [HP. State]

-Surely not. These courses aren't enough for low proficient students. High proficient students usually take the floor in these classes and low proficient students are ignored.[LP, State]
-They aren't enough, especially for those who didn't go to private institutes. When you study your lessons at home, but you can't express your idea in the class……I mean you should be good at speaking English in order to be able to discuss your thought. I think, courses related

to improving speaking skill should be increased or even some optional courses should be put in our curriculum for improving this skill. [LP, State]

- *PNU students felt more independent and responsible for their success or failure, while the State students felt dependent on their teachers' decision.*

The most PNU students stated that they had to shoulder the responsibility for their education, while several students at the State University believed that they were dependent on their instructors' decision and knowledge. PNU students felt their educational system directed them to have self-study and cope with their problems. On the other hand, the State University students mentioned that although their instructors gave them somehow authority in the classrooms, they were pushed to be dependent on their educational system, for example, they were compelled to select their term credits because they were offered just once in a year, while at PNU each course was often offered each term during the educational year.

-PNU students are responsible for their learning. Even in a disaster situation, nobody can help you in getting a better mark. [HP, PNU]

-At first, education in this system was difficult for me, but little by little I learned how to study, how to solve my problems because there is no one who can help you for passing courses, but yourself. [LP, PNU]

-In this educational system [PNU], you should take the responsibility for your education,…I mean, the PNU educational system leads students to do self-study. [LP, PNU]
-In this system, the teachers teach and the students take notes, like a pen pusher [mirza benvis]. It isn't correct. I think students should study by themselves and not rely upon their teacher's sayings. [HP, State]

-Usually, students' studying depends on what their teachers assign to them. As you know, we can't behave opposed to our teachers' will, because if you want good mark, you should do everything they ask for. [LP, State]

-We study copies which were brought to the class by our teachers. Sometimes, we don't have books for our courses. Only the teachers have the authority to decide what we should do and what we shouldn't. [LP, State]

- *They thought participating in private institutes helped them to improve their skills.*

Most of the students with high proficiency of speaking mentioned that they had studied English in the private institutes for so many years. They felt that their success in being able to communicate effectively was due to the time they spent in these institute classrooms.

-The classes or the books aren't helpful in improving students' speaking skill. I think, every person who wants to learn English, first of all should improve her/his general language. I myself have participated in private institute as the English learner for nearly 5 years and now I am a teacher at that institute. [HP, PNU]

-*When I was accepted at the university, at the first sessions I noticed being able to speak English is the default. There were students who could speak fluently in the class……, When I spoke with them, I understood they took part in private English classes for so many years. Then I decided to participate in discussion class at a private institute for improving my speaking and getting self-confidence.* [LP, PNU]

-*I don't have any problem in these classes; I can express my feelings and my ideas. You know, before being accepted at the university, I participated in private institutes for learning English language. I think they are the best place for improving your general language.* [HP, State]

-*The method of teaching English speaking is not influential in universities. Perhaps they think as the English major students you should be good at speaking skill or other skills too. Fortunately, I had studied English in a private institute since I was six years old.*
[HP, State]

-*High proficient students usually participate in conversation and discussion in the class. Unfortunately, they get most of our teachers' attention and low proficient ones are neglected. I know, I am awful in English speaking because, unlike them, I didn't attend private institutes for so many years. I had studied there for 6 months. Maybe I should start studying English there since I noticed if I want to be successful in my education I have to learn it myself.* [LP, State]

Students' interview revealed that although State University Students had more sessions than PNU students during each term, both university students preferred to have better teaching methodology for speaking courses. PUN students believed that with the current way of teaching courses related to speaking skill (i.e., Language Lab 1 & 2, and Oral Reproduction of Stories), increasing or decreasing the number of class sessions will not improve their speaking ability. In the same vein, State university students were not satisfied with the method of teaching these courses (particularly having lectures).

As it was mentioned, there were predetermined books for these courses at PNU, while instructors at State University did not assign any book for Language Lab 1 and 2. In this respect, PNU students pointed that they don't have any problem with having pre-determined books, but like State university students, they prefer to have up-dated and well-known books for these courses. Besides, both university students believed that it is better to teach them how to improve their speaking ability. Moreover, even though university students agreed that speaking ability is one of the main aims of their learning another language, comparing this course to other courses during BA showed that it to be unsatisfactory. It was the more emphasized issue mentioned by low students at each university. As they stated that they preferred to have more basic English courses at the beginning of their education. In this respect most of the students at each university, especially low proficient speakers, mentioned that since their educational system didn't have any effect on improving their speaking skill they participated at private institutions.

The main difference between these two groups (State and PNU students) was their attitude toward the feeling of dependency and independency on their educational system or instructors. In comparison to the State University students' point of view, which they thought that they are mostly dependent on their instructors' decisions, PNU students believed that their educational system pushed them to be autonomous learners.

4.2. Interviews with Instructors

Two instructors at PNU and two instructors at the State University who taught courses related to speaking skill were selected for interview. The following themes elicited from the instructors' interviews:

- *Decreasing or increasing the number of sessions is not a good idea.*

The important issue which was revealed from the State University instructors' interview was the large amount of the students in these classes. As they mentioned there were sometimes a great number of learners in these classes. They felt that it was difficult to engage all of the students in the classroom activities, but this problem was not observed at PNU due to optional classroom participation.

> *-I was always in a hurry to engage all the students since there were a lot of students in the class.* [State University Instructor]

> *-Decreasing the number of sessions is not a good idea because sometimes there are a great number of students in these classes and engaging all the students in class activities is a difficult task. Increasing won't solve the problem, either. We should have less number of students in class.* [State University Instructor]

- *Problems with books which were assigned for Language Lab 1 and 2.*

PNU instructors stated that they did not have any problems with pre-determined books, while they preferred the authorities in the educational system to consult with the teachers who teach these courses for several years, before choosing these books. As an example, they mentioned that the book which is assigned for Language Lab 1 does not have any CD. It should be mentioned that the State University instructors did not face with this problem because the books were assigned by the instructors themselves.

> *-The book which is assigned for Language Lab 1 does not have any CD. Usually teachers face difficulty in teaching this book, as you know, this course is appointed for enhancing students' listening and speaking skills and it is contradictory that the assigned book does not*

have CD. [PNU Instructor]

-The pervious book which was assigned for Language Lab 1 does not have CD,… having pre-determined book is not a serious problem, but as a suggestion I want to say it is better to consult with the lecturers/professors who are teaching these courses. [PNU Instructor]

- *Similar activities used for the teaching of these courses.*

All the interviewed instructors who taught these courses used the same way of teaching such as having free discussion, watching movies, listening to the news, and presenting lectures.

-We have free discussions on interesting topics, if we have time we listen to the news and watch movies, moreover students should present lectures. [State University Instructor]

-Students should present lectures, moreover, I'll bring extra listening CDs and practice on students listening and speaking. [PNU instructor]

- *Taking decisions based on the educational limitation.*

As the advantages/disadvantages of this educational systems and instructors' suggestion were surveyed, PNU instructors mentioned that it is better to design books of these courses based on the limitations of the PNU educational system. They believed that since the classroom participation was not obligatory, it was better to assign books that were appropriate for self-study.

-(….), as the PNU educational system is based on self-study, I think it is better to find or develop a book that can resolve the students' need. [PNU Instructor]

On the other hand, the State University Instructors concerned about the large numbers of students in these classes. They mentioned that as the aim of these courses is improving students' speaking and listening skill, dividing these large numbers in the two classes is more beneficial.

-As you know, the instructors should have enough time to practice with each student to improve students' speaking and listening skill, while as sometimes there are more than 40 students, the instructors can't monitor their progress. I think it would be better if the educational system divides large numbers into two different classes especially for these courses. [State University Instructor]

As the interview revealed, although there were different number of sessions for these courses at these universities, the same way of teaching was applied in both universities (e.g., presenting lectures, watching movie, listening to the news, practicing phonetics, and free discussion).Moreover, it showed that both university instructors believed that it is better to make decisions based on the context of each educational system. For example, the instructors in PNU believed it is better to select materials based on the students' needs and those in the State University believed in decreasing the number of the students in courses related to speaking skill.

4.3. Comparing two Universities in Terms of the curriculum.

During conducting the present study, some similarities and some differences were observed in these two kinds of universities (State & PNU). For obtaining a more complete picture, BA English literature major curriculum, course materials and books related to speaking skill, and class hour instruction were investigated.

Based on the curriculum at PNU students have to pass 37 Specialized, 76 Main, 2 Main-obligatory, and 19 General credits for their BA degree, while the State University students have to pass 43 Specialized, 72 Main, 2 Main-obligatory, and 18 General credits. Comparing BA English literature major curriculum at these two kinds of universities showed that in total, both university students have to pass the same units, but the main differences is the term of offering some courses. Since the process of teaching courses related to speaking skill in these two kinds of universities (PNU & State University) was surveyed, the main difference explored was the time allocated to these lessons in which the State University students benefit more sessions than PNU students. Besides, participation in the class was optional at PNU, while there was a strict obligation to participate in the classroom for all courses at the State University except some limited number of absences. However, the methods of teaching these courses were to some extent similar (e.g., presenting lectures, watching movie, listening to the news, practicing phonetics, and free discussion), but there was a main difference of the selected books for Language Lab 1 & 2, in which no books were assigned for these courses.

5. Discussion

The results of the students' interview indicated that the methodology of teaching these courses (i.e., Language Lab 1 & 2, and Oral Reproduction of Stories) was not satisfactory at either university. As they mentioned, with this way of teaching, increasing or decreasing the number of class sessions will not have any better results. The majority of the students agreed that the method of teaching courses related to speaking skill should be changed as they stated that teachers usually asked students to present lectures in these classes. In addition, both university students believed that courses related to improving speaking skill in comparison to other courses were not enough during their BA study. Ghorbani (2009) believed that, however the overall objective of English language education in Iran is to develop students' basic communication abilities, but in reality there is very little concentration on the uses of English in real-life situations.

Though the students in this study stated their disagreement with presenting lectures in class, the results of other studies were not exactly the same. The results of Flowerdew and Miller's study (1992) showed that there were mixed attitudes toward the lecture experience, with some students being enthusiastic about it and others more disinterested. In their study, they provided some useful strategies to enhance the ability to comprehend lectures and receive benefit from this tool in English language classes. In the same vein, Ahmadi and Sajjadi (2013) investigated the effect of lectures on English learning. They pointed out that presenting lecture "assigns them a package of performance activities for which they can use their own learning strategies" (p. 101). Their study showed that presenting lectures can improve students' listening comprehension, although the level of the improvement may not be so significant.

Another result of the present study was the students' complain in the State University and teachers' complain in PNU of textbooks. Besides, the participants of this study preferred to have up-dated books and have courses on how to improve their speaking skill. This finding is in line with the previous studies about the shortcomings of English language textbooks in Iran (Dahmardeh, 2009; Ghorbani, 2009). As Hutchinson and Torres (1994) mentioned, textbooks have a vital and positive role to play in the teaching and learning process, and as Litz's (2001) argued designing or selecting appropriate textbooks should be embedded in all language programs; therefore, it can be deduced that each university should choose and develop appropriate textbooks which are in line with their students' needs and the policy of the university. In the same vein, Cunnings-worth (1995) argued that textbooks are effective recourses for self-directed learning and he added that good textbooks should closely relate to the learners' need. These findings are in line with what Dolati and Mikaili (2011) concluded in their research about the main reasons of Iranian students' difficulties in spoken English proficiency. They mentioned that inappropriate textbooks, limited class time, using Persian language in the English classroom and syllabus are the main problematic issues.

The findings of the present study supported Yarmohammadi's (1995) investigation of the Iranian language learners' weakness in English language proficiency. In this respect, Yarmohammadi (1995) noted that English BA students should spend the first two years improving their general proficiency and after passing a proficiency test to be allowed to take the related specialized courses. Similar to the findings of the present study, Karimnia and Salehi

Zade (2007) pointed out that the ability to communicate is an important area of difficulty that Persian learners of English have. They added that "Persian learners find it difficult to communicate freely in the target language. This may be due to the methods of language teaching and learning environment, which may be said to be inconvenient for learning a foreign language" (p. 291).

Another issue which was revealed during the interview analysis was that most of the PNU students felt responsible for their own learning, while the State University students mentioned that they are mostly dependent on their teachers. The finding of the present study also supported Badrifar's idea (2000) about Payam-e-Noor University. He claimed that PNU tried to foster learners' autonomy and PNU students are responsible for their own learning, while he supposed the State University students are relying on their teachers' instruction. The achieved results of the present study in this vein support Hashemian and Heidari Soureshjani's ideas (2011) since they pointed out that in the traditional educational system (i.e., the State University) in Iran most of the responsibilities are taken by L_2 teachers. Also, similar to the results of the present research, the study conducted by Ahmadi and Mahdavi-Zafarghandi (2013) on the responsibility taking and decision making of the Guilan State University students related to autonomous language learning and the practice of autonomous activities inside and outside the classroom revealed that they thought the responsibility of managing and planning aspects of their learning should be held by their teachers.

Attending at private institutes was another theme which was revealed based on students' interview. In Iran, there are many private institutes in each city which offer English programs to students. Talebinezahad and Sadeghi (2005) provided statistical information about the number of the private English institutes in Iran. They mentioned that there are 1971 Language institutes which are licensed by the Ministry of Education and 127 English teaching centers, which are licensed by the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance. In this respect, Noora (2008) noted that many "Iranian university students enroll in private language institutes because they feel they cannot get satisfactory results from their English courses at university" (p. 40). In the study of non-academic versus academic situation for learning L_2 language, Talebinezahad and Sadeghi (2005) investigated the similarities and differences of these two types of situations. One of the main results of their study was the limited hours of instruction provided in academic situation which could not provide the chance of learning English especially the most favored skill of listening and speaking. They mentioned that "in private learning programs the hours are doubled or more and programs are normally designed in a way to teach the spoken skill" (p. 94). Moreover, they added that the programs, class size and hours are different between university and private institutes. In line with their result, as the instructors' interview in this study revealed, the number of the students was one of the problematic issues in university classes; they pointed out that this large number limits the instructors in applying effective communicative methods.

From the instructors' interview it was revealed that PNU instructors had problems with the assigned textbooks since instruction in PNU is based on the pre-determined books and they don't have any freedom to behave based on their students' needs and there is a strict constrain for them to plan their instruction based on these materials in limited class hours (Majidi & AbbasBandy, 2000). Moreover, they were not satisfied with those textbooks which were assigned and selected for speaking courses, as they mentioned they are not appropriate for improving students' speaking skill as, for example, they don't have any CDs. In this respect, Litz (2001) mentioned that among the constituents of English language teaching (ELT) programs, textbooks have been viewed as the main recourses in achieving the aims and objectives that have already been set in terms of learners' needs. Therefore, neither the instructors nor the students were satisfied with textbooks and according to Brown (1995) textbooks should be at the service of the teachers and students. Besides, the State University instructors had problems with the large number of students in speaking courses. As they mentioned that they could not manage their class time to engage all of these large number of the students in the classroom activity participation. This finding is in line with many studies (e.g., Dolati & Mikaili, 2011; Talebinezahad & Sadeghi, 2005) and some authors' opinion (Celce-Murcia, 1991; Chastain, 1988; Johnson, 1995) on the importance of classroom practices on students' progress on speaking skill.

6. Conclusion and Pedagogical Implications

This study was conducted to contribute to a better understanding of students' and instructors' perspective toward two different educational systems (i.e., PNU & State University). To this aim, this study investigated the high and low proficient students' opinion and their instructors on speaking skill at these universities. Based on the results of the present study, neither of the university students were satisfied with teaching methodology of speaking courses, the number of courses assigned to improving speaking skill, and the selected textbooks. Moreover, students'/teachers' complaint of textbooks revealed that there is a need for increasing more courses for enhancing general English and particularly improving English language learners' speaking skill and designing or selecting appropriate textbooks based on their students' needs in speaking skill. Hence, it can be suggested that both educational systems can provide more authentic input and more opportunities to use English inside and outside of the classrooms using different techniques one of which might be the integration of computer-mediated communication into their syllabus.

The majority of the students of this study at both universities mentioned that it is taken for granted that English language learners are able to speak English effectively when they are accepted at the university and the speaking courses are just to improve this skill to higher levels while this is not the case. On the other hand, based on the results of the interview with the students, who stated that courses related to improving speaking skill are not sufficient during their BA level and most of them had taken part in private institutes, two suggestions can be provided: 1) It might be better to change to some extent the curriculum of BA English language learners to improve students' speaking proficiency levels. For instance, offering some courses as a pre-requisite of basic English, or some optional courses at the beginning of BA level, and changing the term of offering some courses, as an example, offering the course of phonology at the beginning of the education at PNU instead of the third term. 2) The authorities may assign a specific cut-off score for those who are going to study English as their major for entrance examination in *Konkur*. In this way a more homogeneous students can start studying in English Language.

Since the importance of being autonomous learners and taking the responsibility for learning was revealed in many studies (e.g., Benson, 2001, 2006; Benson & Voller, 1997; Dickinson, 1987), it can be concluded that on the one hand, it is better to put the responsibility of learning on the State University students, on the other hand, although PNU students mentioned that their educational system pushed them to be autonomous learners, they are not trained to become aware of adopting the appropriate strategies to achieve this goal.

The present study showed the advantages, disadvantages, and the impact of the different educational systems on the English language students' learning in Iran. The results of this study can contribute to language teachers, policy makers, curriculum/syllabus designers, and material developers at the State and Payam-e-Noor University. It is hoped that this study will help English language teachers, EFL syllabus designers, and material developers on how to use and design a curriculum/textbooks to provide opportunities which can better fulfill the learner s' needs. The implication for the teacher is to pay attention to the needs of the learners. If they are more satisfied with the use of textbook why not providing them with one which matches more with the purpose of the teacher and at the same time satisfying the psychological satisfaction of the learners? Another implication can be for the authorities in the ministry of education of Iran. Teachers prefer to be consulted with for the selection of the content of the books they are supposed to teach especially in PNU where the textbooks are pre-determined. In other words, they prefer the result for pedagogy to be got through bottom up rather than top-down decisions.

In this study, the researchers focused on the similarities and differences of two different educational systems (PNU & State University) and students'/instructors' perspective on their educational system considering speaking skill. The replication of this study on other skills can be more revealing. Also investigating the learners' attitudes toward the university they attend in general, and about the effect of the educational system on their motivation/demotivation can reveal the advantages and disadvantages of each educational system. In this way the combination of the positive aspects of each educational system can lead to a relatively ideal educational system including the positive aspect of both educational systems.

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Appendix A:

Interview

Part A: Students' Interview Questions

1. Why did you select this educational system (i.e., PNU or State University)?
2. What is your idea about the number of sessions allocated to these courses (i.e., Language Lab1 & 2, and Oral Reproduction of Stories)? Are they enough?

3. What is your idea about the books or sources which are assigned for these courses?
4. What is your idea about the method of teaching of these courses?
5. Are courses allocated to speaking skill during B.A level enough to improve your speaking skill?
6. What are the advantages/disadvantages of your educational system?
7. Do you have any suggestions for your educational system?

Part B: Instructors' Interview Questions

1. What is your idea about the number of sessions allocated to these courses?
2. What is your idea about the books or sources of these courses?
3. What method of teaching or activities do you use for teaching these courses?
4. What are the advantages/disadvantages of this educational system?
5. Do you have any suggestions for the educational system in which you are teaching?

Iranian EFL Journal

A Fresh Look at Curry's Onion Model: Do Inner Layers Predict Outer Layers?

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Abstract

Curry's Onion Model has frequently been represented in different textbooks and shown to be of great significance as a leading model of learning styles during the last three decades. Nevertheless, researchers have rarely ventured to empirically test the efficiency of the model in general, and its verity among EFL learners in particular. In order to study the model's

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applicability and examine the model’s predictive pattern, a survey analysis was carried out. To do so, three measures, i.e. Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (Myers, 1962), Kolb’s (1976) Learning Style Inventory, and Riechmann and Grasha’s (1974) Student Learning Style Scales, were administered to a total of 238 Iranian EFL learners doing their B.A. in English language and literature, and translation studies at four universities in Iran. Pointing to significant relationships among the general make-up of styles, the results of multiple regression analysis revealed that the more stable inner cognitive styles of EFL learners in fact predict their less stable outer learning styles. The findings of the study have profound implications for language teachers and educators who are concerned with the bulk of individual differences that learners bring to the context of learning.

Keywords: Learning styles, Onion Model, Cognitive personality styles, Social interaction styles, Instructional preferences styles

1. Introduction

Educational scholars now embrace the idea that drills, repetition, and other strictly structured activities are no longer regarded as an effective method of teaching for today’s students since they approach learning in different ways (Evans, Cools, & Charlesworth, 2010). That is, the use of diverse learning methods in line with diverse learning styles may contribute to a more constructive learning environment for all students. In fact, it is held that “style awareness is an important aspect in fully understanding a person’s performance in learning” (Peterson, Rayner, & Armstrong, 2009, p. 522).

Learning style may be defined as the mode of learning favored by an individual (Grasha, 1996), or it may include “a range of constructs describing variations in the manner in which individuals learn” (Price, 2004, p. 681). An understanding of students’ learning styles can improve the selection of teaching strategies best suited to their learning (Zapalska & Dabb, 2002). Knowing the learning style of their students, teachers can develop a variety of instructional methodologies to benefit all students (Williamson & Watson, 2007).

The concept of learning styles has been variously framed by different scholars throughout the last three decades. These frameworks include Curry’s (1983) Onion Model of Learning Styles, Riding and Cheema’s (1991) integrative model of cognitive styles, Zhang and Sternberg’s (2005) threefold Model of Intellectual Styles, and Sadler-Smith’s (2009) duplex Model of Cognitive

Style, to mention a few. Being an influential integrated model in the literature on learning styles, Curry's Onion Model has attracted the attention of a number of researchers (e.g., Richardson, 2011). As the principal aim of the present study was to explore one of the underlying assumptions of the Curry's widely-cited Onion Model, i.e. cognitive personality style being essential to information processing style as well as interaction style and instructional preference, the following section only elaborates on the model.

1.2. Curry's Onion Model

One of the earliest and well-known models for classifying learning styles is that of Curry (1983, 1987). Curry (1983) developed an integrated three-layer model of learning style based on 9 psychometrically-attested learning style measures. The three layers resembled those of an onion. The onion model comprised an inner *cognitive personality style* layer, a middle *information-processing style* layer, and an outer *instructional preference* layer. Curry (1987), expanding her Onion Model, included 21 style measures in the model. In the expanded model, the three style measures in the innermost layer remained the same. However, the middle layer, that is, *information-processing style*, was expanded by measures like Biggs' (1979) learning approaches, and Entwistle's (1981) study approaches. Also, measures such as Canfield's (1980) learning styles, and Dunn, Dunn, and Price's (1986) learning styles were added to the outermost layer, i.e. *instructional preference*.

Cognitive personality style, being at the core of Curry's onion model, is taken to be relatively permanent and unlikely to interact directly with the environment. Cognitive personality style is conceptualized as a function of genetic and cultural traits developed early in life which remains stable throughout an individual's life. The measures associated with the cognitive layer are the Embedded Figures Test (Witkin, 1962), Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (Meyers, 1962), and Matching Familiar Figures Test (Kagan, 1965). These three measures assess cognitive personality styles that are defined as an individual's approach to adapting and assimilating information.

The middle layer of the onion, i.e. information processing style, deals with relatively stable learning preferences. However, compared to cognitive personality style, information processing style could be modified by instruction or strategies. The measures included in this layer are Kolb's (1976) Learning Style Inventory, Tamir and Cohen's (1980) Cognitive Preference

Inventory (CPI), and Schmeck, Ribich, and Ramaniah's (1977) Inventory of Learning Processes (ILP).

Instructional preference, the outermost layer of the model, is the style which is the most observable, the least stable, and the most interactive with the environment. It refers to an individual's propensity to choose or express a liking for a particular instructional technique or combination of techniques (Sadler-Smith, 1996). The measures associated with this layer are Friedman and Stritter's (1976) Instructional Preference Questionnaire, Rezler and Rezmovic's (1981) Learning Preference Inventory, and Riechmann and Grasha's (1974) Student Learning Style Scales (SLSS). Defined as an individual's choice of learning environment, instructional preference is modified by person-environment interactions. Later, social interaction, highly related to instructional preference, was added as the fourth layer (Cassidy, 2004). It refers to the learners' preference for social interaction during learning.

As put by Curry (1983, p. 117), "learning behaviour is fundamentally controlled by the central personality dimensions, translated through middle stratum information-processing dimensions, and given a final twist by interaction with environmental factors in the outer strata". She then contended that any attempt to check the validity of the 'Onion Model' should either demonstrate that the three measures in any one layer of the model assesses the same thing, or provide psychometrical evidence for the claim that cognitive personality style is essential to information processing style as well as instructional preference.

A plethora of studies have built on the theoretical assumptions of Curry's Onion Model (e.g., Richardson, 2011); however, only a few studies have been conducted to empirically test the basic assumptions of the model. The results of these studies have been divergent and sometimes even contradictory (e.g. Cools, 2011; Sadler-Smith, 1999; Sadler-Smith, Allinson, & Hayes, 2000). For instance, investigating the relationship between learners' cognitive styles and their instructional preferences, Sadler-Smith et al. (2000) sought to explore the link between cognitive styles and learning preferences. They revealed that their results do not provide sufficient support for any existing link. That is, they found that the relationship between cognitive style and learning preferences is prone to mediation by other individual characteristics such as gender. In a recent study, Cools (2011) conducted two empirical studies, namely a cross-sectional and a longitudinal one. In the first study, the causal link between students' cognitive styles, approaches to studying, and didactical preferences was assessed in relation to their learning outcomes. The results of path analysis did not show a clear causal path from three concepts belonging to different layers in relation to students' learning outcomes. The second study, i.e. longitudinal, tested the malleability of the outer layer. That is, cognitive styles were to be shown to be more stable over time than approaches to studying, i.e. instructional preference. No support was reported for the differences in stability.

In a global e-survey of 94 style researchers, Peterson, Rayner, and Armstrong (2009) sought the researchers' comment on the state of 'styles' field. They found that there was considerable agreement over the value and future direction of style research. Also, the majority of researchers did agree that cognitive styles were associated with underlying cognitive mechanisms and they were viewed as more stable. Along the same lines, to provide psychometric evidence on the centrality of cognitive personality style in relation to the other three styles, namely information processing style, instructional preference, and social interaction, the present study sought to investigate the relationship between the four layers of the model. In so doing, a survey analysis was conducted to investigate Iranian EFL learners' learning styles for their correlational and predictive patterns. The study, therefore, aimed at answering the following research questions:

1) What learning styles do Iranian EFL learners have in terms of *cognitive personality style*, *information processing style*, *instructional preferences,* and *social interaction*?
2) Are more stable styles significant predictors of less stable ones?

2. Method

2.1. Participants

A total of 238 subjects whose ages ranged from 18 to 25 participated in the study. The sample included 96 males and 142 females. They were BA students of English language and literature as well as translation studies at four different universities in Iran, namely Islamic Azad University of Tehran (North Branch), Islamic Azad University of Tonekabon, Payam-e Noor University of Tonekabon, and Payam-e Noor University of Rasht. Generally speaking, in Iran, students of these two fields are conceptualized as EFL (English as a foreign language) learners. Universities examination and academic career policies have greatly contributed to this conceptualization. In 2002, Ministry of Science and Technology followed a new policy for universities entrance examination and a law was passed in the parliament in this regard. From that time on, volunteers for studying in each one of these majors have been obliged to take an independent exam on a separate day which includes many more items and has a higher difficulty level. Accordingly, only those volunteers who are proficient enough in English can pass the examination and enter universities.

Nowadays, there are many tuition-based English language schools in all cities of Iran which provides volunteers with a great opportunity to improve their general English language proficiency to have a better academic career. In addition to the contribution of governmental and educational policies outside the academic institutes to the language proficiency of volunteers, students following their academic career in universities are highly exposed to English language input. In Iranian universities, all of the course books for the students of English language and literature are in English. English Language is also spoken in almost all of the courses. As for the translation studies students, course books are in English and Persian, and a mixture of English and Persian is spoken in classes.

2.2. Instrumentation

To provide psychometrical evidence for Curry's Onion Model's claim that cognitive personality style is essential to information processing style and instructional preference, three measures- one for each layer of the model- were administered to the participants. The measures included Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (Meyers, 1962), Kolb's (1976) Learning Style Inventory, and Riechmann and Grasha's (1974) Student Learning Style Scales. These measures are elaborated below.

2.2.1. Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI)

MBTI is a psychometric questionnaire which measures the psychological preferences how people perceive the world and make decisions. MBTI includes four dichotomies, namely *Extraversion*/*Introversion*, *Sensing*/*Intuition*, *Thinking*/*Feeling*, and *Judging*/*Perceiving*.

Extraversion and introversion preferences are often regarded as attitudes. According to Myers- Briggs (1962), each cognitive function can operate in the external world of behavior, action, people and things (extraverted attitude), or the internal world of ideas and reflections (introverted attitude). Extraverts are action-oriented, seek breadth of knowledge and influence, prefer more frequent interaction, and get energy from spending time with others. On the other hand, introverts are thought-oriented, seek depth of knowledge, prefer substantial interaction, and get energy from spending time alone.

Sensing/Intuition and Thinking/Feeling dichotomies are regarded as two pairs of cognitive functions. Sensing and intuition are information-gathering functions. Those who prefer sensing only trust information that is tangible and concrete, while those who prefer intuition trust hunches and are less dependent upon senses and facts. Thinking and feeling are decision-making functions. These functions are based on the data gathered through the information-gathering functions, i.e. sensing and intuition. Thinkers think to decide by what seems to be reasonable, logical, and causal, while feelers prefer to come to decisions through associating and empathizing with the situation.

Myers-Briggs (1962) finally distinguished between *Judging* and *Perceiving* functions. They identified thinking and feeling as 'Judging' functions and sensing and intuition as 'Perceiving' functions. While judgers like to have matters settled down, perceivers prefer to keep decisions open.

2.2.2. Kolb's Learning Style Inventory

Kolb's (1976) Learning Style Inventory (LSI) is a widely used and cited instrument. The LSI is, however, one of the more complex instruments to understand (Santo, 2006). For practical reasons, Honey and Mumford's (2006) adaptation of Kolb's LSI, which resembles the original inventory, was used in the present study. This inventory yields a four-way classification of learning styles developed over time: *Activists*, *Reflectors*, *Theorists*, and *Pragmatists*. *Activists* prefer to engage in new experiences, and to be dominated by immediate experiences. They first act and then consider the consequences. On the contrary, *reflectors* stand back and observe experiences from different perspectives before acting or coming to any conclusion. *Theorists* adapt and interpret observations into complex but logically sound theories. More clearly, they think problems over in a step by step logical way. Finally, *pragmatists* are keen to try out ideas, and theories. They are always looking for new ideas to take the first chance to experiment with them.

2.2.3. Student Learning Style Scale

Reichmann and Grasha's (1974) scale is an inventory developed for college students. It is based on how they interact with course content, the instructor, and other students as part of a social learning community (Santo, 2006). The scale classifies learners in terms of 3 dichotomies including *Competitive*/*Collaborative*, *Avoidant*/*Participant*, and *Dependent*/*Independent*. *Competitive* learners like to dominate class discussions and be better than other class members.

On the contrary, *collaborative* learners feel they learn better through sharing ideas and attitudes in class. They prefer group projects to individual. *Avoidant* learners do not participate with students and teachers in the classroom. They are not eager to learn content and attend classes. However, *participants* enjoy going to class and taking responsibility for a course. *Dependent* learners show no intellectual curiosity and are highly dependent on authority. They only try to learn what is prescribed by teachers. *Independent* learners, on the other hand, prefer to work on their own and learn the content they think is needed.

2.3. Data Collection and Analysis

The study was launched on February 4, 2015 and continued for 3 successive weeks. Since the instruments applied in this study included many items and were lengthy, it seemed impossible to successfully administer all of them in one single session. In order to make sure that participants answer all the three questionnaires with full potentiality without growing fatigue, the questionnaires were administered one at a time during each week.

As common to the studies of the type, some of the questionnaires were excluded from the study. The questionnaires which had more than 3 unanswered questions were excluded from the study along with the other 2 counterpart questionnaires answered by the same participant. Although the questionnaires were group-administered in class and there was a complete return rate, some of the questionnaires were excluded from the study to increase the validity of the data.

The study benefited from a series of descriptive and inferential statistics. All of the statistical techniques were performed using SPSS version 22. In order to answer the first research question, a set of descriptive statistics including frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation were computed. As for the second research question, first the underlying assumptions of logistic regression were checked, and then logistic regression was run.

3. Results

The results of MBTI showed that the participants were not equally distributed across each dichotomy. It was found that majority of the participants had tendencies toward *extraversion*, *intuitiveness*, *thinking*, and *perceiving*. The biggest and smallest differences in frequencies were for the third and fourth dichotomies respectively (Table 1).

Table 1

MBTI Statistics

Statistics	First dichotomy		Second dichotomy		Third dichotomy		Fourth dichotomy	
	Extraverted	Introverted	Sensing	Intuitive	Thinking	Feeling	Judging	Perceiving
Frequency	104	56	60	100	112	48	68	92
Percentage	65	35	37.5	62.5	70	30	42.5	57.5

The range of scores for each aspect of KLSI was really high. There was no big difference between the four aspects in terms of the maximum and mean scores. As for SLSS, the biggest difference in mean was in the *participant* vs. *avoidant* dichotomy (33.82 vs. 26.70). The means for *collaborative* vs. *competitive* dichotomy (34.17 vs. 30.42) were noticeably different as well. On the contrary, *independent* vs. *dependent* dichotomy (34.85 vs. 34.75) had nearly equal means. (Table 2).

Table 2

KLSI and SLSS Statistics

Inventories	Styles	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
KLSI	Activist	12	2	14	7.55	3.28
	Reflector	13	4	17	9.87	3.61
	Theorist	13	3	16	9.05	3.09
	Pragmatist	12	3	15	8.25	3.77
SLSS	Independent	26	22	48	34.85	5.31
	Dependent	28	17	45	34.75	5.78
	Collaborative	25	23	48	34.17	5.87
	Competitive	18	22	40	30.42	4.99
	Participant	20	26	46	33.82	4.90
	Avoidant	25	12	37	26.70	5.64

Overall, based on the descriptive statistics above, Iranian EFL learners were found to have greater tendency toward *extraversion*, *intuitiveness*, *thinking*, and *perceiving* attributes of cognitive personality style. As for information processing style, learners were found to be more of *reflector* and *theorist* type. Finally, regarding Iranian EFL learners' *instructional preferences* and *social interaction*, it was revealed that they were more inclined toward being *collaborative* and *participant*.

To answer the second research question of the study, logistic regression analyses were utilized. With MBTI dichotomies as the predictors, the regression models showed significant findings for all the aspects of KLSI and SLSS. *Extraverted* vs. *introverted dichotomy* could significantly predict *reflector* (t = -1.16, $p < 0.05$), *pragmatist* (t = -3.09, $p < 0.01$), *independent* (t = 2.24, $p < 0.01$), *dependent* (t = 4.04, $p < 0.01$), *collaborative* (t = 4.46, $p < 0.01$), *competitive* (t =35.99, $p < 0.01$), *avoidant* (t = -3.24, $p < 0.01$), and *participant* (t = 3.68, $p < 0.01$). Although only two aspects of KLSI were significantly predicted by *Extraverted vs. Introverted*, five out of six aspects of SLSS were significantly predicted by MBTI (Table 3).

Similarly, *Thinking vs. feeling dichotomy* was also a significant predictor for *activist* (t = 1.77, $p < 0.01$), *reflector* (t = 2.62, $p < 0.01$), *theorist* (t = 2.33, $p < 0.01$), *pragmatist* (t = 2, $p < 0.01$), *independent* (t = -3.30, $p < 0.01$), *collaborative* (t = -2.35, $p < 0.01$), and *competitive* (t = -2.60, $p < 0.01$). As opposed to *Extraverted* vs. *introverted dichotomy*, *Thinking vs. feeling dichotomy* predicted all aspects of KLSI and fewer aspects of SLSS (Table 3).

The two dichotomies *Sensing vs. Intuitive*, and *Judging vs. Perceiving* predicted fewer aspects of KLSI and SLSS. *Sensing vs. Intuitive dichotomy* significantly predicted *theorist* (t = 1.04, $p < 0.05$), *pragmatist* (t = 1.79, $p < 0.01$), and *participant* (t = -3.87, $p < 0.01$). Finally, *Judging vs. Perceiving dichotomy* was a significant predictor of *avoidant* (t = -2.43, $p < 0.01$) and *participant* (t = 1.66, $p < 0.05$) (Table 3).

Table 3

MBTI as predictor of KLSI and SLSS

MBTI		KLSI				SLSS					
		Activist	Reflector	Theorist	Pragmatist	Inde.	Depe.	Colla.	Com.	Avoi.	Part.
Model	R	.26	.43	.44	.51	.36	.35	.43	.29	.33	.43
	R^2	.07	.18	.19	.26	.13	.12	.18	.08	.11	.18

	Adj R^2	.04	.16	.17	.24	.10	.10	.16	.06	.08	.16
	Df	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
	F	2.89	8.84	9.53	14.09	5.88	5.46	8.89	3.65	4.88	8.97
	Sig.	.02*	.00**	.00**	.00**	.00**	.00**	.00**	.00**	.00**	.00**
Constant	B	5.41	5.31	4.82	6.38	35.67	31.79	30.98	35.99	35.01	30.93
	Beta	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	T	3.98	3.80	4.06	4.60	16.81	13.68	13.64	17.58	15.33	16.30
	Sig.	.00**	.00**	.00**	.00**	.00**	.00**	.00**	.00**	.00**	.00**
Extraverted	B	-.40	-1.16	-.83	-3.09	2.24	4.04	4.46	.36	-3.24	3.68
Introverted	Beta	-.05	-.15	-.12	-.39	.20	.33	.36	.03	-.27	.35
	T	-.73	-2.04	-1.71	-5,48	2.59	4.27	4.82	.43	-3.48	4.75
	Sig.	.46	.04*	.08	.00**	.01**	.00**	.00**	.66	.00**	.00**
Sensing	B	.16	.84	1.04	1.79	-.41	-1.54	1.06	-.82	1.02	-3.87
Intuitive	Beta	.02	.11	.16	.23	-.03	-.13	.08	-.08	.08	-.38
	T	.27	1.39	2.01	2.97	-.45	-1.52	1.07	-.92	1.02	-4.69
	Sig.	.78	.16	.04*	.00**	.65	.12	.28	.35	.30	.00**
Thinking	B	1.77	2.62	2.33	2	-3.30	-1.12	-2.35	-2.60	-1.36	1.23
Feeling	Beta	.24	.33	.34	.24	-.28	-.08	-18	-.24	-.11	.11
	T	.3.05	4.39	4.58	3.38	-3.64	-1.12	-2.42	-2.97	-1.38	1.52
	Sig.	.00**	.00**	.00**	.00**	.00**	.26	.017*	.00**	.16	.13
Judging	B	.07	.85	.39	.32	.71	.93	-.95	-.85	-2.43	1.66
Perceiving	Beta	.01	.11	.06	.04	.06	.08	-.08	-.08	-.21	.16
	T	.13	1.54	.83	.59	.85	1.01	-1.06	-1.05	-2.69	2.22
	Sig.	.46	.12	.40	.55	.39	.31	.28	.29	.00**	.02*

*Notes: * = p < .05; ** = p < 0.01; Inde. = Independent; Depen. = Dependent; Colla. = Collaborative; Com. = Competitive; Avoi. = Avoidant; Parti. = Participant.*

In contrast with MBTI regression models for SLSS, only three of KLSI regression models for SLSS aspects showed significant results. *Activist* was a significant predictors of *dependent* (*t* = -

.60, *p* < 0.01). *Reflector* could significantly predict *avoidant* (*t* = -.61, *p* < 0.01) and *participant* (*t* = .48, *p* < 0.01). *Theorist* only predicted *avoidant* (*t* = -.69, *p* < 0.01). Finally, *pragmatist* significantly predicted *competitive* (*t* = .38, *p* < 0.05) and *avoidant* (*t* = .77, *p* < 0.01) (Table 4).

Table 4

KLSI as Predictor of SLSS

KLSI		Inde.	Dep.	Colla.	Comp.	Avoi.	Part.
Model	R	.21	.26	.16	.16	.46	.33
	R^2	.04	.06	.02	.02	.21	.11
	Adjusted R^2	.02	.04	.00	.00	.19	.08
	Df	4	4	4	4	4	4
	F	1.94	2.82	1.01	1.08	10.84	4.84
	Sig.	.10	.02*	.40	.36	.00**	.00*
Constant	B	33.99	34.28	32.17	30.90	33.71	29.36
	Beta	-	-	-	-	-	-
	T	24.59	23.01	20.80	23.52	25.32	23.79
	Sig.	.00**	.00**	.00**	.00**	.00**	.00**
Activist	B	-.07	-.60	.31	-.07	-.13	.13
	Beta	-.04	-.34	.17	-.05	-.07	.08
	T	-.43	-2.99	1.48	-.43	-.75	.77
	Sig.	.67	.00**	.14	.66	.45	.43
Reflector	B	-.12	.02	.09	-.14	-.61	.48
	Beta	-.08	.01	.05	-.10	-.39	.35
	T	-.69	.11	.46	-.90	-3.69	3.09
	Sig.	.48	.91	.64	.36	.00**	.00**
Theorist	B	-.15	.44	-.09	-.17	-.69	-.03
	Beta	-.09	.23	-.05	-.10	-.38	-.02
	T	-.69	1.83	-.37	-.81	-3.20	-.17

	Sig.	.49	.06	.70	.41	.00**	.85
Pragmatist	B	.49	.09	-.04	.38	.77	-.11
	Beta	.35	.06	-.02	.28	.52	-.08
	T	2.45	.43	-.20	2	4.01	-.62
	Sig.	.015*	.66	.84	.04*	.00**	.53

*Note: * = p < 0.05; **= p < 0.01*

On the whole, the results of regression analyses revealed that the more stables layers, i.e. MBTI facets, would predict the aspects of the less stables layers, i.e. KLSI and SLSS, with different degrees. That is to say, each one of the *Extraverted vs. Introverted* and *Thinking vs. feeling* dichotomies significantly predicted seven aspects of KLSI and SLSS; however, *Sensing vs. Intuitive* and *Judging vs. Perceiving* dichotomies predicted fewer aspects of KLSI and SLSS. As for KLSI, it was found that its facets predicted fewer aspects of SLSS.

4. Discussion

The results of the study showed that majority of the Iranian EFL learners were extraverted, intuitive, thinking, and perceiving in terms of their cognitive personality style. This shows that they are mainly focused externally and prefer frequent interactions. They also thought intuitively and were less focused on tangible facts. Additionally, they were great thinkers who sought reasonable and causal link between issues. As for perceiving aspect of MBTI, Iranian EFL learners kept their decisions open and did not want the matters settled down. The findings of the present study with regards to MBTI are more representative of an *Extraverted-Intuitive-Thinking-Perceiving Portrait* typical of persons who are warm, enthusiastic and full of potential. They could also become passionate and excited about thoughts. They are good at many thoughts and may go through several careers during their lifetime (Myers, 1962).

The analysis of KLSI showed that the range of scores for each aspect of the inventory was really high; however, the reported means were not high. These findings not only indicated that Iranian EFL learners are quite heterogeneous regarding their information processing styles, but they also do not highly involve themselves in information processing styles. More clearly, they do not extensively engage themselves in new experiences without bias (activist), do not widely observe experiences from different perspectives (reflector), do not synthesize observations into sound theories (theorist), and do not generally bring ideas and theories into practice (pragmatist). The insubstantial involvement in information processing styles of could be attributed to the participants' low ages who had not acquired higher-order information processing styles. A replication of the study with older participants who have already acquired the very information processing styles could lead to contradictory results.

As for SLSS, *independent vs. dependent* dichotomy had nearly equal means. This indicates that the participants had equal inclination toward working by themselves as well as viewing others as sources for support. On the contrary, they were more collaborative and competitive and more participant and avoidant. Collaboration and participation are typical of students who enjoy going to class and sharing ideas with classmates. They enjoy working with others and taking responsibility for getting the most out of a course.

All in all, from the analyses of the three instruments, it could be concluded that Iranian EFL learners are externally-oriented and focused on hunches and could become excited about things. Although they are not good at information processing, they are collaborative and participant enough to share their ideas and enjoy being with others.

The study also found that MBTI facets would predict the aspects of KLSI and SLSS with different degrees. Although each one of the *Extraverted vs. Introverted* and *Thinking vs. feeling* dichotomies significantly predicted seven aspects of KLSI and SLSS, *Sensing vs. Intuitive* and *Judging vs. Perceiving* dichotomies predicted fewer aspects of KLSI and SLSS. These findings, on the one hand, support the assumptions of Curry's onion model, on the other hand, it could be claimed that only some facets of inner cognitive styles are predictive of outer less stable styles.

It was also found that KLSI facets predicted fewer aspects of SLSS in comparison with MBTI. This could be attributed to the fact that KLSI aspects are less stable than those of MBTI and are themselves molded by inner cognitive styles and are less cognitive-based to form outer styles of personality. It could be asserted that, similar to inner cognitive styles, information processing styles are also causally linked with particular social interaction and instructional preferences styles.

The findings of the present study run, however, counter to those of Sadler-Smith et al. (2000) and Cools (2011). For instance, Sadler-Smith et al. (2000) found that the relationship between cognitive style and learning preferences is prone to mediation by other individual characteristics, i.e. gender. Moreover, Cools (2011), testing whether cognitive styles were more stable over time than instructional preference, found no support for the differences in stability. In the present study, on the other hand, Curry's assertions regarding the stability of inner cognitive styles and instability of outer social interaction and instructional preferences styles were supported.

The findings of the study on the whole revealed that Iranian EFL learners are generally thinkers who leave their decisions open. Being externally-oriented and collaborative, they prefer to share their ideas and seek frequent social interactions. It can be concluded that since the participants of the study were not experienced enough to know the principles of information processing styles, they did not extensively synthesize assumptions into theories and put theories into practice.

5. Conclusion

The uniqueness of this study in comparison with earlier research in this area is twofold, i.e. exploring EFL learners' learning styles and providing empirical evidence for Curry's assertions regarding the stability of inner cognitive styles and instability of outer social interaction and instructional preferences styles. The findings of the study lent support to Curry's assertions. It was found that some facets of each layer of personality are casually associated with particular facets in other layers. These findings have profound implications for second language teachers by providing better insights into the influence of diverse individual learner differences on student learning. That is, through establishing a link between the more stable and the less stable learning styles, language teachers can make far more informed decisions in opting for teaching approaches in accordance with learners' specific approaches to learning. As the study was limited to Iranian context and the data were collected through questionnaires, future researchers are suggested to take cross-sectional as well as longitudinal approaches in testing stability of learners' cognitive styles in different learning situations to cross-validate the results of the present study.

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Iranian EFL Journal

Iranian EFL Learners' Noticing of Morpho-Syntactic Corrective Feedback: Recast Types and Uptake

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Abstract

This study aimed to examine the Iranian EFL learners' noticeability of morpho-syntactic corrective feedback and the mode of recast. Further, the correlation between mode of recast and learners' uptake in the produced scripts was investigated. The participants were 10 male and female Iranian EFL learners studying English at the undergraduate level in Shahrekord University. The tasks used in this descriptive study consisted of a "spot-the-difference" task and picture sequencing. The results revealed that the participants tended to notice morpho-syntactic recasts and the resultant recasts could be a source of corrective feedback. Also, the participants' noticing of morpho-syntactic errors co-varied significantly with the modes of interrogative and

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declarative recasts. The pedagogical implications concerning the issue in EFL contexts are discussed.

Keywords: Corrective feedback, Recast, Interrogative recast, Declarative recast, Uptake, EFL learners

1. Introduction

Feedback, the important source of interactional benefits, is defined as "the reactive information that learners receive regarding the linguistic and communicative success or failure of their utterances" (Mackey, 2007, p.14). The last two decades witnessed a growing interest in interactional feedback to be associated with L2 learning. In recent years, an increasing concern among researchers about types and components of feedback is reflected in studies which address a wide range of issues of corrective feedback (Lyster & Ranta, 1997; Mackey, 2007). Lyster and Ranta (1997), for example, found six various types of feedback in the communicative-based classrooms: recasts, elicitation, clarification request, metalinguistic feedback, explicit correction, and repetition of errors. As input providers, recasts and explicit correction embrace the correct forms; the other corrective strategies, as output providers, prompt learner repairs. Furthermore, along feedback continuum from implicit to explicit, recasts stand at the implicit end and explicit correction and metalinguistic correction at the explicit end.

The vital role of recasts has been the object of much interest among scholars in second language acquisition in recent years. Likewise, researchers have come to accept the inevitability of recast roles in SLA research. For example, according to Long (1996), recasts can be effective in "promoting second language (L2) development because they juxtapose the learner's incorrect rendition and the teacher's or native speaker's reformulation" (p.15). This juxtaposition, as Ellis (2008) asserts, is thought to create the optimal conditions to attend to the formal characteristics of the utterance because the learners' meaning of the original expression remains unchanged.

In the last few years, an extensive body of research has been accumulated concerning the role of corrective feedback in general and recasts in particular in second language development (Choi & Li, 2012; Mackey, 2007; Miller & Pan,2012;Tsang, 2004), revealing that research in this field is a rapidly growing area. The research suggests that learners must be made aware of and equipped with appropriate recast that may be beneficial for language learners in improving structure development in L2 learning contexts (Mackey, 2007). Therefore, examining the types of recast can offer insights into the importance of classroom interactions and will be beneficial for learners in promoting more accurate language. This view rests on Schmidt's (2001) Noticing Hypothesis, which suggests that learning occurs when learners notice the breakdown between what they produce and the recast they receive.

In recent years, researchers have investigated issues such as the contribution of recast to second language development and learning (e.g. Ammar, 2008; Choi & Li, 2012), the association between recasts and uptake (Lyster & Ranta, 1997; Sheen, 2006), the noticeability of recast (Bao, Egi, & Han, 2011), the effect of recasts on models (Ayoun, 2001), and the relationship between recast, uptake, and L2 development (Loewen, 2005). However, these studies have utilized a variety of operational definitions of recasts, making comparison of the findings difficult and generalization problematic.

Despite the proliferation of the research in recast as a corrective feedback at educational settings such as schools, institutes, laboratories, and universities, there have been very few descriptive studies uncovering the impact of different types of recast on L2 development in an EFL classroom setting and the relationship between these types and learner uptake and repair. Accordingly, the present study attempted to investigate the effect of recast type on L2 learners' noticeability of morpho-syntactic corrective feedback. Furthermore, the importance of learners' uptake created a theoretically-based argument in which a few researchers actually uncovered the association between uptake and L2 learning. According to Lightbown (1998), uptake must influence learning if it is a sign of noticing; under the condition that noticing is a pre-requisite for learning (Schmidt, 2001). This study attempts to cast light on the relation between learner repairs resulting from recast types. The reason for examining morpho- syntactic features in the current study is that they are very susceptible to elimination in the process of speech production. As Van Patten (2004) states,

> second language learners know there are "big words" that can help them get the meaning of what is being said to them and their internal processors attempt to isolate these aspects of the speech stream during comprehension. " Little words", inflections on verbs and nouns, may be skipped over or only partially processed and then dumped from working memory as the processing resources in working memory are exhausted by the efforts required to process lexical items (P.8).

2. Literature Review

2.1. Recast

Lightbown and Spada (1999) define corrective feedback (CF) as “any indication to the learners that their use of the target language is incorrect” (p. 171). Likewise, CF contains all reactions that explicitly and implicitly mention that the learner’s production is non-target like or erroneous. Recast as the widely researched and most frequently studied type of CF has been a challenging issue among SLA researchers (Lyster & Ranta, 1997; Mackey, 2007). According to the interaction hypothesis proposed by Long (1996), feedback that occurs during interaction and negotiation processes is considered to facilitate language learning, though recasting is a complex and challenging activity. In the last few decades, an extensive body of research has accumulated in the field of SLA inspired by the works of researchers on recast. One set of studies has given particular attention to effects of recast in different contexts. In these studies, the description of recast (e.g., Lyster & Ranta, 1997; Mackey, 2007), evaluation of the effectiveness and efficacy of recasts (e.g., Sheen, 2006), and utilizing recast procedure under both observational and experimental settings (e.g., Miller &Pan, 2012; Ohta, 2000) were investigated. A second set of studies sought to focus on different aspects of recasting behavior such as recasts types, features of recasts, effectiveness of recast on L2 outcome, recognition of recasts, prompts and recasts, noticeability of recast, and uptake and recast (e.g., Bao, Egi, & Han, 2011; Choi & Li, 2012; Mackey, 2007; R´ev´esz, 2012; Sheen, 2006; Tsang, 2004). In these studies, the fuzziness nature of recast, the contribution of recast to noticing, the type and quality of corrective feedback learners received, and creating tutorial environments in classrooms have been explored. However, considerable attention has been given to the study of recast, the most commonly used type of feedback by teachers, in native speaker/native speaker (NS-NS) dyads. Therefore, we have little appreciation of how different issues of recasts such as its types have an influence on L2 learning in an EFL classroom setting.

One area of concern which emerged from the second set of studies was the classification of the different types of recasts. Some researchers have distinguished specific types/categories of recasts such as partial recasts (Roberts, 1995), isolated/incorporated recasts (Lyster, 1998), corrective recasts (Doughty & Varela, 1998) and intensive recasts (Mackey & Philp, 1998). For example, in their study of corrective feedback in an EFL setting, Lyster and Ranta (1997), defined recasts as “the teacher’s reformulation of all or part of a student’s utterance, minus the error" (p.46). This definition indicates that the reformulation can involve either the entirety or a part of the original erroneous utterance. The latter is what Roberts (1995) calls 'partial recasts', when the teacher only models the segment of the utterance in which the error occurs. Lyster (1998b) calls this type 'recasts with reduction'. Lyster also distinguished between four different types based on the setting and context they occur in: (1) isolated declarative – *when corrected reformulations have no added meaning*; (2) incorporated declarative – *when corrected reformulations have additional meaning*; (3) isolated interrogative; and (4) incorporated interrogative. Recently, Sheen (2006) presented a comprehensive taxonomy of the characteristics of recasts including explicit recast, implicit recast, declarative recast, and interrogative recast. In the current study the declarative and interrogative types of recast were examined.

Some studies have also paid attention to the noticeability issue of recasts. For example, Nabei and Swain (2002) examined an adult Japanese learner's awareness of and development from the recasts provided by her teacher in a theme-based EFL classroom in Japan. The findings revealed that the learner attended to feedback differently according to the context of interaction (i.e., teacher-fronted or group-related). She attended more to recasts in group interaction than in teacher-fronted interaction. Even though the learner in this study indicated her awareness of feedback, the amount of noticing was relatively low. Moreover, the learner's slight improvement could result from being in the instructional setting for a long time.

However, Mackey (2006) assessed learners' awareness of corrective feedback by employing three measures in her controlled pre-test post-test study. Learner's noticing was assessed through on-line learning journals, a stimulated recall, and an exit questionnaire. The results showed that the learners reported noticing forms more when feedback was provided than when it was not. Moreover, there was a positive relationship between reporting noticing and L2 development. Mackey (2006) indicated that almost two thirds of the learners reported noticing of feedback, which included recasts and negotiation. In a pioneering study, Egi (2010) examined learners' noticing of recasts and the relationship between noticing recasts and L2 development. Egi hypothesized that learners would show more development when interpreting recasts as corrective feedback than as response to content. The results indicated that the learners' interpretation of recasts as feedback was more beneficial for lexis than morpho-syntactic errors. The above studies show that noticing recasts of morpho- syntactic errors and the extent to which recasts are beneficial for L2 development are intriguing issues that require more investigation.

2.2. Uptake

One variable that may play a role in CF literature as a measure of noticing is uptake. It refers to a learner's reactive move that immediately follows the teacher's feedback (Lyster & Ranta, 1997). Lyster and Ranta's definition is adopted in the current study. There are two types of uptake, namely repair and needs-repair. According to Lyster and Ranta (1997), repair refers to instances when "the student manages to produce the correct form after the teacher's feedback." "Uptake that results in an utterance that still needs repair" is referred to as "needs-repair." (P.49) In case of uptake types, as Lyster and Ranta put, the learners' non-target like utterance is either repaired or need repair in some way. The *needs-repair* uptake is a category that can bring about more feedback from the teachers. This means that corrective feedback may be provided by the teachers if the utterance is still in need of repair. As a type of pushed output, uptake has been considered as an indicator of the effectiveness of feedback because they may serve as evidence of the learner's noticeability and incorporation of the provided feedback (Egi, 2010; Lyster & Ranta, 1997).

In the recent years, uptake has been at the center of a significant body of research in SLA. Two sets of the studies have been documented in the literature. The first camp regards uptake as an indicator of noticing end consequently learning (Braidi, 2002; Oliver, 1995). The second treats uptake as an invalid measure of such complex constructs in different contexts (see Loewen, 2004). For example, Braidi (2002) and Oliver (1995) found that the uptake amounts following recasts went from 9.5% and 16.31% to 34.21% and 35%, respectively. Uptake that occurs after recasts may be 'parrot- like' repetitions of the teachers' reformulation. Likewise, Long and Robinson (1998) presented evidence from L1 research that children frequently notice recasts, as evidenced by the high frequency of their repetition of recasts (i.e. uptake/repair). They also argued that recasts as opposed to models are more likely to promote grammatical improvement in children. Taken together, these findings suggest that uptake/repair can serve as one measure of learner noticing and thus have potential for language acquisition.

Lyster and Ranta (1997) found a relatively low uptake amount (55%) in young learners' immersion classes; Ellis et al. (2001) and Loewen (2004) reported that the uptake rates ranged almost over 73% and 74%, revealing high levels of uptake in meaning-focused ESL classes. In a comparative study, Sheen (2006) investigated the uptake levels of four different contexts of

France, Canada, New Zealand, and Korea. The results revealed that uptake in the New Zealand and a Korean setting was as high as 80%, whereas almost 50% of feedback was followed by uptake in the Canadian settings.

Concerning the effect of characteristics of feedback on uptake, some studies revealed that if recasts consisted of a single change and partial reformulation or were provided with declarative intonation, prosodic emphasis, and within extended moves, it would then lead to more uptake (Loewen & Philp, 2006; Sheen, 2006). Despite the fact that uptake might facilitate L2 development and learning, there have been very few empirical studies to support its usefulness as a source of learning. Ellis and Sheen (2006) point out that it is not clear if uptake contributes to acquisition. Nor is it clear that absence of uptake indicates an absence of acquisition. If learners correct their original errors by incorporating the target forms from recasts, then they must have noticed these forms at some level. However, failure to repair the original errors cannot be taken as evidence of a failure to notice the target forms. Indeed, as Ohta's (2000) study of Japanese foreign language classrooms showed, learners' responses to recasts often take the form of private rather than social speech.

The studies mentioned above have given insight into the process of classroom learning, and especially the effects of negative feedback. The concept of uptake has, however, not been used to investigate the relative contribution of different recast types to uptake. Just two documented studies investigated the efficacy of recasts in relation to uptake. Ellis et al. (2001) examined focus-on-form practices (including teachers' provision of CF), learner uptake, and subsequent repair (i.e., successful uptake) in intensive adult ESL classrooms in New Zealand. They reported that recasts were the most dominant type of feedback (75%), leading to the highest amount of uptake (75%). Panova and Lyster (2002) reviewed eight classroom-based observational studies on feedback and learner uptake and concluded, "in comparison with other feedback types, recasts do not promote immediate learner repair, which, in the case of recasts, involves repetition" (p. 578). As can be inferred from these two studies, the results on the effectiveness of recasts in relation to uptake were incongruent.

All in all, most second language researchers agree on the importance of recast in L2 classes as it is a means to draw learners' attention to the formal aspects of language, morpho-syntactic features. It can also boost noticing which is claimed to facilitate L2 development and learning (Schmidt, 1995). Nonetheless, the above-mentioned studies have been mainly concerned with general aspects of recast and that they were not carried out in NNS-NNS interaction. Furthermore, as the research reveals, given the specific sociocultural context of Iran in which a traditional product-oriented approach is still dominant in teaching English to learners and little space has been invested into CLT tenets in universities (Birjandi& Malmir, 2009), no studies have been designed to analyze descriptively the issue of recast types in the conversational interaction. The gap becomes more evident when it comes to studies that set out to uncover the role of learner uptake in L2 learning. The present study was an attempt to shed light on the link between learner uptake resulting from recast types and the acquisition of morpho-syntactic features of English as an L2. More specifically, the following research questions were investigated in this study:

1. Are Iranian EFL learners made aware of the morpho-syntactic errors they make?
2. What type of recast is used more frequently in response to non-target like forms?
3. Is there any significant relationship between recast types and Iranian EFL learners' noticing of morpho-syntactic recasts?

3. Method

3.1. Design

The present study adopted a descriptive research method. In this study, recast was defined as the interlocutor's corrective reformulation of all or part of learners' erroneous utterance. Recasts were classified into *declarative,* when learners' incorrect utterance is reformulated in a statement, and *interrogative,* when learners' incorrect utterance is reformulated in a question with a rising intonation. Morpho-syntactic corrective feedback is defined as any non-target production of morpho-syntactic structures. Lyster and Ranta (1997) operationalized uptake in the context of corrective feedback as "a student's utterance that immediately follows the teacher's feedback and that constitutes a reaction in some way to the teacher's intention to draw attention to some aspect of the student's initial utterance" (p. 49).

3.2. Participants

The participants were 10 male and female Iranian EFL learners (6 females and 4 males) studying English at the undergraduate level with the age range of 19-24 years old. All of them had registered for an English conversation course of the undergraduate program of the university in which the study was conducted. This university was selected as the place of the present study of EFL learners' recast types and uptake. The estimated proficiency level of the participants, as reported by the instructors, was intermediate. All the participants agreed to partake in this study. They had received an average of 40 months of English instruction and had never lived in any English speaking country. The researcher as an instructor in the department of foreign languages of the university carried out the study. That is, the researcher-as-teacher prepared task activities for the conversational interactions. Moreover, the instructor explained the aim of the study, procedures, and learners' expectation by acting as a model before beginning the main phases of the study.

3.3. Materials

The tasks used in this descriptive study consisted of a "spot-the-difference" task and picture sequencing. They were administered to elicit different kinds of questions and different facets of their knowledge. In the oral picture-description task, students were required to describe cartoons from the 'For Better or For Worse' series (Johnston, 1978), each of which portrayed a child with one or two parents in the midst of a problem. All of the interaction took place in a separate classroom and were tape-recorded, transcribed and analyzed. The second material for the purpose of the study was picture sequencing.

3.4. Data Collection and Analysis

Each participant took part in a separate session completed within 8 sessions and 8 hours of lessons were observed and the observations were recorded. The session began with the picture difference task. The rationale behind this was to find the differences between the two pictures by describing them to each other. In each session the participant and the researcher sat at the table facing each other in an EFL classroom. The pilot recordings were done in order to familiarize the participants with the recording procedures.

After that the next task came into the vogue. The picture sequence task was explained to the participants. The participant and the instructor were to work together to put the pictures in order to get the story. During the interaction, the instructor provided recasts on the participants' morpho-syntactic corrective feedback and the reaction and responses of the learners were considered as uptake. In order to have a record of the total morpho-syntactic recasts and probably resultant uptake, during the task interaction, the audiotapes of the interaction between the instructor and the participants during the dyads were coded for recast types and uptake. They were coded as interrogative or declarative as well.

Regarding the coding system, Lyster and Ranta's (1997) error treatment sequence was adopted for the purposes of this study. It starts with a learner utterance containing at least one error. "The learner error is followed either by the teacher's recast or topic continuation. If feedback is provided, then it is either followed by learner uptake or topic continuation. If there is uptake, then the learner's initial error is either repaired or still needs to be repaired." (p. 52)

4. Results

4.1. Recast Types and Noticing

The first research question deals with the participants' noticeability of morpho-syntactic corrective feedback. The results revealed that the participants reported those errors in 22 % of the total reports. That is, learners attended to recasts on their morpho-syntactic errors, but with a low level of noticing. The second research question deals with the types of recast. As mentioned earlier, in order to have a report of the total morpho-syntactic recast parts and uptake, Lyster and Ranta (1997)'s coding system was applied. Moreover, episodes of recasts were coded as either interrogative or declarative. The analyses of teacher – learners dyads show that the teacher used two different types of recasts in this study, though with varying degree: (1) Interrogative (INT), and (2) Declarative (DEC). The teacher provided a total of 149 recasts in response to the learners' erroneous utterance. The results revealed that of 126 morpho- syntactic recasts, 63.8% were interrogative (N=95) and 36.2% were declarative (N=54) (Table 1, Fig. 1).

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics of Recast Types

Recast types	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Interrogative	95	4.1	63.8	63.8
Declarative	54	2.3	36.2	100.0
Total	149	6.5	100.0	

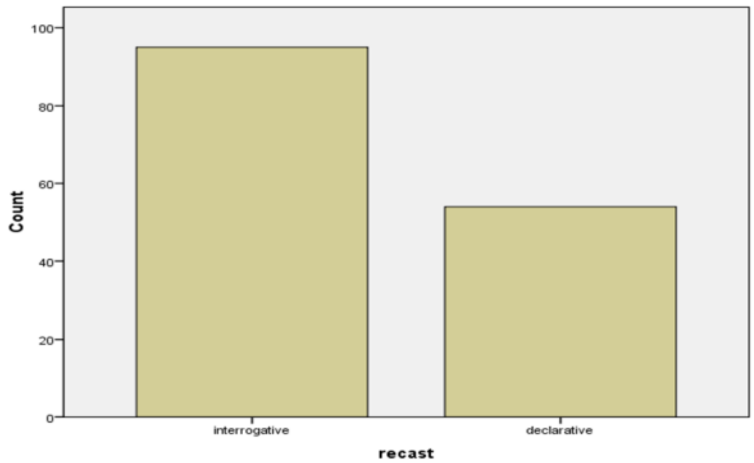

Figure 1. Graphic Representation of Recast Modes

The followings are examples of the declarative type of recasts used by the instructor in response to learners' non-target-like utterances:

Example 1D:

((From Task 1; T-L Interaction; Instance of Declarative))

T: Umm. I have two cushions on the sofa.
S: Only two. I .. I have…sofa, I cushion two.
T: Two (cushions) **recast**
S: Two cushions
T: On the sofa, two **recast**
T: two cushions
S: yes, two cushions
T: Okay.

Example 2D:

((Task 1; T-L Interaction; Instance of Declarative))

S: Yesterday I drove, I drove the traffic light.

T: You drove through the traffic light.) Recast

S: I drove through the traffic light.

Example 3D:

((Task 1; T-L Interaction; Instance of Declarative))

S: She look at my eye.
T: She looks at your knee.) **Recast**
S: Yeah.

Example 4D:

((Task 1; T-L Interaction; Instance of Declarative))

S: That's more health.

T: Healthier.) **Recast**
Example 5D:

S: The first picture I have, there is three people uh three people
T: There are three people. **recast**
S: They are three people.
T: Okay

As shown in examples 1-5Ds, the instructor provides recasts in the form of declarative in the designated lines in response to learners' morpho-syntactic errors. That is, the instructor reformulated the erroneous parts in a statement. This type of recast involves repetition of the non-target like form with a statement followed by target-like model. According to the descriptive statistical results, this form of recast was the least frequent type of recast in our data. The examples given below are the excerpts in which the instructor provides interrogative type of recast in response to the erroneous forms:

Example 1I:

((Task 2; T-L Interaction; Instance of Interrogative))

S: He's raise his hand.
T: He is raising his hand? **Recast**
s: Yeah, may be the man try to shoot him.

Example 2I:

((Task 2; T-L Interaction; Instance of Interrogative))

S: I pay the cost.
T: I pay? **Recast**
S: I'll pay the cost.
Example 3I:

((Task 2; T-L Interaction; Instance of Interrogative))

S: They probably like ... horse or ride horse.
T: Okay, a race horse? **Recast**
S: A race horse.
Example 4I:

((Task 2; T-L Interaction; Instance of Interrogative))

T: You didn't apply, they just gave it to you?
S: I'm a freshman.
T: I 'm a freshman? **Recast**
Example5I:

((Task 2; T-L Interaction; Instance of Interrogative))

S: Eighteenth of January
T: the eighteenth of January? **Recast**

S: Yes.

Example 6I:

((Task 2; T-L Interaction; Instance of Interrogative))

S: Yeah, he know Michael.
T: He knows Michael? **Recast**

As can be seen in the above examples 1I-6I, the instructor provides recast in the form of interrogative in response to the erroneous statement. It means that the instructor provides a recast in which the learner's incorrect utterance is reformulated in a statement with a rising intonation. The results obtained from the descriptive statistics revealed that this is the most frequently used type of recast.

4.2. Uptake and Acquisition

As mentioned before, Lyster and Ranta (1997) coding system was used to operationalize any learner response (output produced by the participants) that is immediately following a teacher recast. Two categories of uptake were distinguished: repair or needs repair. According to this coding system, repair involves 'successful uptake', where the initial error is corrected. Needs repair refer to uptake that is still in need of correction.

As Table 2 and Figure 2 depict, of 149 accurate recast in T-L conversational interaction, there were 105 instances of immediate incorporation (70.5 % of the total teacher recast) considered as successful uptake and 53 instances of unsuccessful learner uptake (29.5 % of the total teacher recast).

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics of Successful/Unsuccessful Uptake

Uptake	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
successful	105	70.5	70.5	70.5
unsuccessful	44	29.5	29.5	100.0
Total	149	100.0	100.0	

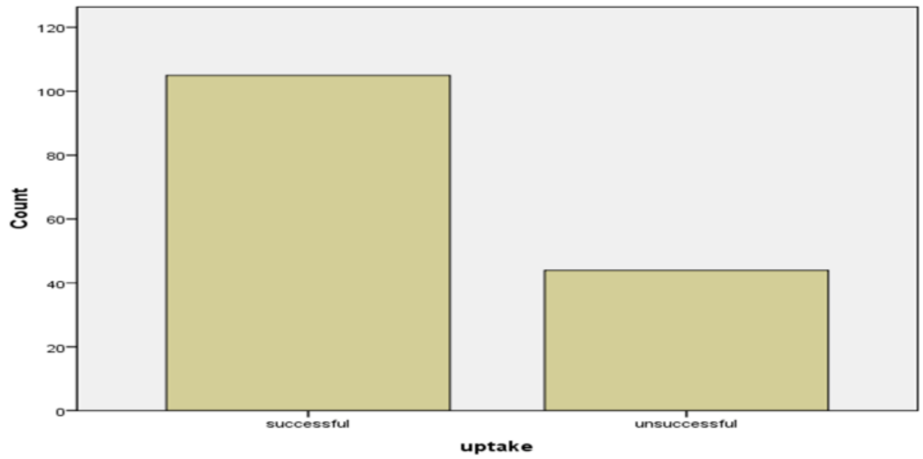

Figure 2. Schematic Representation of Successful/Unsuccessful Uptake

The examples of immediate incorporation after teacher are reflected in the following examples:

Example 1:

((From Task 1; T-L Interaction; Instance of uptake))

S: Are it blue? **Grammatical error**
T: Is it blue? **<u>Recast</u>**
S: Ok. Is it blue? **<u>Uptake</u>**

Example 2:

((From Task 2; T-L Interaction; Instance of recasts and uptake))

T: Umm. I have two cushions on the sofa.
S: Only two. I .. I have…sofa, I cushion two.
T: Two (cushions) **recast**
S: Two cushions
T: On the sofa, two **recast**
T: two cushions
S: yes, two cushions **<u>Uptake</u>**
T: Okay.

Example 3:

((From Task 2; T-L Interaction; Instance of recasts and uptake))

S: It's red bird? Grammatical error

T: It is a red bird? **Recast in the form of interrogative**

S: It's a red bird? **<u>Uptake</u>**

Example 4:

((From Task 2; T-L Interaction; Instance of recasts and uptake))

S: if she plays it, people gets sleep.(Grammatical error)
T: people go to sleep? **Recast in the form of Interrogative**
S: yeah. **<u>Uptake – needs repair</u>**

As the above excerpts revealed, the instructor reformulated the erroneous parts not to correct the error(s); rather, he used the recast as a discourse move to maintain the flow of the conversation, to deliver the message that the utterance had been understood, and to send a 'go-ahead' signal. And, the students incorporate the recast in their utterance successfully.

Example 5:

((From Task 2; T-L Interaction; Instance of recasts and no uptake))

S: He is poison.

T: could be poisonous.

S: He could bite you. **no uptake – topic continuation**

In this scenario, the student's error did not cause any problem in meaning conveyance, and the teacher carried on topic continuation without providing any feedback.

Example 6:

((From Task 1; T-L Interaction; Instance of recasts and uptakes))

S: I have a table …, I have…, I have a TV on the lamp. **Grammatical error**

T: You have a lamp on the TV. **Recast in the form of declarative**

S: Ah…., yes, I have lamp on TV, on TV. **Grammatical error, topic continuation**

T: You have a lamp on the TV? **Recast in the form of interrogative**

S: Yes. I have a lamp on the TV. ***Uptake***

In this episode, the student was talking about the story. The teacher reformulated the non-target -like statements in the form of both declarative and interrogative recasts. That is, the instructor used both modes of recast to draw learners' attention to erroneous forms. The learner then modified her incorrect utterance, making another grammatical error. After that, the instructor provided another recast in response to the error and the learner in turn correct it.

According to the aforementioned episodes, the instructor has utilized recast as a discourse move to maintain the flow of communication between in a NNS-NNS interaction. The learner then modified her incorrect utterance (uptake). That is, modified output was applied when as a learner's utterance following a morpho-syntactic corrective feedback in an attempt to modify his or her original utterance that invited a recast.

In order to answer the third research question quantitatively, the chi-squared analysis was carried out to show the frequency uptake corresponding to the modes of recasts.

One characteristic of recasts, mode, was significantly related to learner uptake. In fact, Interrogative recasts elicited a substantially a higher amount of uptake (60%) than declarative recasts (47%).

Table 3

Recast Modes and Successful Uptake

	recast	uptake
Chi-Square	11.282[a]	24.973[a]
df	1	1
Asymp. Sig.	.001	.000

As Table 3 depicts, recast types were significantly correlated to uptake with an associated significance level of .05.This means that the proportion of modes of recast is significantly different from the proportion of successful uptake.

5. Discussion

With the current interest among SLA researchers concerning the effect of recast in general and the efficiency of recast modes, the present study aimed at investigating the effects of declarative and interrogative modes of recast on EFL learners' noticing of morpho-syntactic errors. Moreover, this study offers taxonomy of the recasts that appeared in a communicative EFL classroom. The taxonomy of declarative and interrogative is used to examine the relationship between different modes of recasts and learner uptake/repair. The research questions in this study are discussed in terms of a distinction between declarative and interrogative recasts and the extent to which recasts are salient to learners both linguistically and pragmatically. The study suggests that these two different modes of recast lead to uptake/repair. The results of the research questions are discussed hereafter.

The first research question of the study examined whether learners notice morpho-syntactic recasts in NNS-NNS dyads. The findings revealed that participants tend to notice morpho-syntactic recasts and the resultant recasts could be a source of corrective feedback. The findings are consistent with previous empirical literature (Bao, Egi, & Han, 2011; Mackey, 2007; Miller &Pan, 2012; Sheen, 2006) that asserts that recasts on these errors are noticed by the learners. This study adds to the previous literature by examining the noticeability of the recasts in an EFL context.

It is noteworthy, however, that some of the participants did not grasp this noticeability of the recast. A likely interpretation is that teachers and learners in an EFL context in general and in Iran particularly are product-oriented. Epistemologically speaking, they have thought of how to get the meaning across rather than accuracy of their communication. Such learners are more concerned about communicating their messages, ideas, and meaning than being accurate. In other words, the participants' inability to get advantage of recasts to may be attributable to the differential noticeability of both recast types. It seems that this justification is more warranted in light of corrective feedback research which indicated the difficulties of the noticeability of morpho- syntactic reformulations (Mackey, 2007).

As the results of the first research question revealed, the majority of the learners have a tendency to attend the instructor‘s corrective feedback in the form of recast. Therefore, they have noticed the gap between the non-target like utterances and the correct model rendered by the instructor. However, it is necessary to take into account Schmidt's (1995) warning that "I am not so sanguine that the noticing hypothesis can be proved or disproved...reports of learning without awareness will always flounder" (p. 28). Applied to this study, most of the participants suggest that they noticed the morpho-syntactic features but did not develop, and a few learners did not report noticing the target-like items, indicating the problems Schmidt was talking about.

Concerning the second research question, the participants' noticing of morpho-syntactic errors has not been affected by modes of recast, interrogative and declarative. This finding contradicts Lyster's (2001) study, who found that declarative isolated recasts were followed by learner repairs (27 percent of time), while interrogative recast were only followed by repairs in 3 percent of interactions. Our obtained results are also inconsistent with Sheen (2006)'s findings, who asserts that declarative recasts elicited a substantially a higher amount of uptake (81%) than interrogative recasts (47%).

The current study, unlike the above reports, documented the teacher's frequently use of interrogative recast in response to erroneous utterances. On the other hand, our findings are in line with those of Mackey, Gass, and McDonough (2000) who found out that the frequent use of recasts of both types have something to do with the varying nature of both types of recast. This finding may suggest that Iranian EFL learners in this study have committed many morpho-syntactic errors and the instructor has to reformulate them in a correct form. Furthermore, it is likely that the instructor modelling of how to provide recast could have been primed the learners regarding how to respond to the morpho-syntactic recasts. Another likely interpretation of the results is related to the context of the study. Many documented research has been conducted between NS-NS, and NS-NNS dyads; the current study has been conducted between NNS-NNS dyads. Therefore, future studies should aim at probing the issues of the context and nature of the recast types.

The third question of the study sought to find a relationship between modes of recast, interrogative and declarative, and uptake/repair. Previous studies have delineated the relationship between various characteristics of recasts such as length, duration, linguistic focus, the type of change (e.g., Mackey, 2007; Panova &Lyster, 2002; Philp, 2003) and uptake. However, in the current study one under-researched feature of recast has been taken into account: mode of recast.

The findings are consistent with the work by Sheen (2006) who reports that mode of recast is related to uptake. However, a few researchers have investigated this association, and the findings in this study add insights to the limited research body.

One likely interpretation for this significant relationship between react types and uptake is the instructor’s tendency for corrective recasts. As shown in the result section, the corrective recasts resulted in high uptake and repair rates across all the morpho-syntactic types. This finding corroborates the argument posed by Ellis and Sheen (2006) who assert that the nature of ambiguity of recast and the resultant uptake rate can be solved by making the corrective force transparent. With regard to the relationship between learner errors, feedback, and uptake, there was a noteworthy tendency: Phonological errors primarily invited recasts and resulted in a high uptake rate irrespective of feedback types, even after recasts. As episodes in the previous section show, when the participants committed morpho-syntactic errors, they often signaled their uncertainty by means of paralinguistic cues such as hesitations or rising intonation.

Another likely explanation might be sought in the interactional contexts within a communicative task activity that may also influence how declarative/interrogative, and therefore how importance the reformulation is to the participants. Another probable interpretation of this association is that recasts directed at morpho-syntactic features and individual differences of the participants in the way learners participated in classroom interactions. That is, the willingness to communicate (WTC) of the participants who were active learners and willing to express ideas tended to participate in interactions more actively.

One reason for unsuccessful uptake on the part of the learners might be due to the willingness of communicates. Thus, recasts are more effective when they contain isolated interrogative recasts or corrective recasting (Lyster, 1998). However, contextual factors such as age, proficiency, educational contexts, and nature of recasts might be affected this documented relationship. However, the varying differences of the interaction and dyads of the instructor and participants in recast within a context such as Iran might be different. Thus, future researchers need to examine the differences within and across different contexts of EFL and ESL.

6. Conclusions and Pedagogical Implications

As previously mentioned, the current study aimed at examining the types of most commonly studied type of corrective feedback in interaction research, namely recasts, and lately the contribution of the two recast types, declarative and interrogative, to learners' uptake in an EFL context. The findings indicated that L2 learners tend to notice morpho-syntactic recasts and the resultant recasts could be a source of corrective feedback. It means that recasts on these morpho-syntactic errors asserts are noticed by the L2 learners and the majority of the learners have a tendency to attend the instructor‘s corrective feedback in the form of recast. Moreover, the findings revealed the association between modes of recast, interrogative and declarative, and uptake/repair.

As the literature has shown, there was a debate over the role of uptake among the researchers and in L2 learning. The findings of the current study add to the literature by reporting the link between recast and uptake. This result may infer that the presence of uptake may be a positive step in the right track but that its absence should not be taken to imply lack of noticing and finally learning (Mackey, 2007). In the current study, we positioned such reformulations that can result from interactional contexts in an EFL context that are form-focused.

Given the product-based approach to language teaching in Iran (Anani Sarab & Amini Farsani, 2014), the pedagogical implications are in order. First, the findings of this study provide evidence of the benefits of recast in the development of more accurate interlanguage development in an EFL context. That is, it shows that the NNS-NNS dyads can make recast on hand to learners as usable corrective feedback in response to the learners' erroneous utterances, thereby facilitate L2 development. Due to the quantitative -oriented context of Iran, this finding is of paramount importance to language teachers as the findings provide assistance to NNS teacher in an EFL communicative classroom in indicating more appropriate recast types. Second, teachers need to consider what types of recast they want their students to engage in NNS-NNS dyads as this kind of interaction may help to create a relaxing environment which encourages language production and active involvement in negotiation of meaning.

The major limitations of this study are 1) the researcher did not take contextual factors such as age, gender, different level of proficiency into account. Thus, further research should consider these contextual factors in the interactional communication; 2) another single task that has been utilized in the NNS-NNS dyads. The results of this study should be complemented by other studies eliciting other sources of data and tasks, such as introspective data, stimulated recall, learner logs, journal writing, etc. The task used in this study contained single type task entitled spot-the-difference. Future research should utilize more tasks and comprehensive ones in the NNS-NNS interactions.

Also, the same research can be run with EFL learners at specific proficiency levels, e.g. freshman, sophomores, juniors, and graduate students. Because of the limited scope of this study, researcher was not able to study all effective variables in the instructional practices. Therefore, to further validate the results of the current study, further research is needed to probe the other factors influencing the learners-teacher and learner-learner interactions in different EFL contexts.

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Iranian EFL Journal

Do Self-regulation, Self-efficacy, and Motivation Predict Listening Comprehension?

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Abstract

Language learning, by and large, seems too intricate a process to define. A multitude of issues needs to be tackled for learners concerning their goals, means of attaining achievement, communicative competence and the like among which affective variables merit considerable attention. The current study investigated whether self-regulation, self-efficacy, and motivation can predict Iranian upper-intermediate EFL learners' listening improvement. It also aimed to investigate the impact of listening strategies on listening enhancement. In this study, Pintrich's MSLQ, Gardner's AMTB, Sherer's GSEQ, and a researcher-made Listening Strategies Questionnaire were administered to female upper-intermediate EFL learners (N=80) to gather data on the learners' self-regulation, motivation, self-efficacy, and listening strategy interest respectively. The results indicated no significant correlation between self-regulation, self-efficacy, and motivation with respect to the learners' listening progress. Moreover, the impact of

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listening strategies on listening turned out to be statistically significant. The implications and suggestions for further research are dealt with in the study.

Keywords: Listening Strategies, Self-regulation, Self-efficacy, Motivation, EFL learners

1. Introduction

1.1. Motivation and Listening

Taking language skills into consideration, it is remarkable to assume various underlying elements in development of such skills, among which listening skill is of primary importance. Various studies reveal these elements and the way highly motivated learners enhance this receptive skill utilizing their cognitive and metacognitive knowledge. Language learners have always been seeking for ways to enhance their listening skill for which they mainly resort to the materials such as their textbook to practice. Rarely are they aware of various strategies for that purpose. These strategies turned out to be tremendously beneficial through which motivated learners can significantly develop their listening skill. "Listening tasks that guide students through the process of listening can help learners develop the metacognitive knowledge critical to the development of self-regulated listening" (Kassaian & Ghadiri, 2011, p. 1070). In two investigations by Vandergrieft (2005) on listening, students were guided in the use of prediction, individual planning, peer discussions, and post-listening reflections; the beginner-level elementary school students of French exposed to such an approach found it motivating to learn to understand rapid, authentic-type texts.

Vandergrift (2005) examined the relationships among metacognition, motivation, and listening proficiency. When listening test scores were correlated with students' levels of motivation and students' use of cognitive and metacognitive listening strategies, an interesting pattern of increasingly higher correlations among the three levels of motivation (amotivation, extrinsic motivation, and intrinsic motivation) emerged (as cited in Kassaian & Ghadiri, 2011). Kumaravadivelu (2006) claimed that "motivation is perhaps the only intake variable that has been consistently found in various contexts and at various levels of L2 development to correlate positively with successful ESL learning outcomes"(p. 40).

Vandergrift (2003) found that skilled listeners used twice as many metacognitive strategies as their less-skilled counterparts. There is some empirical evidence that an important difference between more skilled and less-skilled L2 listeners lies in the use of metacognitive strategies (e.g., Bacon, 1992; Goh, 2000; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Vandergrift, 1998, 2003).

Vandergrift, Goh, Mareschal, and Tafaghodtari (2006) in his study came up with the conclusion that listening tasks which help students deal with the process of listening by involving them in different stages of prediction, monitoring evaluation and problem solving can assist listeners to develop the meta-cognitive and strategic knowledge (as cited in Latifi, Tavakoli, & Dabaghi, 2014). Goh (2000) has found that by growing listeners' knowledge of metacognitive strategies, they will be more autonomous in solving their listening problems and that they will not give up the listening tasks very fast anymore.

1.2. Self-regulation and Listening

The listening skill is theoretically considered as "an active process in which individuals focus on selected aspects of aural input, construct meaning from passage, and relate what they hear to existing knowledge" (O'Malley et al., 1985, p. 418). Fatemi and Vahidnia (2014) states that definitions employed for self-regulation can provide support for relating psychological trait to listening comprehension among EFL learners.

Rubin (1975) is considered a pioneer in writing the first article on language learning and strategy. This article was about the techniques and approaches which were used by successful language learner (as cited in Latifi et al., 2014). Later, Joens, Plinscar, Ogle, and Carr (1987) emphasized the development of independent language learners who can manage their language learning processes. In order to find the problems of second language listeners, Goh (2000, 2002) carried out a survey on poor listening comprehension skills that revealed some of listeners' problem related to a strategy use.

Furthermore, scholars found out that the strategy use is not the only problem with second language listeners, but also it lies in their inability to orchestrate the learnt strategies. Consequently, studies change their focus and it was directed toward meta-cognitive strategies since language acquisition research has discovered that the meta-cognitive strategies and regular trainings can facilitate listeners' consciousness of listening processes (Goh, 2008). Vandergrift and Tafaghodtari (2010) investigated the effects of meta-cognitive, processes-based approach to teaching second language listening during a semester. Participants listened to some texts using a methodology that led learners through meta-cognitive processes (prediction/planning, monitoring, evaluating, and problem solving) underlying successful L2 listening (as cited in

Latifi, et al., 2014). Coskun (2010) stated that given an importance of metacognitive strategies use and listening abilities, their studies showed that the use of metacognitive strategies assisted the language Learners to get better performance in their listening proficiency (as cited in Lin & Gan, 2014). Language learners can have better self-related learning abilities after their awareness of listening is increased (Vandergrift, et al., 2006). Finally, Lin and Gan (2014) point out a number of research studies that have highlighted the metacognition and self-regulated learning (Sperling, Howard, & Staley, 2004; Sungur, 2007; Vrieling, Bastiaens, & Stinjnen, 2012).

1.3. Self-efficacy and Listening

Unquestionably, listening comprehension has always been an enormous challenge for EFL/ESL learners. While the role of self-efficacy in learning has been investigated by researchers of different disciplines, "less research has focused on self-efficacy beliefs in the context of foreign language learning" (Raoofi, Tan & Chan, 2012, p.61). As discussed earlier, both cognitive and affective factors influence the way listeners manage their listening tasks and overcome its difficulty. Rahimi and Abedi (2014) point out that "in spite of the studies that have probed into the role of self-efficacy in language learning, the role of self-efficacy in listening comprehension is still in need of research (p. 1455)."An argument less frequently made... is that effective listening ... depends on learners' self-efficacy for listening, on their confidence in the ability to make sense of the input to which they are exposed" (Graham, 2011, p. 114).

To help language learners to listen more completely and to maximize the efficiency of listening instruction in both EFL/ESL settings, the recent studies have concentrated on the ways skillful listeners process oral input with spoken message. As stated in Rahimi and Abedi (2014), some experts suggested that low level of self-efficacy among EFL learners can be related to the way listening taught as "in many language classrooms, listening takes the form of an activity to be delivered rather a skill in its own right" (Graham, 2011, p. 114). Graham and Marco (2008) believe the shift from traditional approach of teaching listening -mainly focus on comprehension to a strategy-based listening to instructions will boost EFL learners' self-efficacy (as cited in Rahimi & Abedi, 2014). Bandura (1995) opined that people persisted with the task in face of hardship obtained better results with substantially lower levels of stress. In addition, self-efficacy beliefs can contribute to one's accomplishment and well-being (Pajares, 2002).

The studies indicate that there is a relationship between effective use of listening strategies and successful listening comprehension (Vandergrift, 2003), self-regulation and autonomy in listening (Vandergrift, 2004), language learning motivation (Vandergrift, 2005) and using technology for listening (Rahimi & Katal, 2012). Graham and Marco (2008) believe learners' self-efficacy correlates with language learning strategies they utilize in their progression toward learning.

Language learners employ various affective variables to enrich their learning and to sharpen their skills. According to social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1977), once a learner faces a particular task, he/she sets his/her goal, systematically organizes certain strategies, and uses them purposely to attain the desired objectives (Bandura, 2001). While the role of self-efficacy in learning has been investigated by researchers of different disciplines, "less research has focused on self-efficacy beliefs in the context of foreign language learning" (Raoofi et al., 2012, p. 61). Self-efficacy beliefs are related to learners' attributions, the explanations individuals provide consciously or subconsciously about how well they have done the task (Hsieh & Schallevt, 2008). Raoofi et al. (2012) state that the most important finding is that learners' self-efficacy for foreign language affects performance in different fields , as proved in a multitude of studies (Hsieh & Kang, 2010; Hsieh & Schallert, 2008; Mills, Pajares, & Herron, 2006, 2007).

For meta-cognitive strategies to be efficacious, students need to be willing to learn and practice, which happens only through setting goals and regularly monitoring them, and through self-regulation (Duckworth et al., 2009). Self-regulated learning is the process of monitoring one's cognitive behavioral and affective development. Moreover, Self-regulation theory states that human endeavors are always goal-directed, intentional, effortful and voluntary (Boekaerts, de Koning, & Vedder, 2006). "Confronting multiple goals and ensuring environmental challenges, humans are capable of achieving the ends they choose to pursue because they are able to self-regulate their behavior" (Ortega, 2009, p. 211).

As it may seem, to call motivation as a major factor in achieving the language learners' success is not an overstatement. Ryan and Deci (2000) define motivation as concerning energy, direction, and persistence - all aspects of activation and intention (as cited in Kassaian & Ghadiri, 2011). Oxford and Shearnin (1996) posited that "L2 learning is a complex process in which motivation plays a major role"(p. 121). Additionally, Burden and William (1997) claim that motivation is probably the most powerful factor in learning and teachers' list. Taking all these quotes and studies into consideration, the significance of the foregoing constructs – self-regulation, self-efficacy and motivation – seems indubitable.

Therefore, this study examines the three constructs, namely self-regulation, self-efficacy and motivation and considers their relationship with upper-intermediate students' listening skill in order to see whether they can predict the learners' listening skill.

In addition, this study aims to assume the significance of listening strategies in learners' listening skill. That's what enhances teaching efficiently, which is an important aim in second and foreign language teaching. Accordingly, this study has a twofold purpose which serves as a guide on the part of both learners and teachers. Based on the aforementioned points, the present study addresses the following research questions:

1- Is there a significant relationship between the students' self- regulation, self-efficacy and motivation with respect to their listening skill?

2- Do the listening strategies influence EFL learners' listening skill?

2. Method

2.1. Participants

Through convenience sampling, 80 female upper-intermediate EFL learners in Iran language institute (ILI) in Esfahan were recruited for this study. As a popular language learning center, the ILI provides language applicants with a graded placement test followed by a structured interview out of which the final decision is made for the applicants to begin the appropriate level, ranging from Basic One to Advance Three, in order to complete the levels on a step-by-step basis. The participants of the current study were graded by the ILI criterion to be upper-intermediate English learners. They had already passed at least ten levels according to the ILI curriculum program. All the participants were educated from different academic backgrounds, ranging in age from 18 to 25. They were recruited for the study in the second season of academic year i.e. summer 2015. They did not receive any listening courses prior to the treatment of this study. Participants were informed that they were under no obligation to take part in this study. We gained permission to use collected data in our study for academic publication. After recruiting the participants, they were divided into experimental and control groups: two groups as the experimental and two groups as the control group. The experimental group received a 15-hour listening-strategy treatment for around two months, whereas the control group had no treatment. There are various statistical considerations in later part.

2.2. Instrumentation

There are numerous materials to measure different affective variables such as motivation, self-regulation and self-efficacy. In the current study, we benefited from the most frequently used questionnaires for each construct. Another reason for manipulation of these instruments is their high validity and reliability which has been verified frequently in numerous studies and recommended by experts in the field.

2.2.1. Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ)

To measure the self-regulation construct, we used Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ) which was prepared according to the procedure used by Pintrich and De Groot (1990). It is an 81-item; self-report instrument designed to measure the students' motivational orientations and their use of different learning strategies. MSLQ is based on a five-scale Likert scale with two major sections out of which the second set of questions (50 items) was used in the current study, simply because the questions were related to the students' self-regulatory abilities, the former section (31 items) was eliminated since it was meant to measure students' goals, value beliefs, and motivation, hence has very little to do with the construct under investigation. This instrument comprises 50 questions on a five-point Likert scale according to which students are asked to choose from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The subdivisions include Rehearsal (4 items), Elaboration (6 items), Organization (4 items). Critical Thinking (5 items), Metacognitive Self-Regulation (12 items), Time/Study Environment (8 items), Effort Regulation (4 items), Peer Learning (3 items) and Help Seeking (4 items). The reliability of the original version of MSLQ calculated using Cronbach's alpha formula is 0.940 (Pintrich et al., 1990). As stated previously, this tool has been numerously employed in studies (e.g., Eom & Reiser, 2000; Niemi, Nevgi, & Virtanen, 2003).

2.2.2. Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB)

The next instrument we applied in the study to measure motivation called the Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) introduced by Gardner (1985). As clarified previously, this measuring tool has been numerously employed in a significantly large number of studies (e.g., Hashwani, 2008; Ghanbarpour, 2014; Lin & Gan, 2014; Softa, 2014). As Gardner (1985) and several other scholars recommended, we abridged the questionnaire to make it more appropriate for this study: rather than administering 104-item questionnaires on a seven-point Likert scale, we applied five-point questionnaires with thirty items focusing on the three scales of Motivational Intensity (10 items), Attitudes toward Learning English (10 items), and Desire to learn English (10 items). The Persian equivalent translation of the two questionnaires was used in the current study and piloted prior to their administration. The reliability of the original version of AMTB calculated using Cronbach's alpha formula is .85 (Gardner, 1985).

2.2.3. General Self-Efficacy Questionnaire (GSEQ)

The next measuring instrument was General Self-Efficacy Questionnaire (GSEQ) by Sherer et al. (1982) to examine the self-efficacy construct. This entails 17 questions on five-point Likert Scale which begins from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). As previously mentioned in the literature, there are frequent studies in which GSEQ was applied which made us decide to administer it to measure the self-efficacy construct. Chen, Gully, & Eden (2001) found more than 200 published studies that have used this instrument to measure learners' self-efficacy; hence its reliability and validity have been conclusively admitted by many scholars. The components include: Initiative (4 items), Effort (7 items) and Persistence (6 items). Sherer et al. (1982), found that the General Self-efficacy has adequate reliability (Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients =.86). This questionnaire has frequently been translated into various languages including Persian.

2.2.4. Oxford Listening Strategies Questionnaire (OLSQ)

This 20-item questionnaire was adopted from Oxford (1990) and translated by the researcher. Prior to the administration of this tool, it was modified and examined by two Iranian PhD students in Esfahan University and re-examined by two PhD holders to confirm the content and wording of questionnaire. Additionally, four experienced ILI teachers announced their agreement on its credibility. Then it was modified and re-translated by the researcher. The subcategories include Memory Strategies (7 items), Cognitive Strategies (11 items), Guessing Intelligibly (1 item), and Metacognitive Strategies (1 item). These listening strategies were selected due to their significance as recommended by experts and the thesis committee members.

2.2.5. Level-Appropriate, Upper-Intermediate Listening Tests

Finally, as for the listening tests, the current study assessed the participants' listening skill by administering graded, level-appropriate, upper-intermediate listening tests given to the ILI (Iran Language Institute) students to examine the students' listening skill. The ten-item listening test included five short conversations (5 items), and one lecture (5 items) in American and British accents. These tests have been meticulously graded by the knowledgeable authorities of the Testing Department at the ILI. The researcher gained permission for administering the ILI listening tests. Owing to the popularity of the ILI, we figured that ILI listening tests can be considerably appropriate for the purpose of our study.

2.3. Procedure

This study has been organized in the following way:

. Recruiting the subjects for the main study through convenience sampling
. Providing students with a list of 20 listening strategies and choosing the strategies deem useful to them
. Dividing subjects into experimental and control group
. Piloting the instruments
. Administering three questionnaires to both groups prior to the course
. Giving pretest listening exam to both groups at the outset of the course
. Launching the listening strategies course for the experimental group
. Giving posttest listening exam to both groups at the end of the course
. Collecting and analyzing data using SPSS software

To measure the three constructs, all the participants were provided with the questionnaires prior to commencing the listening course in three sessions. During session one, their self-regulation level was measured and during session two and three their motivation and self-efficacy levels for which they spent approximately 90 minutes to complete, so their motivation, self-regulation and self-efficacy levels were measured. On the 4th session, they were presented the ILI listening tests. In connection with listening strategies, we prepared a list of 20 strategies based on Oxford (1990). This list was administered to the experimental group to select the ones they were intrigued by. Fifteen out of 20 were selected since their mean scores were below 3.4, therefore listening strategies number 2, 7. 13, 17, and 19 were excluded and that established the framework for the listening strategies course. The experimental group was instructed in all these fifteen listening strategies for fifteen hours that lasted around two months. Following that, there was ILI listening test. The control group received no treatment. Initially, the experimental group was given a 20-item list of listening strategies to select their favorite ones according to which fifteen were selected. Then, the group was divided into two. They were instructed in fifteen listening strategies for fifteen hours which lasted around two months. The purpose was to show the students how they could adjust their listening behavior to deal with a variety of situations, types of input, and listening purposes. The program was on a sixteen-session basis, each session around fifty minutes. The classes were held twice a week during which they were taught various listening strategies. Some strategies needed longer time to practice than others. For instance, strategy number 18, i.e. summarizing, required the learners to listen to an excerpt, read by the teacher, and to summarize what they heard in twenty words. As expected, they found it a demanding task since they did not know how to summarize. Then, the teacher explained the way to do the task by focusing on the main points and not considering unimportant parts served as distractors. Then, it was followed by more excerpts to practice to gain better results.

It seems essential to point out that the control group did not receive any treatment since they represented the traditionally-instructed group of learners compared to the experimental group who were instructed in listening strategies.

Finally, we compared the result of two listening tests among different groups in order to find out the effect of the treatment on the learners under study. The listening tests and the results along with their questionnaires were prepared for analysis. Needless to say any measurement tool in all studies needs to be highly reliable and valid. Scholars have many other reasons for choosing an instrument which include ease of administration, scoring, interpretation and practicality. The questionnaires administered in this study have been frequently tested and approved by numerous researchers, among many others (e.g., DeBruin, Thiede, & Camp, 2011; Faghihi, 2013; Gardner & Tremblay, 1994). These measurement tools have been administered and translated in different languages and proved to be appropriate tools to be employed in studies. Using Cronbach's alpha, the internal consistency (reliability) of .895 for self-regulation, .749 for self-efficacy, and .736 for motivation questionnaires was obtained.

As for validity, all instruments (self-regulation, self-efficacy, motivation, listening-strategies questionnaires) were examined, assessed and confirmed by four faculty members at Esfahan and Najafabad Universities. In some cases, the researcher modified some items as recommended by the experts in the field. Therefore, all the instruments seemed highly valid and reliable.

3. Results

To address the research questions, this study presented four questionnaires: three questionnaires to measure self-regulation, motivation, and self-efficacy levels, and one listening strategies questionnaire to determine the subjects' level of interest. In addition, two listening tests- pretest and posttest- were administered.

For the first research question, the study attempts to clarify whether or not listening improvement in learners can be predicted by measuring the three constructs of self-regulation, self-efficacy, and motivation. To attain the results, the regression coefficient measure (*R*) was used. Table 1 indicates multiple correlation coefficient value among the self-regulation, motivation, and self-efficacy variables in relation to listening skill:

Table 1

Model Summary

R	R Square
.034	.001

The multiple correlation coefficient is intended to measure the degree of linear association between multiple independent variables (self-regulation, motivation, self-efficacy) and the dependent variable (listening). The computed multiple correlation coefficient is represented by the notion *R*. The value must fall within the range 0 to +1. The closer the value of *R* is to 1, the stronger the linear relationship between the criterion variables, whereas the closer it is to 0, the weaker the linear relationship. The results indicated the multiple correlation coefficient value of R =.034 and R^2 =.001.

To examine the suitability of the model, ANOVA test, along with *F* value, was employed. The hypothesis is formed as the following:

Table 2

ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	.369	3	.123	.029	.993
Residual	326.381	76	4.294		

Total	326.750	79

According to the results of Table 2., p = .993, which is greater than 0.05, so H0 is accepted (p > .05) and the model is not suitable signifying that none of the independent variables predicted the development of the students' listening skill.

The second research question was to find out whether listening strategies influence EFL learners' listening comprehension.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics of listening Tests and Questionnaires

		N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Experimental	Pretest	40	2.00	8.00	4.60	1.67
	Posttest	40	4.00	10.00	7.22	1.36
	efficacy	40	1.53	4.76	3.30	.56
	regulation	40	2.49	4.30	3.58	.47
	motivation	40	2.23	4.30	3.02	.39
Control	Pretest	40	.00	8.00	4.32	1.87
	Posttest	40	1.00	8.00	4.52	1.66
	efficacy	40	2.00	4.69	3.24	.594
	regulation	40	2.78	4.72	3.85	.46
	motivation	40	2.60	4.40	3.22	.54

As Table 3. shows, in the experimental group, the lowest mark in the pretest listening is 2.00 (M = 4.6, SD = 1.67) and the highest mark is 10.00 in the posttest listening (M = 7.22, SD = 1.36). As for the questionnaires, the lowest mean value belongs to motivation (M = 3.02, SD =.39), while the highest one goes to self-regulation questionnaire (M = 3.58., SD = .47). In the control group, the lowest listening mark is .00 in pretest (M = 4.32, SD = 1.87) and the highest mark is 8.00 in posttest (M = 4.52, SD = 1.66). Among questionnaires, the lowest mean value belongs to motivation (M = 3.22, SD = .545) and the highest to self-regulation (M = 3.85, SD = .460) respectively. The first step is to test the normality level of the listening tests; hence Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was performed. Table 4 shows the results:

Table 4

Tests of Normality

		Experimental		Control	
		Pretest	Posttest	Pretest	Posttest
Kolmogorov-Smirnov	Statistic	.181	.164	.169	.145
	Sig.	.002	.008	.006	.033

To accept or reject the hypothesis, based on *z* score, the *p*-values or sig values are calculated based on which the *p*-value indicating the lower result than 0.05 means the H0 is rejected whereas the *p*-value greater than 0.05 means the opposite i.e. H0 is accepted. The *p*-values of listening pretest and posttest in both experimental and control group were calculated ($p < .05$) indicating that the sample under study was not normal, therefore Wilcoxon matched-pairs signed-ranks as a non-parametrical test was employed to deal with the question. As a non-parametric test, Wilcoxon matched-pairs signed-ranks was employed to compare the results of pretest and posttest in the experimental group. Table 5 demonstrates the results of the experimental group:

Table 5

Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test

	Ranks & Test Statistics		
Posttest - Pretest of Experimental	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Negative Ranks	2[a]	16.75	33.50
Positive Ranks	34[b]	18.60	632.50
Ties	4[c]		
Total	40		
Z		-4.729	
Asymp. Sig.		.000	

a. Posttest < Pretest
b. Posttest > Pretest
c. Posttest = Pretest

According to the result, among 40 learners in the experimental group, only two learners (*M* = 16.75) gained lower marks in the posttest, whereas 34 learners (*M* = 18.60) received higher marks. The p-value signified 0.000 which is lower than 0.05. Figure 1 illustrates this difference. The letters a and b denote a major difference:

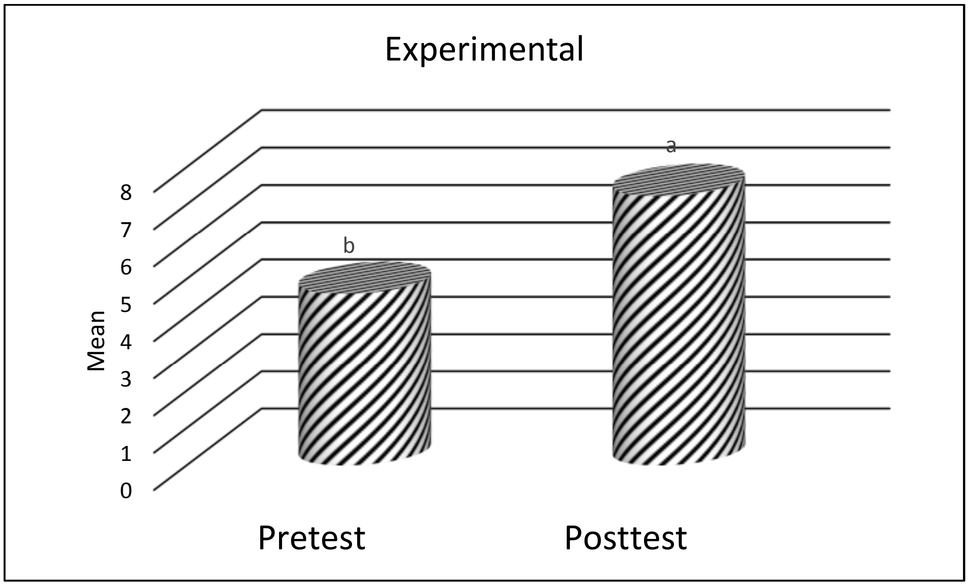

Figure 1. Pretest and posttest mean values of experimental group

According to the results obtained from both research questions, measuring the learners' self-regulation, self-efficacy and motivation did not account for any significant variation in listening improvement, i.e., these variables could not be measured topredict the learners' enhancement in listening skill. As for the second question, the result indicated a profound effect of listening strategies in facilitating listening tasks.

4. Discussion

The study examined two null hypotheses: (1) There is no relationship between the students' self-regulation, self-efficacy, and motivation with respect to their listening skill. (2) Listening strategies do not considerably influence EFL learners' listening skill. The basic idea behind the first hypothesis was to examine whether these affective variables could determine the learners' success in their listening comprehension. Surprisingly, according to the results, the first null hypothesis was accepted indicating that there was not a strong relationship between these affective variables and the learners' listening skill and there must be some other contributing factors to enhance learners' listening level. Therefore, it was concluded that measuring these affective variables could not predict the learners' enhancement in listening skill.

This study produced results which corroborate the findings of a bulky body of research studies on affective variables (DeBruin et al., 2011; Faghihi, 2013; Masgoret & Gardner, 2003; Rahimi & Abedi, 2014; Ushioda, 2009;) which examined various constructs of self-regulation, self-efficacy, and motivation. Regarding the affective variables of motivation, the findings of this study are in line with Harputla and Ceylan, (2014), where they examined the effects of motivation and metacognition strategy use on EFL listening proficiency. The results showed that the correlation between listening proficiency and intrinsic motivation was not significant. Likewise, in another study conducted by Baleghizadeh and Rahimi, (2011), the result indicated there was no significant relationship between listening performance and motivation. Other studies with the same correlational result include Noels, Clement and Pelletier (2001), and Vandergrift (2005).

Although a large body of literature supports predictive nature of self-regulation with relation to listening improvement, self-regulation was not always supported. These studies include O'Malley et al., (1985), Ozekis, (2000), and Cross (2009), whose findings are in line with the current study. With regard to the impact of self-efficacy on the learners' performance, Raoofi et al. (2012) reviewed 32 articles among which seven articles indicated a strong significant negative relationship between one's self-efficacy and EFL performance (Anyadubalu, 2010; Cubuku, 2008; Erkan & Saban, 2011; Graham, 2006; Mills, Pajarest & Herron, 2006; Hsieh & Keng, 2010; Hsieh & Schallert, 2008).

With respect to the second null hypothesis, the study aimed to see whether language learners could enhance their listening comprehension by applying listening strategies or it would make no difference for learners to be instructed traditionally, i.e. the current method of teaching listening in classes in which teachers merely play and pause the CD and have inattentive learners repeat that part. The results proved that learners could certainly gain from listening strategies and the current method of teaching listening in classes simply did not work. Thus, based on the results taken from these questionnaires, it was strongly affirmed that manipulation of listening strategies can significantly result in improved listening skill among EFL learners. The findings of the current study accord with numerous results with respect to the significance of listening strategies to promote learners' listening skill (Goh, 2002; Latifi, 2014; Lin & Gan, 2014; Sungur, 2007; Vandergrift & Tafaghodtari, 2010; Vrieling et al., 2012). In a study conducted by Coskun et al. (2011), the significance of metacognition listening strategies use and listening ability was examined and the results showed that the manipulation of listening strategies assisted the learners' performance in their listening proficiency.

5. Conclusion and Implications

Some of the issues emerging from the findings of this study relate to the significance of listening strategies, affective variables and language skills. Although the findings revealed no significant relationship between self-regulation, self-efficacy, motivation, and listening skill, which is contrary to expectation, it is worth considering the reasons behind this finding to see what can bring about such results amongst learners. Therefore, teachers should bear in mind their learners' individual differences in terms of such affective variables. One very simple implication might be that teachers try to promote and value affective factors such as self- regulation, self-efficacy, and motivation in their classes. More importantly, the way listening is taught in the present education system needs substantial improvement. In a foreign language context like Iran, the method of teaching listening is nothing but having the students listen then repeat the listening episode without informing them of the existence of listening strategies. Consequently, students find listening tasks so difficult, which should not be the case. Thus, teachers should be equipped with these listening strategies to enhance their instruction so that they could better teach learners how to get the input. On the other hand, students themselves can be informed of the significance of such strategies which yield to more competent listeners. Still another implication could be for material designers to feed their books with practical, hands-on materials so that learners apprehend the significance of listening strategies to overcome their learning obstacles.

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