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DESCRIPTION

Iranian Journal of Language Studies (IJLS) is devoted to all areas of language and linguistics. Its aim is to present work of current interest in all areas of language study. No particular linguistic theories or scientific trends are favored: scientific quality and scholarly standing are the only criteria applied in the selection of papers accepted for publication. *IJLS* publishes papers of any length, if justified, as well as review articles surveying developments in the various fields of language study (including Language Teaching, Language Testing, TESOL, ESP, Pragmatics, Sociolinguistics, (Critical) Discourse Analysis, Curriculum Development, Politeness Research, Classroom Research, Language Policy, and so on). Also, a considerable number of pages in each issue are devoted to critical book reviews. *IJLS* commenced publication 2006 for people involved in language and linguistic studies.

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Monitoring the implementation of the reformulation technique in the EFL writing class: A case study in Argentina

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This case study sets out to evaluate the effectiveness of the implementation of the reformulation technique in the L2 writing class at the public institute of Foreign Languages and Arts Josefina Contte, Corrientes, Argentina. The participants of this study were 18 students whose ages ranged from 16 to 18. Their level of English language competence at the time this project was carried out was pre-intermediate. After this writing project was implemented, all the students' written assignments were critically analysed and interpreted in the light of the current literature on L2 writing skill teaching. For reasons of practicality and space, the analysis of only 5 of these written samples will be shown in this study. The final results obtained revealed that the use of the reformulation technique in the writing class helped these students make significant linguistic changes in their L2 written productions. After interpreting these findings some recommendations for further research in this area were given.

1. Introduction

For the last two decades, although some L2 trainers and methodologists have been looking for ways of acknowledging writing skill teaching and emphasising its major contribution to SLA (second language acquisition), in many contexts writing has been considered only as a support system for learning grammar and vocabulary exclusively rather than a skill on its own right (Harmer, 2004). The truth is that many teachers realise that writing is a problem for their students because, sometimes, when involved in this complex process, their learners experienced frustration and demotivation. This might be the result of their not being taught explicitly how to deal with the development of their writing skills throughout their schooling years.

For a long time now, different approaches to teaching writing have been confronted and compared, and this, as a result, has brought about a great controversy in the field as to which one seems to be the most beneficial for L2

learners. With the intention of seeking a rewarding alternative, this work aims to identify some differences as well as some areas of convergence between the current main approaches to writing skill teaching and, in so doing, explore and analyse in depth the reformulation technique as one way of feedback provision to student writers.

The purpose of this case study is to evaluate the effectiveness of the implementation of the reformulation technique in the writing class with a group of 18 students aged 16-18 at the public institute of Foreign Languages and Arts Josefina Contte, Corrientes, Argentina. In the first part of this work, the literature review will be presented which will be used throughout this paper as a framework to critically analyse the findings obtained. In the second part, the study will be outlined and the participants and context will be described. Subsequently, the findings emerging from the instrument for data collection used in this study will be analysed and interpreted. Finally, some suggestions will be given.

2. Literature review

Generally speaking, many writing teachers do not always accomplish to only one approach to teaching writing skills. With the purpose of obtaining better results they usually conflate them to meet their students' needs and cater for their individual differences. On these same grounds, and in order to accomplish this same goal, this present study will report on a case study in which a process-genre oriented methodology for teaching writing will be implemented and the reformulation technique for feedback provision will be critically analysed.

Among the different approaches to teaching writing, Harmer (2004) explains that when students work under the genre approach they are pushed to decide on the purpose and audience of their work, and to construct it responding to the expectations of a given discourse community. But knowledge of genre is not the only notion student writers require to become competent writers. Student writers also need general knowledge of the world as well as socio-cultural and topic knowledge. In the genre approach, students are made to follow a given pattern of construction to produce a new version of a text. Harmer emphasises that "all texts can be analysed in terms of their strict formulae governing their construction" (2004, p. 86).

The genre approach involves the use of model texts or schematic structures on which students are expected to base their works. Modelling, then, entails analysis of texts in terms of purpose, message, structure and grammar and this requires researching and, as Gee points out "scaffolding" (Gee, 1997, p. 38 in Luchini, 2002) to accommodate the generic structure of the text that students will produce later. That is, students are presented with an explicit framework or with a scaffold for their writing where the focus is on the generic structure, its grammar and the organisation of the content knowledge into a structure. Moreover, learners under this approach, learn grammar through writing, in that they learn the grammar of writing through understanding how their own writing functions (Luchini, 2003).

Critics of the genre approach, however, claim that its focus in class is merely on copying and imitating a given model text and that its ultimate goal is an error-free coherent piece of writing (Nunan, 1989). Students are made to study models and complete exercises in which they are pushed to draw their attention to relevant linguistic features present in the texts being used (Clenton, 2002). These students, then, are encouraged to produce parallel texts using their own information. Escholz (1980) says that students use the same schematic plan in different settings, applying the same form regardless of content. This means that teachers who pursue this approach present their students with authoritative texts for them to imitate and adapt. Over-emphasis on genre constructions, it might be argued, may limit students to imitate what other people have written (Harmer, 2004).

On the other hand, when analysing the nature of the process approach to teaching L2 writing, it is possible to observe that it was born as a reaction against the product approach. According to Nunan (1989), the product approach to writing focuses on the end result of the act of composition, so the teacher is concerned with the fact that the end product is readable, grammatically correct and obeys discourse conventions relating to main points. Teachers in their role of instilling correctness and conformity, see errors as something they have to correct and eliminate. Extending on this same view, McDonough and Shaw (1993) consider that the product approach places emphasis on accuracy over meaning, and focuses its attention on the finished product. Under this writing approach the teacher acts as a judge of the finished work and writing has an overall consolidating function. So from considering writing as a reinforcement activity that aims mainly at the

storage of surface structural knowledge, focusing on the final product in itself, we will now move on to the process writing approach whose principal goal resides in the writers and their processes to obtain such product.

Process approach is associated with freedom, self expression and creativity as Caudery mentions "...it is a highly complex and variable process whereby sub-process are intertwined in brief episodes" (Caudery, 1997, p.6. in Luchini, 2002). Following with this idea, Nunan (1989) defines process approach "as the act of composing through several stages as the writer discovers what it is that he is trying to say. The process approach can be considered as a reaction against the product approach in the sense that it offers students levels of fluency and expression (Harmer, 2004). This process is affected by the content, type and medium in which the text is written, and it comprises at least four main stages: planning, drafting, editing and a creating a final version. The process of writing, as can be observed, is not linear, but recursive in nature (Harmer, 2004). On similar grounds, Hedge (2000) sees process writing as the result of employing an assorted range of strategies to make a composing process become gradually a text. This process involves a number of activities such as setting goals, generating ideas, organizing information, selecting appropriate language, making a draft, reading and reviewing it, revising and editing.

The process approach enables students to have a more genuine purpose to write and a stronger sense of the audience for whom they are writing (Holmes, 2001). Although it is not always possible to provide students with an audience to write to, Tribble (1997) suggests that the simple incorporation of peer-conferencing sessions into a writing lesson can achieve this aim as "knowing that your peers will be evaluating your work provides a more motivating context in which to write than writing for an entirely fictitious reader" (Tribble, 1997, p. 106). The main aim of the process approach, according to Hedge (2000), is "to help students to gain greater control over the cognitive strategies involved in composing and this suggests a number of principles that writing teachers should incorporate into their teaching of writing (Hedge, 2000). These principles are:

- Discussing the topic
- Getting or generating ideas

- Planning through different activities such as brainstorming, note-taking, asking questions, mind maps, spider-grams, using visuals and charts, dramatizations, role plays and/or simulations.
- Selecting ideas.
- Identifying audience.
- Organising and structuring of texts.
- Drafting.
- Using revision strategies where learners, working individually or in groups, are encouraged to review their outcomes by means of different techniques such as reformulation through which learners have the possibility of looking at different ways of improvement by comparing a target model with their own texts.
- Proof-reading.

The way teachers respond to their students' works plays a major role in the teaching of writing. The provision of constructive feedback definitely influences the students' performance when writing a text. Teachers' intervention should be designed "to help students edit and move forward to a new draft" (Harmer, 2004, p. 109). This is known as responding to students' works, which is defined by Harmer (2004) as "the concern of teachers with the content and design of their students' writings" (2004, p. 109). Holmes (2001) expands on this notion stating that teachers working under this scheme respond not as judges or evaluators, but as genuine and interested readers and, in so doing, they turn the feedback process "into something more human, less threatening and a more positive, valuable and effective experience to the student" (2001, p. 3).

In his paper entitled *Providing Feedback on ESL Students' Written Assignments,* William states that "the goal of feedback is to teach skills that help students improve their writing proficiency to the point where they are cognizant of what is expected of them as writers and are able to produce it with minimal error and maximum clarity" (2003, p. 1)*.* He categorises feedback into *feedback on form***,** in which the teacher corrects surface errors by marking the type and place of mistake or by underlining them to indicate only their presence; and *feedback on content***,** where the teacher writes comments on drafts pointing out discursive problems belonging to a deeper structure and offering suggestions for their improvement.

Following these ideas, feedback on form can be counterproductive as it could be unclear and inconsistent, having students merely copy the corrections provided by their instructors in their subsequent drafts. One of the ways to solve this problem would be to assign students a set of symbols to indicate place and type of error, and train them to use them. On the other hand, William suggests that comments made by writing instructors as regards feedback on content, can be "vague, contradictory and inconsistent", leading students to frustration or confusion (2003, p. 1). To solve this problem, then, teachers should employ a "standard of clear and direct comments and questions to indicate place and type of content feedback" (2003, p. 1).

A distinction between the provision of oral and written feedback should be made when looking at a piece of writing. When providing oral feedback, teachers, most of the times, have the possibility of being face-to-face with their students, so they can make some comments to their students personally. An example of this technique are conferences whereby "through careful questioning, the teacher can support a student writer in getting ideas together, organizing them and finding appropriate language" (Hedge, 2000, p. 313). Another type of oral feedback is peer response, in which students read each other's papers and provide their classmates with some kind of feedback (Kroll, 2001). Peer response in the L2 classroom must be "modelled, taught and controlled" (Kroll, 2001, p. 228) and one way of achieving this goal could be through teachers providing their students with a short list of directed questions or checklist, as it is important that students have the necessary teacher's guidance when reviewing their partners' written assignments (Harmer, 2004).

Written feedback, on the other hand, centres around error correction and this mainly consists in the "elimination of grammatical problems and stylistics infelicities for the production of good prose, considering the fact that the text is complete in terms of having been shaped by content, organization, attention to the needs of the reader and a consideration to its purpose" (Kroll, 2001, p. 229). Nevertheless, a distinction between correcting and responding should be made.

Harmer (2004) points out that when teachers respond to students' work, they are not only concerned with the accuracy of their performance, but also with the content and design of their learners' work. He goes on to say that responding to students' work is like entering a kind of affective dialogue with

them, whereby teachers discuss their writings rather than judge them. Correcting, on the other hand, is "the stage at which teachers indicate that something is not right… on issues such as syntax (word order), concord (grammatical agreement), collocations or word choice" (Harmer, 2004, p. 109). Harmer (2004) claims that in process writing, responding is often more appropriate than correcting.

When correcting errors, teachers should bear in mind *when*, *which*, *how* and *who* will correct them. The correction of students' errors can turn out to be a counterproductive activity for learners, particularly, if teachers just focus on their students' insecurities instead of drawing their attention to the kind of revision they must attend to (Kroll, 2001). There are different approaches as regards *how* to correct the students' mistakes: (i) to write a mark next to it, (ii) to provide the correct form, (iii) to label specific errors, for example, word order or spelling, (iv) to indicate that there is a mistake without specifying its precise location or (v) to ignore specific mistakes and concentrate on content (Kroll, 2001, p. 230).

A very useful technique for providing feedback to student writers is that of *reformulation*. This technique, which will be the one employed and evaluated in this study, constitutes "a useful procedure when students have produced a first draft and are moving on to look at more local possibilities for improvement" (Hedge, 2000, p. 313). The reformulation technique was born as a result of error analysis in the 1970's. Levenston, in 1978, developed the idea of reconstruction as presented by Pit Corder in 1971, who, back in that time, said that a reconstructed sentence is "what a native speaker of the target language would have said to express a certain meaning in a certain context, it was a translated equivalent" (in Myers 1997, p. 2).

Levenston (1978) considered that for a composition to sound more *native-like*, it would take a process called *reformulation* to take into account rhetorical factors other than only grammar. The reformulator should "re-write the paper so as to preserve as many of the writer's ideas as possible, while expressing them in his/her own words so as to make the piece sound native-like" (Cohen , 1989 in Myers 1997, p. 2). Reformulation as defined by Allwright consists in:

> … an attempt by a native writer to understand what a non-native writer is trying to say and then to re-write it in more natural to the

native writer. This rewriting involves making changes of any kind and at all levels: syntax, lexis, cohesion and discourse functions, but the point of any such changes must be to respect and bring out the original writer's probable intentions. A reformulation therefore is intended to offer a sympathetic reader's interpretation in acceptable English, of the original writer's text. (1986, p. 111)

One of the advantages of using the reformulation technique in the L2 writing class is that it "provides students with opportunities to notice any differences between the target model and their own productions" (Hedge, 2000, p. 313), and this, although it may be argued, contributes to promote second language acquisition. It also "allows for discussion of certain aspects such as how ideas are developed, how a range of structures, vocabulary, or connecting devices can be used, and how the writing style needs to be adapted to meet the readers' needs and purposes (Hedge, 2000, p. 315).

Allwright (1986) considers different stages for reformulation. Firstly, all the students in a class should carry out the same guided written task to ensure that the content and organization of their outcome is similar among themselves. Secondly, each student should write a first draft and hand it in to their instructor who, later on, will mark those areas that need to be improved. After looking at all the written works, the writing teacher chooses one student's essay and reformulates it, trying to keep the original's ideas, but improving the expression in terms of language accuracy and appropriacy. Subsequently, the original and the reformulated texts are photocopied and handed in to students. Students are asked to compare both versions in order to find differences as regards form and content cues. The class, guided by their instructor, may work in pairs or in groups to identify, analyse and discuss these differences. In this way, the whole class engages in discussions on key issues of the academic writing process aiming at promoting the autonomy that the students need to become competent L2 writers in the future (Allwright, 1988, in Clenton, 2002). Finally, in the light of these informed discussions, the students go through their own first drafts and revise them for improvement (in Hedge, 2000).

Back in 1988, Allwright, Woodley and Allwright did a research work following the format of case studies on the use of the reformulation technique in an L2 writing class at a British University in order to explore to which extent this technique influenced, if at all, non-native writers. This feedback procedure

was implemented in a ten-week course whose classes met for three hours a week. As a starting point, they assigned all their students the same written task in order to ensure compatibility. After the students completed their task, the researchers picked out one at random and gave it out to a native speaker of English for reformulation. On looking at the student's version, the native speaker re-wrote those sections which he/she thought needed to be expressed more naturally. The point of any change suggested by this assessor was mainly to bring out the original writer's probable intentions. The non-native original first draft and the reformulated version were typed and then distributed among all the students. The learners were asked to explore and discuss both versions, note similarities and differences among them and consider possible reasons for and effects of the changes suggested.

The aim of these activities was to have the students consider the implications of the changes made, decide on more appropriate ways to improve their pieces, and reflect on their own writing skill. In cases such as this, the discussion is more important than the actual reformulation task as it ensures that the reformulation itself is not misled and is used creatively as a starting point of the whole process of reconstruction. In their findings these researchers claimed that 79 % of the modifications their students had made in their second drafts, after having used the reformulation technique, rendered their versions a more native-like aspect. They also stated that these students reported having lowered their anxiety and inhibitions to write. Although some critics of the reformulation technique claim that it merely provides students with a model for them to copy, these researches support the view that this technique for feedback provision is a viable way of helping non-native writers to move nearer native-writers' norms.

The theoretical principles underpinning this section will be partly used as criteria to evaluate the usefulness of employing the reformulation technique in a writing class at the public institute of Foreign Languages and Arts - Josefina Contte- in Corrientes, Argentina.

3. METHOD
3.1. Context and participants

The students who participated in this project were 18 students among 16 and 18 years old in their 5th level at the public institute of Foreign Languages and Arts Josefina Contte, in Corrientes, Argentina. Their level of English

competence at the time this project was undertaken was pre-intermediate. This project started in July, 2005 and lasted once semester approximately. While one of the authors of the present study was in charge of teaching this class where the reformulation technique was implemented, the other contributed with the design, evaluation and later report of the findings obtained. As an academic requirement from the school authorities of this institute, the students had to employ a course book which they had begun using at the beginning of that academic term. Therefore, the teacher in charge had to adapt some of the activities presented in this course book to meet the objectives set for this present project.

3.2. Implementation of the project

A battery of staged tasks was designed to be taught over a five-lesson period (Appendix A). Most of these tasks revolved around the contents presented in the students' course book which was assigned by the school authorities. Throughout the project, the learners were exposed to the narrative mode of writing and were asked to follow a set of stages to complete the given tasks.

Firstly, they had to choose what type of story to write. Secondly, they were asked to brainstorm ideas related to the characters in the story chosen, the setting, and the plot for which they had to anticipate the conflict, describe it in details, and find a suitable resolution. After that they were asked to write a timeline of the story chosen following a sequence of events in order of importance, and finally they were asked to write a four-paragraph first draft.

After the students turned in their first draft, the teacher chose one of their works randomly and reformulated it, "trying to preserve as many of the writer's ideas as possible, while expressing them in his/her own words so as to make the piece sound native-like" (Cohen,1989, in Myers, 1997: 2). Subsequently, the teacher projected the original version through an overhead projector on a white board. On looking at the selected version on the board, the whole class discussed assorted types of mistakes related to grammar, vocabulary and overall discursive features. In doing so, the teacher intervened and along with her students negotiated a grading system on which, later on, the students would have to base their own self-corrections.

The students were asked to read the first sentence of the projected text and spot those areas that they considered needed to be modified. At this stage, they were asked to use the correction code, wherever possible, which they

had previously negotiated. Once they were able to identify some of the faulty areas in the first sentence, the teacher projected the first sentence in the reformulated version and placed it below the first sentence in the original version. On comparing and contrasting the two versions, the learners discussed in pairs the types of changes they thought they needed to be made. Then, they were asked to report their findings to the whole class.

The same procedure was followed with the rest of the text allowing the students some time to find those areas in style, coherence and cohesion that needed improvement. The intention, at that stage, was to make the students become aware that re-writing and revision phases are integral to writing and that editing is an ongoing, multi-level process, not just a checking for correct grammar (Myers, 1997).

Once the students finished analysing both versions, the teacher distributed their first drafts to each one, and they exchanged them with their partners for peer correction. Based on the negotiated correction code system, they looked at their classmates' works. Following their partner-assessors' comments and suggestions, the student-authors re-wrote their tasks and handed them in to their instructor along with the first draft. Their teacher made some comments on their second drafts, and, eventually, she assigned them a final mark.

3.3. Instruments and analyses

The instrument for data collection used in this study was the set of 18 written samples drawn from the students' productions gathered at the end of this project. For reasons of practicality and space, only five of these eighteen samples will be critically analysed here with the intention of illustrating the final results obtained.

Written task

With the aim of gathering some written outcomes which would eventually allow us to evaluate the impact of the pedagogic intervention in this project, the teacher asked the students to complete a progressive battery of comprehensible tasks. First, they had to read and listen to different types of stories proposed by the teacher. Then, after choosing the type of story they wanted to work with, the learners brainstormed ideas related to the characters, setting and plot of their stories. They organized their ideas on a timeline and finally they wrote a first draft.

Following are some examples taken from the students' final written assignments that will serve to show and partly illustrate the impact this project had on their written outcomes.

Student A:

ORIGINAL VERSION	REFORMULATED VERSION
It was a beautiful spring day and the boys and girls still be in the camping. The sun was shining and the sky was blue. The teacher, Susan, wake the students up and they started the day.	It was a beautiful spring day. The sun was shining and the sky was blue. The children had spent an exciting night and they were enjoying the camp. Their teacher, Susan, had woken the children up and they started with the activities.

In the reformulated version this student divided the text into paragraphs, organizing the ideas differently. The paragraphs are also indented, a fact that contributes to better organise the text and create a more appealing visual impression on the reader. As regards grammar, the use of the Past Perfect tense is used to refer to prior past events. There is an increase in the vocabulary rage used in the reformulated version if compared with the previous one.

These changes could be the result of the discussion sessions held during the analysis of both the reformulated and the original versions as they were projected on the board. During that discussion, the teacher and her students talked about the schematic organization of paragraphs and the importance of describing the setting and atmosphere to help the audience become more involved in the narrative. As Hedge (2000) points out, reformulation also "allows for discussion of certain aspects such as how ideas are developed, how a range of structures, vocabulary, or connecting devices can be used, and how the writing style needs to be adapted to meet the readers' needs and purposes (2000, p. 315), and this is precisely what the teacher and the students did over their reformulation session.

In the case of Student B, the changes made in the reformulated version mainly respond to the organisation of ideas and to the way in which paragraphs were segmented to create a more unified and coherent piece. Although there are still some problems at the syntactic level, there is a notable increase in the use

of more sophisticated vocabulary and sentence structures. In the second paragraph of the reformulated version, it can be observed how the student writer managed to link his ideas by using two different types of cohesive devices ("*because, and*"), a fact that was not present in the original version.

Student B:

ORIGINAL VERSION	REFORMULATED VERSION
It was a beautiful spring day, was the July's birthday and she invited all the people of her class, her mother made a lot of fast food and the boy put the music.	It was a beautiful spring day July decided did her birthday's party. She invited her friends the school. The July's mother was so happy because the house it was full of young people. She bought delicious food and drink and the boys took a big radio and put good music.

On analysing the original version of Student C, it can be noticed that some ideas are mixed, a fact that makes the text hard to understand. Sentences do not relate one another thus breaking the unity of the text. In the reformulated version, however, the student made use of a range of cohesive devices ("*and, when, so*") to link up the sentences. The use of cohesive devices, as is this case, facilitated the process of understanding the text.

Student C:

ORIGINAL VERSION	REFORMULATED VERSION
… after minutes the police asked who were the last peoples who had arrived. Then the police hunted in their bags. They didn't find anything in the other bags, but in the Luca's bag something different they saw. That was the reason to arrest Lucas whit out giving any reason and they took the police station …	… they asked the people there, Lucas included, who the last to arrived at the campsite had been and they also looked into each one of their bags as if looking for something special. When they searched inside Lucas' bags, they found something strange, so they decided to take him to the police station.

During the reformulation session, many aspects related to language development were discussed and analysed. As Allwright (1986) explains "… this rewriting involves making changes of any kind and at all levels: syntax, lexis, cohesion and discourse functions (1986, p. 111).

Student D:

ORIGINAL VERSION	REFORMULATED VERSION

It was a beautiful spring day in Mevisteno like all days here.
In the library of Mevisteno worked four childrens Joaquin, Maria, Lucrecia and Mariano.
   One day, after work, the four children went to the lake to a picnic.
	It was a beautiful spring day like all days in Mevisteno. Joaquin, María, Lucrecia and Mariano worked with Mr. Cabaldo at the library.
	     One day the four children went to a picnic in the lake.

On this occasion, it can be seen that this student, in his reformulated version, made noteworthy changes in word order and sentence structure. This might be the result of having worked with a marking code for correction which the teacher had used to highlight cases where mistakes in word order had occurred.

Student E:

ORIGINIAL VERSION	REFORMULATED VERSION
It was a beautiful spring day as happened as Virginia Spences, student of Medicine was driving her car. When it broke the steering of car. She was sitting in her car when for bad luck she fel into a deep water.	In the short story beginning in a beautiful spring day when Mrs Virginia was travelling in her car. She was coming back from the first congress of Dentist in Australia. It was Monday April 15th at morning seven and Mrs Virginia was driving and tired. Suddenly she saw in the bridge far away a flock of birds after a minute the flock of birds was above she. From that moment she couldn't see nothing and she went to the Blue River. Under the river she wanted move but she can't because the water cover the car.

On looking at this last reformulated version, it can be seen that this student, in particular, made a number of visible changes. First, she increased the number

of sentences from three in the original version, to six in the reformulated story. Second, she segmented the new story into three different paragraphs and used time markers to highlight their beginnings. Besides, she used some cohesive linkers to link up and sequence some of the ideas presented, a fact that rendered the new version a greater sense of unity. Finally, she made use of a wider range of vocabulary thus creating a more vivid image of the setting she described. Although the new piece of narration revealed some grammatical problems, the text was more comprehensible and read more smoothly than the original version.

Close examination of all the students' outcomes reveals that after being exposed to the reformulation technique, most of them made significant headway in their writing skills. The most evident linguistic areas that seem to have received the greatest impact after the implementation of this writing project were vocabulary range, sentence structure and the organization of the schematic scheme of the reformulated texts. This pattern of improvement was consistent all throughout the 18 samples analysed.

On analysing the second drafts, it can be seen that the learners paid significant attention not only to what they wrote, but also to how they expressed their ideas. This might explain the improvement in their vocabulary range, and the use of some these words in context. At least, at this embryonic stage in this process, it could be fairly said that they have become more aware of how some of these word collocations function in discourse, a fact that in the past was totally ignored. In their last versions of their written productions, a considerable improvement in their grammar, punctuation and spelling can also be seen.

 All these positive features will hopefully equip them with the necessary linguistic resources and language skills to deal with these types of written tasks in their future writing classes and, eventually, in their professional careers.

4. Discussion

Although the main aim of this study was achieved successfully, there were many constraints and limitations to this project, the main one being, undoubtedly: time. This teacher got in charge of the course where she implemented the reformulation technique, half-way through the academic term. This means that right after she devised the problem that the students

had with writing, she had to design a staged course of action, implement the project, and, in due course, evaluate it in a very short time.

Another limitation was the fact that the teacher had to teach a fixed syllabus which had been designed by the former teacher in charge of this course. Although this new teacher was compelled to stick to and with a fixed syllabus, she had the possibility of making some alterations in the teaching materials, a fact that allowed her to put the present writing project into action.

As regards the learners' outcomes, it would have been interesting to have asked the students to write a piece of writing *before* the teacher's pedagogic intervention and then compare it with the same piece of writing done *after* her intervention to analyse differences and similarities between the two pieces. This would have allowed us to see under a different perspective to what extent these students' written outcomes had truly improved, if at all, after being exposed to a different approach to writing skill with a concentration on the reformulation technique.

Another observation was the way in which the teacher assessed her students' final drafts. For this purpose, she designed a marking scheme which included those aspects such as content, organization of ideas (coherence and cohesion), grammar, vocabulary and mechanics that, later on, she would take into account when marking her students' works. However, when she elaborated this marking scheme, she ignored to discuss with her students the marking code she would employ for the assessment of their written works. In hindsight, we believe it might have been fruitful to have negotiated with them this marking scheme before its actual instrumentation. This would have allowed the learners to have had a clearer idea of what aspects they should have paid more attention to at the time of writing their final versions.

After we analysed the students' second written assignments, we noticed that it would have been interesting to have provided them with the possibility of submitting a third draft, considering that in their second drafts there were still some linguistic aspects—syntactic—that needed further development. Perhaps, driven by their major concern to look at those cohesive aspects of their texts, which had received special emphasis during the development of the writing project, these students failed to focus on syntax when the wrote their second drafts. Unfortunately, the possibility of having allowed the

students to submit a third draft had to be discarded because of time-constraints.

Despite the above somewhat discouraging observations, this case study has provided some useful and valid information. It would be interesting though to continue researching on this technique for providing feedback to student writers in different contexts, using it as a long term process, and with bigger groups. Indeed, in 2006, the same teacher used this same technique with another group of learners under similar working conditions to the ones described in the present study, and we are now in the process of evaluating its results. Although we have not been able to interpret entirely all the new data gathered yet, at this initial stage, we can claim that the results obtained are similarly rewarding to the outcomes emerging from this present study. This fact will eventually reinforce the view that this writing technique for feedback provision proves to be truly beneficial for L2 student writers.

5. Conclusion

This case study consisted in evaluating the effectiveness of the implementation of the reformulation technique used in a writing class with a group of 18 L2 learners at a public English language Institute in Corrientes, Argentina. After analysing the data collected, it can be said that the reformulation technique offered these students a good opportunity to improve their writing skill and to go on learning a second language. On looking at the students' outcomes, it transpired that after using this writing technique for feedback provision, they managed to sequence and organize their ideas logically, improve moderately their structure and grammar, expand their vocabulary range and consider their audience. All these aspects rendered their outcomes a sense of unity and overall coherence, two indispensable attributes to be able to operate successfully in the writing class. In order to further validate the findings obtained in this study, more research should be conducted in this area in different contexts and with other populations.

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APPENDIX A

TASKS

1) LESSON: 2 periods of 40 minutes

- AIM: To identify types of stories.
- VOCABULARY: Adventure stories, autobiographies, detective stories, fairy tales, fantasies, horror stories, humorous stories, ghost stories, love stories, legends, myths, science fiction, travel stories, true stories.
- GRAMMAR POINT: Used to and would

1) Presentation of different types of stories. They talk about them, providing examples of books or films.
2) Listening: they listen to the beginnings of different kinds of stories. They identify them.
3) Speaking: they ask each other questions about their preferences on reading.
4) Reading: life stories: Groucho Mmarx's childhood. They look at the key words and make predictions on his childhood. They read the text and check predictions then they answer the questionnaire and match words.
5) Systematization: presentation of the grammar point: difference between would and used to.
6) Practice: they do the exercises on the book and workbook.
7) Speaking: they talk about their childhood, using the structure learnt.

2) LESSON: 2 periods of 40 minutes

- AIM: To read and comprehend a newspaper story. To internalize the uses of the Past Perfect tense.
- VOCABULARY: antique shop, break-in, burglars, bus shelter, fields, footprints, police constable, police dog, railway line, river, silver, wood
- GRAMMAR POINT: Past Perfect.

1) Pre-reading. The students read to make predictions. They look at some pictures and guess what the story is about.
2) Reading: They read the story and answer a set of given questions.
3) Systematisation: Presentation of the Past Perfect.
4) Practice. Grammar practice of the structure presented.

3) LESSON: 2 periods of 40 minutes

- AIM: To read and comprehend a fairy tale. To find linking words in the text.
- VOCABULARY: barrel, beard, cave, sign, valley, village inn.
- GRAMMAR POINT: Linking words.

1) Pre-reading: They read the title and look at the pictures and make predictions about the setting of the story, characters, etc.
2) Reading: They read the tale to put a set of given pictures in order. Then they answer some questions on the story.
3) Inference of linking words. They identify linking words in the text. They complete a text using these linking words.

4) LESSON: 2 periods of 40 minutes.

- AIM: To write a story.

1) Task: Write a story beginning with the words "*It was a beautiful spring day…*" and finishing with the words "*… we all felt very happy to be back home.*"
2) Talk about the stages for writing the story.
   a) **Stage 1:** They decide what type of story they are going to write.
   b) **Stage 2**: They ask and answer some questions about the story:
      - **THE PEOPLE**: Who are the main characters? What are their names? What do they do? Where are they from? How old are they? What personalities have they got?
      - **THE STORY:** The beginning: Which was the setting of the story? Which was the main conflict? What had happened before?
      - **THE ACTION**: What happened? What happened next?
      - **DEVELOPMENT:** How did the characters react? Where did they go? What else happened?
      - **THE END:** What happened in the end? How did the people involved in the story feel?
   c) **Stage 3**: Write a timeline for your story.
      (Background; what happened in the story; Ending)
   d) **Stage 4**: Write your story in four paragraphs.
   e) **Stage 5:** Check your story for mistakes in grammar, vocabulary and coherence.

5) LESSON: 2 periods of 40 minutes

- AIM: To reformulate their stories.

1) The teacher chooses one of the students' productions and uses the technique of reformulation to rewrite it.
2) The teacher projects the original and the reformulated versions to the whole class through an overhead projector. The class discusses the types of mistakes and the different ways of going about them.
3) They use a correction code to classify the type of mistakes encountered: sp: spelling, ww: wrong word, wo: word order, t: tense, cc: coherence, v: missing word, () omission.
4) Based on the comments which had emerged from the reformulation session and the comments made from their peers, the students rewrite their texts.
5) They rewrite their stories again and hand them in to their instructor.

Web-based English language teaching: Preconceptions from university teachers in Iran

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Web-based education is a young issue in most developing countries and there are debates on its application into language teaching or complementing the traditional system with virtual learning and teaching. One of the major obstacles on the implementation of such systems into English Language Teaching (ELT) in Iran, besides other possible barriers, has been the disinclination of the teachers and instructors to adopt ICT as an effective tool in language teaching. This study has been an attempt to explore the attitudes of university English instructors toward web-based ELT. A questionnaire including 25 questions - dealing with issues on ELT - were sent to English language instructors and professors in Iran. It was assumed that ELT professionals with enough experience in teaching and exposure to web-based resources can be of considerable help in revealing, at least, the fundamental concerns. The findings suggest that teachers have positive attitudes toward online learning in general. But academic design, quality of education and whether the program could be implemented with the least possible waste of time, money and energy were of highest concern. However, almost all respondents expressed the pressing need for it. Finally it was concluded that in order to develop successful online ELT programs, valuable guidelines could be obtained from university professors and instructors.

Key words: Online Education; English as a Foreign Language; E-learning; Media in education

1. Introduction

Web-based education has become a topic of much debate within the academy in the last two decades as we are getting through the beginning steps of an "e-learning revolution". There has been a considerable rush by universities, venture capitalists, and corporations to develop online courses, virtual universities, education portals, and courseware, particularly in developing countries. As Pelgrum (2001) contends in developing countries, there have

been wild speculations about the necessity of educational reforms under the influence of the new tools and the information and communication technology (ICT) in particular. In most pioneering countries, attempts have been made to help the change flourish as the number of online classes offered by universities and colleges are reported to grow rapidly; in 1999, one in three U.S. colleges offered some sort of accredited degrees online, and approximately one million students took online classes while the number of students taking traditional classes was only 13 million (Bernal, 2001).

However, the success and failure rates and criticisms against the spread of such learning and teaching systems are also considerable. For instance, the Jones International University, as an early pioneer, popularized higher education as the first fully accredited online university and was granted accreditation by the U.S. regional accreditation agency in March 1999 to be the first online university, fully certified by the Global Alliance for Transnational Education. Although the courses were highly modular and all involved business subjects, there was no regular faculty or participatory governance system, and no research was carried out. Critics of this so-called university argued that although it had the term "university" in its title, it could not to be considered one, and was considered merely a credentialing service, *a degree delivery machine, providing tailored programs that appeal to specific markets*.

On the other hand, governments and departments of education in most developing countries have responded to the challenge by initiating national programs to introduce ICT and mainly computers into education. This has been done even though the costs have been remarkable and the payoffs modest (Benzie, 1995). Benzie (1995) indicates that national programs have been of limited success not only because they were formulated in non-educational realms, but also because they were not based on research. In Rogers' terms (1995), *the initiation stage*, which demands information gathering and planning, seems to be missing in this headlong process of technology implementation. Young (1991) remarks that, in many cases, even computers were introduced into schools not as a means, but as an end. Computers, as a symbol of ICT, were provided with no supplementary measures to enable educators to develop positive attitudes toward the new tools and to use them. Also, Baylor and Ritchie (2002) state, ''regardless of the amount of technology and its sophistication, technology will not be used unless faculty members have the skills, knowledge and attitudes necessary to

infuse it into the curriculum" (p. 398). That is, teachers should become effective agents to be able to make use of technology in the classroom. Ultimately, teachers are the most important agents of change within the classroom arena (Albirini, 2006).

Even in the United States, despite the alluring nature of such propaganda as disintermediation, internet democratization and frictionless education, the American Association of University Professors was first to fight for the prevention of accrediting Jones International University, along with similar online programs (Campos and Harasim, 1999). As expected, the first critique came from university professors. They expressed their concern about how to manage the challenges that online education poses. According to Noble (1998), teachers are to be consulted before any measure. Also, they want to have an active role in education. But in most cases, the knowledge is delivered to learners; and teachers are overlooked at the price of non-specialist delivery in the form of disintermediation. This type of mediation sometimes leads to troubles. For example, there was a strike at York University in 1998. In *Digital Diploma Mills*, Noble (1998) describes how teachers at York University in Canada were required to put their research and teaching materials online, and to sign ownership rights to the university; faculty refused, going on strike over this, and eventually won. In other words, teacher autonomy is not to be overlooked, even in online education.

Bernal (2001) further refers to the American Association of University Professors, a key policy-making organization within academia, which has outlined the rights and responsibilities of faculty in a policy paper on distance and online education:

> The institution is responsible for the technological delivery of the course. Faculty members who teach through distance education technologies are responsible for making certain that they have sufficient technical skills to present their subject matter and related material effectively, and, when necessary, should have access to and consult with technical support personnel. The teacher, nonetheless, has the final responsibility for the content and presentation of the course (quoted in Bernal, 2001, p. 3).

However, Werry (2001) believes that the language of the document recreates a split between pedagogy and technology, between providers and users. It still thinks of technology primarily as a delivery mechanism for teaching, rather than a new environment. And it does not make the case that *academics*

ought to have a significant role in shaping that environment. Also, according to Bernal (2001), teachers ought to play a role in shaping that environment, and that we need to provide constructive alternatives for administrators to consider. If resistance to the models of online education critiqued by Luke, Noble, and others proceeds via claims that education and academics are somehow 'special', exempt from conditions that so many others must work under, then we run the risk of being represented as backward, obstructionist and selfish. We need to offer alternatives as well as critiques, and we need to link our struggle to those of other groups. Lastly, teachers need to ensure that the universities they teach at, and the professional organizations that represent them, produce policy that ensures faculty control of online resources. And when they negotiate contracts with publishers they need creative policies to deal with the issue of future electronic property rights.

This is rightly indicated in research findings; also, recent studies have shown that the successful implementation of educational technologies depends largely on the attitudes of educators, who eventually determine how they are used in the classroom (Robertson, Grant and Jackson, 2005; Albirini, 2006). For instance, Bullock (2004) found that teachers' attitudes are a major enabling/disabling factor in the adoption of technology. Similarly, Kersaint, Horton, Stohl, and Garofalo (2003) reported that teachers with positive attitudes toward technology felt more comfortable with using it and usually incorporated it into their teaching. Earlier, Woodrow (1992) asserted that any successful transformation in educational practice required the development of positive user attitudes toward the new technology. Therefore, the development of teachers' positive attitudes toward ICT is a key factor not only for adopting the new technology but also for lowering their resistance.

Rogers (1995) believes that people's attitudes toward a new technology are a key element in its diffusion. His *Innovation Decision Process theory* states that an innovation's diffusion is a process that occurs over time through five stages: Knowledge, Persuasion, Decision, Implementation and Confirmation. Accordingly, the innovation-decision process is the process through which an individual (or other decision-making authorities) passes (1) from the knowledge of an innovation, (2) through forming an attitude toward it, (3) through a decision to adopt or reject it, (4) to the implementation of the new idea, and finally (5) to the confirmation of that decision (Rogers, 1995, p. 161).

Due to the novelty of ICT and related technologies all over the world, studies concerning technology diffusion in education have often focused on the first three phases of the innovation-decision process. This is also because the status of web-based education is, to a great extent, still precarious. In cases where technology is very recently introduced into the educational system, as is the case in most developing countries, studies have mainly focused on the first two stages, that is, on knowledge of the innovation and attitudes towards it. Rogers' premise concerning individuals' shift from knowledge about technology to forming attitudes toward it and then to its adoption or rejection corroborates the general and widely accepted belief that attitudes affect behavior directly or indirectly. Also, teachers' attitudes have been found to be a major predictor of the use of new technologies in instructional settings (Amiri, 2000) and certainly a predictor of its success or failure since success itself is a function of the cooperation and attitudes of the educators.

It has also been suggested that positive attitudes can often encourage less technologically capable teachers to learn the skills necessary for the implementation of technology-based activities in the classroom. Rogers (1995) further contends that one of the major factors affecting people's attitudes toward a new technology is the attributes of the technology itself. He identified five main attributes of technology that affect its acceptance and subsequent adoption: relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, 'observability', and 'trialibility'. Thus, a new technology will be increasingly diffused if potential adopters perceive that the innovation: (1) has an advantage over previous innovations; (2) is compatible with existing practices, (3) is not complex to understand and use, (4) shows observable results, and (5) can be experimented with on a limited basis before adoption.

One developing country that is currently pursuing the technological track in education in the Middle East is the Islamic Republic of Iran. Recognizing the challenges of the information age, the three Iranian Ministries of *Education*, *Higher Education* and *Health*[1] – all involved in training students for pre-

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[1] Three major divisions in the governmental body of Iran are responsible for public and higher education: the *Ministry of Education* and Vocational Training controls the primary, secondary and high school education, 12 years all in all (www.medu.ir); the *Ministry of Science, Research and Technology* offers university degrees from bachelor's to PhDs in all disciplines except for medical areas (www.msrt.gov.ir or www.msrt.ir); the *Ministry of Health, Treatment and Medical*

determined goals – have adopted a national plan (known as *TAKFA[2]*) to introduce ICT into their educational contexts. Currently, there are computer labs within most schools, all colleges and universities, widespread internet access as well as access to research databases for university instructors and students; ICDL[3] skills have been emphasized for all employees particularly for those dealing with educational issues; faculty members are now presenting at least some of their course materials via PowerPoint and video projections; their annual promotion is partly decided on their use of innovative technology; also, administrative systems are all networked. While it is felt that the infrastructure is developed sufficiently, applying technology into English language teaching is lagging behind other areas and has not been guided by research in this specific context.

To illustrate this with a local example, you may consider the case of the virtual branch of the University of Isfahan[4] in Isfahan, Iran where some courses, at least, are offered virtually or in a blended form, courses like

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Education is responsible for the community health and treatment as well as training medical professionals from Bachelor's to Medical Doctors and fellowships (www.hbi.ir).

[2] TAKFA is an acronym based on Persian words translated as the *Applied Development of Information Technology*, a national plan ratified through the Islamic Parliament, emphasizing the allocation of 2% of the budget in every governmental organization to the infrastructures if IT development, including hardware, networks, personnel training, etc.

[3] ICDL has been the focus of personnel training in governmental and private sectors and all relevant employees have to spend around 300 hours to get a certificate from certified institutes as the proof of their ability in handling computers including word processing, data organization, internet, etc. Major programs to be taught are Microsoft Word, Access, Excel, Photoshop, Internet Explorer, FrontPage, etc.

[4] All universities in Iran have initiated presenting some courses in virtual branches. While the intention has not been to replace the traditional system with virtual learning, traditional procedures are adopted in the implementation of these plans. Lack of research and contextual considerations have been the major barriers in achieving the goals. While students apparently prefer virtual courses in many cases, teachers avoid them for many good reasons. The Virtual University of the University of Isfahan is one in many examples; the website is www.vu.ui.ac.ir.

Religious Teachings 1 and 2, Electrostatics, Economic Assessment, Literature courses and many others.

Language teachers are mostly among the early adopters of new technology almost in every society; this is partly because of their familiarity with English as the main computer and ICT language and also because much of the available software is for English language practice; moreover, the field of foreign language education has always been in the forefront of the use of technology to facilitate the language-acquisition process (Lafford and Lafford, 1997). But their resistance or reticence against the web-based versions of their courses seems to be a real challenge. As this has often been the case in most developing countries across the world, the technology implementation plans seem to lack the consideration of teachers' views and reaction to new tools.

In his theory of *Diffusion of Innovations*, Rogers (1995) considers adopters' attitudes indispensable to the innovation-decision process. Therefore, it is plausible that studies at the early stages of technology implementation focus on the end-users' attitudes. Specifically, in a developing Asian country like Iran, traditional ELT is extensively popular; but online language programs in its professional sense have not been successfully offered *not* because the educators and teachers are not consulted. Rather, the problem lies mainly in the fact that some of them do not feel that a foreign language can be taught through virtual learning at all.

While the conjecture may be right and valid in realistic terms, there might be other reasons leading to such reactions; other aspects like poor ICT knowledge, disinclination to lose their traditional authority in real classes and so many others which require investigation. However, as Benzie (1995) describes, there have been scattered attempts in ELT training but not in an organized form and mainly from non-academic origins, which we are not going to treat here in this article.

Extending the views of Rogers (1995) and Young (1991) on the adoption of new technology and the attitudes of its users, the present study is conducted in the hope of exploring the views of university instructors on web-based ELT programs to draw the attention of corporate and educational centers to the fact that faculty members do have ideas and opinions in this regard. Recognition of teachers' reason for resistance could lead to a more successful

design and implementation of such programs. We further suggest that the introduction of a new technology in a Middle East context like Iran should be accompanied with a careful study of the situation and taking the views of its participants, especially the teachers, into account.

2. The study

Given the importance of teachers' attitudes and the relationship of teachers' attitudes to the web-based ELT design, the purpose of this study was therefore to explore the views of university instructors on developing online ELT programs in the Iranian context. More specifically, the study investigated the following questions:

1. What are the attitudes of university EFL instructors in Iran toward web-based language teaching?

2. What are the teachers' preconceptions of such programs in terms of the role of teachers, course content, methodology and prediction of success or failure?

The study focused mainly on university EFL teachers because, as previously stated, they were perceived to be among the first to adopt ICT potentialities in education in the national context. Therefore, this descriptive study was intended to survey their attitudes and opinions on the likelihood of developing online English programs in Iran. To do so, the websites of all universities offering English programs were visited and emails were sent to the heads of the departments to ask for cooperation and to inform them about the survey. Then, a questionnaire - see the appendix - with an introductory letter explaining the research was mailed to around 200 English instructors and professors. A stamped envelope was attached to each questionnaire so that they were returned with the least possible delay and trouble.

The questionnaire was a Likert-type checklist with 25 questions; the content of the checklist was designed with reference to the previous literature and the national situation of EFL education. Due to differences between the participants and the cultural context of this study and those in previous studies, the questionnaire was developed by the researchers to obtain the information needed for the study rather than using pre-existing instruments. The development of the questionnaire was guided by review of literature. The final version of the questionnaire consisted of 25 questions corresponding to main issues in ELT. The instrument was evaluated and

criticized by a number of colleagues for content and face validity. The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient for the questionnaire came up to be 0.76 after deleting some items.

The respondents were asked to fill out the questionnaire and to mail it back to the researcher as soon as possible; also they were required to ascertain their age and degree but it was optional to write their name and contact address. They were provided space to add their comments, if any. Out of about 200 posted questionnaires, 105 returned; however, a few of them were not fully completed or had no information on age and degree and thus were excluded. Finally, 99 questionnaires were analyzed in SPSS, which is almost in line with the sample size calculation (d=0.1, α=0.05) which rendered 97 as the desired sample size.

3. Results

As the questions on the questionnaire were of different types and focuses, before dwelling on the main concerns of the study, having a quick look at the demographic data first might prove useful. The obtained and analyzed data revealed that the subjects' mean age was 43.9±10.9, ranging from 25 to 69 years old. 47.9% had Masters in ELT and the rest PhDs in applied linguistics, linguistics or English literature.

For views and attitudes on different aspects of the study, we have merged the responses to some of the questions and analyzed them collectively to determine the holistic agreement on one single aspect like material development, training, methodology, etc. Therefore, the analysis will not present the questions in sequence. Rather, very significant results will be presented for analysis.

As for the *necessity* of web-based ELT programs, 83% of the respondents asserted that online EFL programs were among the inevitable requirements of the present age. However, 66.7% (20.8% *Strongly Agree* and 45.8% *Agree*) agreed that the success of such programs was not predictable unless they were actually implemented.

There were scattered views on the *application* of online programs in various areas such as teacher training, translator training, teaching literature, ESP and short courses, but the highest percentage (63%) involved teacher training; and the lowest (17%) was obtained for short courses.

About the *methodology* and *material development* for online programs, 86.6% and 49.4% agreed, respectively, that the teaching methods and materials should be different from the campus-based education.

The results for the interactive *role of English teachers* in EFL classes were interesting; 60.4% disagreed that online EFL programs could marginalize the traditional role of the teachers. However, it seemed that they were uncertain whether it was possible to create a virtual setting where the absence of the teacher was not sensed; the number of respondents who agreed, disagreed and those who were neutral in this regard were almost the same. Also, 61.2% agreed that it was not easy to *create life-like interaction* in virtual settings. The interesting point was that 70.8% agreed that virtual classes were to be *complemented with real sessions*.

How success could be realized was another concern; and 80.9% agreed that advanced *technological infrastructure* was required for a successful program. However, 69.9% of the respondents felt the other way and thought the content and interactive nature of web-based programs were of more importance than the delivery technology.

Most of the respondents did not consider online programs as a *threat for the traditional system* of education. 72.9% disagreed that online programs would threaten the efficacy of campus-based programs in the governmental and private universities. Very few indeed, only 12.5%, felt that *online degrees* would replace campus-based degrees.

As for the commercialization of online education, there were uncertain responses whether these programs could be considered as an economical measure for the national budget (39.6% were neutral and only 37% agreed). In fact, 86.9% did not believe that those programs were a *waste of time and money*. In general, 79.2% pointed out that such programs would improve the educational situation of EFL. Also, 85.1% believed that online EFL programs would be a step forward in the educational development of the society. In particular, it was felt that they could be useful for the *youth not admitted to campus-based universities*.

4. Discussion

Based on the views of Rogers (1995) and Young (1991) on the adoption of new technology and the attitudes of its users, the reported study was conducted in the hope of exploring the views of university instructors on online ELT programs in an Asian context, i.e. Iran. Furthermore, we meant to

imply that the integration of a new technology in such a context was to be accompanied with a careful study of the situation and obtaining the views of its participants, especially the teachers. The study focused on pedagogical aspects, technological infrastructure and the future of online language teaching in this context.

Normally, as Benzie (1995) rightly contended, scattered attempts without research feedback and from non-educational realms cannot guarantee success by copying the same material and methods of the traditional education. Therefore, it was felt that teachers' attitudes could be considered as a major predictor of the use and success of new technologies in instructional settings and certainly the successful implementation relies on the cooperation and attitudes of the educators.

According to the findings, the emergence of information technology as a facilitator for instruction and education is welcome in Iran too; as the majority did not believe that those programs were a waste of time and money. They further asserted that online EFL programs were among the inevitable requirements of the present age but the success of such programs was not predictable unless they were actually implemented.

While the age criterion is not always the discriminating one, it can be considered as one factor impeding teachers' desire, if any. In this study, the population could not be considered as young, motivated and necessarily ambitious to adopt such innovations, but they seems to be aware of global trends in educational technology – as disclosed from the responses – while in most cases lacking the professional knowledge on its application.

This type of knowledge deficiency can be viewed and interpreted from another perspective too. As Wiser and Beck (1997) rightly assert, language cannot be *taught* in cyber–contexts; learners need interaction with teachers and other learners. Brown (2001) believes that face–to–face interaction is an essential ingredient of ELT. The claim is in line with what the respondents of this study indicated in their checklists. English Language Teaching will not succeed without teachers as they are the essential core of classroom communication.

However, while this attitude towards language is respectable by itself and undoubtedly true, it can be interpreted in some other sense; i.e. teachers need training and more information on the potentialities of ICT as a new technology. For instance, most of them were uncertain whether it was

possible to create a virtual setting where the absence of the teacher was not sensed; also, 61.2% agreed that it was not easy to create life-like interaction in virtual settings. While it is not easy to provide such a setting, it is certainly not impossible. As far as the technology is concerned, there must be ways to compensate for teachers' temporary absence; or classes could be held in both real and virtual format, in the form of blended learning or hybrid courses (Harmon and Jones, 1999; Eastmond, Nickel, Plessis and Smith, 2000). In fact, the latter was one of the widely agreed items with the respondents: 70.8% agreed that virtual classes were to be complemented with *real* sessions. Robertson, Grant and Jackson's (2005) empirical study showed that this preconception could be right. But it still seems that lack of professional knowledge causes misconceptions in teachers' minds and that is the major barrier. This may be in line with the previous research pointing to teachers' lack of computer competence as a main barrier to their acceptance and adoption of computers in developing countries (Pelgrum, 2001; Albirini, 2006).

However, what appeared certain was the respondents' perfect knowledge in traditional ELT where they rightly highlighted the differences between traditional and web-based programs in terms of methodology, material development, the interactive role of English teachers, and the quality of English language teaching. On the scale proposed by Rogers (1995), it seems that the respondents of this study have not apparently passed the *persuasion stage* to *make new decisio*ns and are disinclined to *implement* and *confirm* the use of web-based programs. Moreover, in some other fields such as teacher training, the respondents believed that they could apply online education for short, in-service courses. The respondents pointed out that online programs might not be used for teaching English literature and ESP neither for training translators and teachers. This fact emphasizes the communicative nature of language, which is obviously inevitable for such courses, where success is a function of classroom discussions and negotiation of meaning with human elements.

Last, but not least, teachers' attitudes toward the web-based program revealed its importance in the national context of education. 85.1% of the respondents believed that online EFL programs would be a step forward in the educational development of the society. In particular, it would be useful for the youth not admitted to campus-based universities, who are not few in Iran. Currently (as of September 2007), about 1.6 million students take the

nationwide university entrance exam each year while only one out of five is admitted to campus-based (governmental and private) universities and the rest wander around looking for temporary employment or study harder for a second opportunity next year. However, why such programs are not designed and implemented is another issue which merits investigation.

Despite inadequacies of online language programs, web-based training is not to be overlooked since its potentially successful areas are remarkable while it is not to be considered as something which can *revolutionize* the field as well. It can be successfully applied in online discussions especially for the students of English, e.g. online discussions with native speakers. Although the respondents did not seem to be oriented with the issue in question, it may take time to find them motivated and active in this regard as they are already using the basic infrastructure in teaching and research.

From another perspective, low response rate—though statistically justifiable—may be considered as a shortcoming to this study but it could also be interpreted as a sign of the respondents' lack of professional knowledge or interest in web-based language programs. Finally, based on Hanson-Smith's (1997) ideas, further research is suggested on the possibility of web-based applications in material pooling as well as technological, economic and social aspects of using information technology for computer-mediated English programs in similar contexts where English is a foreign language.

Given the recent dominance of technology all over the world, developing countries have the responsibility to think of solving some of their national problems via upcoming technologies. One of the main barriers may be the resistance of teachers in adopting the technology due to such reasons as lack of motivation, lack of professional knowledge, etc. Hence, the study of teachers' attitudes becomes indispensable to the technology implementation plans as the challenge of *integrating technology into education is more human than technological*. In fact, as leaders of change in the society, teachers are to be persuaded first to adopt and experiment with new technologies; if they are supplied with the positive attributes of the technology, the advantage of using it is all sufficient to start a new movement in teaching and learning.

5. Conclusion

The findings of this study may be specific to EFL contexts like Iran, but their implications are significant for both national and international educators.

Teachers are to be consulted in the first place as they are the central, key agents in the realm of education. Empowering them with professionally enriched feeding will be the main concern of the policy-makers to sustain and promote any sort of change including costly technology initiatives. Teachers must be kept informed about the features of new technology, its importance, its consequences and even its advantages for the teachers. A relevant measure in this regard can be borrowed from Rogers (1995) who stressed five main attributes of technology that affect its acceptance and subsequent adoption: relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, observability, and trialibility. By creating motivation and scientifically valid knowledge in teachers, policy makers can prepare them for incorporating ICT in their teaching practices. Once teachers are prepared to bring about such a change, they are in a better position to exert necessary changes on the existing curricula and the educational framework. Accordingly, the burden can be divided between policymakers and teachers.

Finally, teachers' preparation necessitates not merely providing additional training opportunities, but also aiding them in *experimenting with new educational technologies* before being able to use them in their classrooms. If decision-makers, especially in the Higher Education sector, desire to involve teachers in the process of technology integration, they have to find ways to overcome the barriers perceived by the teachers. It should also be noted that the change might not occur overnight in bare contexts; the change is expected to occur step by step and one of the major steps forward is *teacher training and empowering*, which in turn will bring about the motivation to create initiatives.

Acknowledgements

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Appendix 1- The questionnaire used for data collection

Name and surname: ....   Age: ....   Qualification: ....
Phone & e-mail and address if desired: ....
Comments, if any: ....

SA: strongly agree; **A:** agree; **N:** neutral; **D:** disagree; **SD**: strongly disagree

	QUESTIONS	SA	A	N	D	SD
1	Online EFL programs are among the inevitable requirements of the present age.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
2	Such programs will facilitate and improve the status of EFL education in Iran .	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
3	Th4ese programs will be most useful for5 the youth unable to attend univ6ersities.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
4	Advanced technology is the key to the su9ccess of these programs.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
5	The content and interactive nature of web-based programs are more important than advanced technology.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
6	Online EFL programs will be a step forward in the educational development of the society.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
7	Online EFL programs should copy the traditional methods of teaching.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
8	It is easy to create real interaction in web-based EFL programs.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
9	Online EFL programs will marginalize the traditional role of English teachers.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑

10 It is possible to create a virtual setting where the absence of the teacher is not sensed. ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑

11 A successful online EFL program should be complemented with real sessions of teaching. ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑

12 Online EFL programs will threaten the efficacy of private-sector and governmental institutions and universities. ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑

13 Cultural considerations are the major barrier against the success of such programs. ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑

14 The idea of online EFL programs is a waste of time and money. ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑

15 These programs will be an economical measure for the national budget. ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑

16 Online EFL programs are much suitable for training professional teachers. ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑

17 Online EFL programs are much suitable for training professional translators. ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑

18 Online EFL programs are much suitable for teaching English literature. ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑

19 Online EFL programs can be most successful in teaching ESP. ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑

20 They are suitable *only* for short-term training. ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑

21 Web-based material development can be the same as hard-copy material development. ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑

22 The success of online EFL programs is not predictable unless they are actually implemented. ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑

23 Online EFL programs will be a profitable business. ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑

24 Online degrees are expected to replace those obtained on campus. ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑

25 Online EFL programs sound like a predictable success in Iran. ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑ ❑

Sentence names in Lamnso'

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Though current literature (Chomsky 1986b:2) distinguishes syntactic categories based on feature composition, the idea that the name of a person, place or thing is a noun has persisted. Personal names are structurally NPs, which function as agents or patients in sentences. Such names are understood to be single morphemes with unique meanings. However, our findings indicate that majority of Nso' personal names are sentences rather than basic NPs which have been reduced to lexemes that act as identity tags. Length restriction has constrained some Nso' sentence names to be abridged into phrasal forms. Personal names captured by a lone lexical item are rather rare in Lamnso'. Where a preponderance of lone word names is prevalent they are most likely to have been clipped. This paper identifies linguistic structures in Nso' personal names and relates them to their primary structures and meanings within Lamnso' syntax. The meaning changes that these constituents undergo, as units of personal names are remarkable. These semantic shifts are better understood within the purview of the meaning extensions that make them appropriate as names. The paper employs the basic socio-cultural principles and interpretations guiding the bestowal of Nso' personal names and categorizes the various restrictions that limit the adoption of all well-formed sentences in Lamnso' as personal names. Nso personal names offer clues to the systematic correlation existing between culture and linguistic behavior

Keywords: Lamnso'; Nso'; Personal names; Sentence names; categorical restrictions; socio-cultural restrictions.

1. Introduction

Before western civilization and Christianity infiltrated the traditional Nso'[1] society, the selection and bestowal of a name to an infant marked his/her formal acceptance as a member of the community. The Nso' week consists of

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[1] In this paper, Nso' refers to the people, while Lamnso' refers to the language of the Nso' people.

eight days. The general belief is that any child who has lived up to a week after birth intends to live within the community of his birth up to an appreciable age. The bestowal ritual rites performed on the morning of the morning of the 8th day after the birth of child is referred to as Vghəə́ví. Vghəə́ví initiates the child to the human world and recognises the inheritance due to him as part of the immediate and extended family lineage. The right to select a name for the child among the Nso' people is generally the responsibility of the eldest family member. His knowledge of family history and foresight of what the future holds for the infant is assumed. The family priest, who equally takes care of the family shrine and communes with family ancestors, conducts the name bestowal rites. This ceremony attracts family members and other well-wishers from the community who participate in singing, dancing, eating and drinking organised to mark the event. Child naming is a joyous occasion since the Nso' people consider children as wealth and linage continuity.

With the coming of Christianity, the name bestowal ceremony among the Nso' people has gradually been overtaken by church baptism, which is a religious ceremony where an individual is sprinkled with or immersed in water to signify purification. As part of this purification, the person being baptised usually takes a new Christian name in addition to whatever name they may have had before their initiation into Christianity. The Christian name is regarded by the church as liberation from traditional beliefs and practices of non-believers (paganism).

These baptismal names are culturally alien to the Nso' people—and their native language Lamnso'[2]. More importantly, the meanings of most of these

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[2] Lamnso' is spoken in the greater part of Bui Division, which is 150 km. from Bamenda, the capital of the North West Province of the Republic of Cameroon. It is also spoken in Nigeria, specifically in Taraba State, Sarduana Local Government Area. Lamnso' belongs to the Ring subgroup which is subsumed under the Grassfield branch of the Southern Bantoid languages. Kom, Oku, Aghem, Babanki and Noni are other languages of the subgroup (Welmers 1973: 159). Lamnso' and Oku are closely related. Lamnso' does not have prominent dialectal variations (Grebe 1984). The languages commonly referred to as Bantu are also classified as Southern Bantoid languages. They are considered to be Narrow Bantu, whereas Lamnso' and other Grassfield languages are non-Bantu (or Wide Bantu). Like Fula (Annot 1970), Swahili (Mkude 1995, Welmers 1973) and many other languages of

names are unknown to their bearers. This runs contrary to the Nso' naming system that has been conserved and orally passed on from one generation to another for centuries. The Nso' naming system can easily pass for a verbal history book of the people. Family and tribal achievements, culture, religion, history, ethics, language, and the general worldview of the people are reflected in the names they bear. Personal names are a special category of linguistic units since the names a people bear enable them to be distinguished as individuals (Kishani, 2005). Nso' personal names provide a symbolic system of value identification that is historically constructed and socially maintained by the community. In Nso', a personal name is interpreted as part of the personality of the bearer. The choice of a personal name is a delicate exercise, because individuals are believed to behave in tandem with the name they bear. In Nso', anybody who is known to be undependable, dishonest, lack conscience, or ascertained to have involved himself in crime or other antisocial activities is generally said to have lost his name. Family names are therefore jealously guarded and cherished. Another reference to 'reputation' among the Nso' people is their reference to 'a name'.

2. Forms of Personal Names in Lamnso'

The epitome of the Nso' man's personality, his achievements, aspirations and interpretation of the world around him are discernable from the personal names borne by the people. In an attempt to derive an appropriate meaning, personal names manifest themselves in different grammatical forms. For the present discussion, we have identified the following forms.

1. a) Sentence Dominated Names   [S = Name]
    b) Verb Dominated Names   [VP = Name]
    c) Noun Dominated Names   [NP = Names]

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the Wide Bantu family, Lamnso' nouns and nominals fall under different classes on the basis of agreement operated by concord markers which vary from one class to another (Grebe and Grebe 1975, Eastman 1980, Yuka 1998,1999).

Orthographically, the name of the language has been represented in the literature as Lamnsoq, Lam Nso, Lamnso, Nso, Lamnsok and Lamnso$^{\text{j}}$. Gradually, most researchers have preferred the last option because the variety of existing spelling stem from the struggle to appropriately represent the glottal stop which appears in every lexical position except as a C_1. For typographical reasons, this sound [$^{\text{j}}$] has come to be represented in the literature by [']. In this paper, therefore, Lamnso$^{\text{j}}$ is written simply as Lamnso'.

d)   Lone Word Names

1a-d indicates that a Nso' personal name (henceforth NPSN) is either a sentence, a verb phrase, a noun phrase or a loan word. Nso' names can easily be subjected to a systemic analysis within which the sentence name is ranked highest and the lone word name is lowest in the hierarchy. Such ranking is akin to the Scale-and-Category Grammar otherwise known as Systemic Grammar (Halliday 1961: 247-8, Tomori 1977:26-64). We examine these forms in an attempt to isolate and analyse the peculiarities of each.

2.1 Sentence Dominated names

Like basic sentences, sentence names in Nso' employ the bare essentials of language. Primarily, there exist a set of basic units (the lexicon). A system of rules governs the combination of these lexical items into larger units (phrases and sentences). The specification of combinatory rules constitutes the grammar of the language. These rules specify not only the permissible complex forms within a given language, but also how meaning is derived (Cruse, 2001).

A sentence is conceived of as either a word or a group of words that express a complete thought. Basically, it is made up of a predicate containing a finite verb and a overt or covert subject. Sentence names in Nso' seek to distinguish an individual through a complete statement that exhibits all the constituents of a basic clause. The grammatical rules that govern the derivation of sentence names are largely not at variance with the rules that guide Lamnso' grammar. The selection and pairing of subjects with permissible objects generally generate semantically well-formed sentence names that may not be necessarily syntactically well-formed. The categorical rules employed in the expansion of sentence names, makes personal names in Nso' a subset of the expansion rules for the sentence in Lamnso' grammar.

In the examples that follow, we present sentence names as they are orthographically represented by bearers who may not be acquainted with the Lamnso' writing system and its grammar. The same sentence name is then presented following the standard sentence representation in Lamnso' syntax after which the literary interpretation is shown.

2.   a)   Mbiydzenyuy   [S mbìy dzə   nyùy]
                           first pres-be god

         'God is primary'

b) Dohsekafover [S dò' sɔ́ ka fo vèr]
         do' prog-take what from us
         'What does the Do' (family) want from us?'

c) Mberinyuyle [S m bèrì   nyùy le]
         I non-prog-thank god how
         'How do I thank God?'

d) Nsaidzedzee [S nsay dzə dzee]
         earth non-prog-be road
         'The world is a route'

e) Verdzekov [S vèr dzə kov]
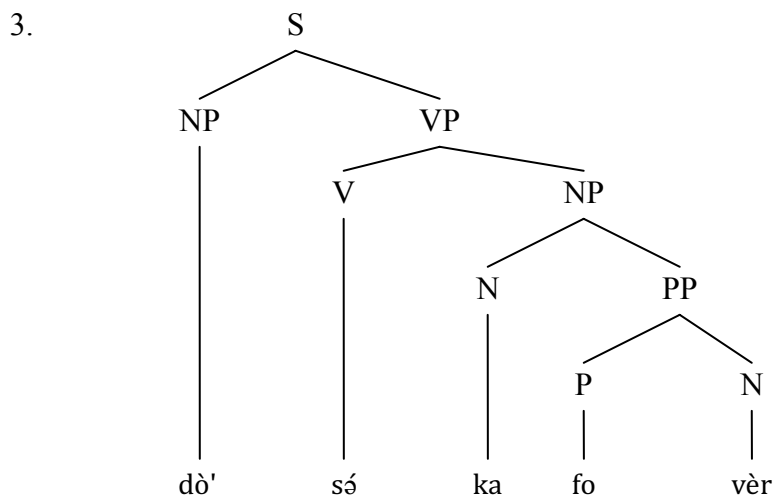   we non-prog-be forest
         'We are in the forest'

In 2 (a-e), each name can be derived from the rule Name = S, where

$$S \rightarrow NP + VP$$

The VPs can further be expanded to:

$$VP \rightarrow V + N$$

as shown in the tree diagram in 3.

3.

The semantic appropriateness for the arguments occupying the object and subject positions of each sentence name is guided by selectional restrictions governed by socio-cultural considerations. For instance, there are some lexical items that are excluded from the membership of personal names such as taboo words, names that negate eternal truths, derogatory terms etc. Nso' sentence names like Lamnso' sentences are productive. By simply replacing one appropriate agent or patient within a known name with an appropriate noun phrase, one can generate a new NPSN that has never been in use before. This characteristic permits the native speaker to be creative in the interpretation of his social environment through name bestowal given the numerous choices of names available to choose from. Categories from sentence names in Lamnso' can be isolated for emphasis or questioning. Nso' personal names, like basic sentences in Lamnso' can be marked for mood differentiation: declarative mood and interrogative mood.

2.1.1 Declarative personal Names

Meaningful statements that are reflective of conceptual, historical and socio-cultural reality can be said to be declarative. Such statements could be affirmative, assertive, denials etc. Information signalled by declarative names corresponds to that signalled by declarative sentences. Declarative sentences that have positive pragmatic effects easily qualify for adoption as personal names because of the Positive Sanction Principle[3]. The examples in 4 are personal names that make a pronouncement about a position, a state, an observation, a wish etc.

4.	a)	Lendzemo	[S lèn dzə mo]
			now non-prog-be me
			'It is now my turn'
	b)	Verdzebah	[S vèr dzə ba']
			we non-prog- be ba'
			'We are in Bah[4]'
	c)	Ndzewiyi	[S dzə́ wíyì]
			world prog-come
			The world is advancing'
	d)	Bongdzehem	[S bòŋ dzə'èm]

---

3 See the Home Context Condition in section 3.1

4 The name of a settlement within Nso' land.

good non-prog-sit
'It is better to be settled'

4 (a-d) are sentence names that are assertive of the circumstances surrounding the birth of the name bearer. Each family bestows a name that reflects their own interpretation of the event(s) connected to the moment of birth. The declarative sentence names convey the belief of the family in their reading of the conditions of birth.

2.1.2 Interrogative Sentence Names

People generally ask questions when life presents events and circumstances for which they cannot immediately proffer answers or solutions. The birth of a child offers families an opportunity to reflect on the lives they are leading. The interrogative personal names are bestowed on children delivered into uncertain political, socio-cultural and economic circumstances.

Question sentences in Lamnso' are structurally unique. Unlike English-type languages in which question derivation involves the movement of the wh-element from clause final position at the deep-structure to clause initial position at the surface-structure, Lamnso' is a wh-in-situ language in which the wh-phrase remains at clause final position at surface structure. In addition, this wh-element must appear in the domain of some appropriate binder at LF (-representation) [5] if the interrogative derivation is to converge at the interface level of the sentence (Yuka, 2006). Nso' interrogative personal names equally exhibit their question elements clause finally. The examples in 5 show that interrogative sentence names have the features of interrogative sentences.

5.   a)   Nsaidzeka   [S nsay dzə   ka]
                        soil non-prog-be   what
                        'What is the worth of this world?'
     b)   Ashujika   [S á   shuˋ   ji ka]
                        they   non-prog-suggest that what
                        'What have they suggested?'
     c)   Mberinyuyle   [S m bèrì   nyuy le]
                        I   non-prog-thank God how

---

[5] Logical Form. A level of representation where component interpretation includes only semantic features.

'How do I thank God?'

d)   Muyeele   [S mù yèé   le]
                        me non-prog-do how
                        'How do I do (this)?'

e)   Liybarfee   [S líy   bár   feé]
                        insult prog-hang where
                        'Where is the insult hanging?'

f)   Nsohdzefee   [S nso' dzə   feé]
                        nso' non-prog-be where
                        'Where are the people of Nso'?'

g)   Ngehdzeyela   [Sŋge'   dzə   ye la]
                        penury non-prog-be sm who
                        'Whose penury is it?'

h)   Nyuybanla   [S nyuy ban   la]
                        God non-prog-hate who
                        'Who does God hate?'

i)   Wiryenkfea   [S wìr   yén   kfə́ á]
                        person prog-see his part
                        'Is one seeing his own (faults)?'

j)   Kehmua   [S kè'   mu á]
                        non-prog-start me part
                        'Am i the first to start?'

In 5, the personal names, like the sentences from which the names are derived, are in the interrogative mood. The wh-words[6] highlighted in bold face occur clause finally.

The wh- words in 5 are generally suggestive of the answer to the question given that the question word and the appropriate answer always have identical features. Wh-in-situ languages vary question formation strategies when they base-generate a question particle at clause final position (see example 5 i-j). In 5 i-j, there is no overt wh-words; rather, a question particle appears at clause final position. The question particle is an idiosyncrasy of languages in which the wh-words are not moved at surface-structure (Cheng, 1991). The wh-words in Lamnso' personal names comprise of two cardinal

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[6] Though question words in Lamnso' do not necessarily begin with the letters wh-, as is the case with English, we choose to refer to them as wh-words (question words) as is the case in existing literature.

components: the proposition and the object of focus of the question. The object of focus and the proposition are identical in features. Thus a question name in Lamnso' must occur within the domain of some appropriate binder at LF if such a name is to an intelligible interrogative name in the language.

2.2 Verb Dominated Names

The verb dominated personal names in Lamnso' are inherently verb phrases (VP). Like every other maximal projection, the verb phrase name is a symmetrical projection of a single headword category (V) (Radford, 1990). The VP standardly referred to as the 'predicate' contains the verb, which is the sentence predicator (Yusuf 1992a). Lamnso' verbs can easily be divided into two major groups: The simple verbs and the complex verbs. Morphologically, the simple verbs consist only of the verbal base, while the complex verbs consist of the verbal base and an extension. The base and its affix are grammatically and phonologically interdependent. The verb has generally been treated as a unitary component ignoring the smaller morphological units existing within complex verbs. Yuka (forthcoming) has shown that these smaller morphological units participate in transitivity alternation. Transitivity begins with the understanding that the verb takes a direct object.

The head verb of the VP name in Lamnso' is always transitive. Such names describe situations, home conditions, circumstances of birth etc. Verb dominated personal names are also derived from declarative statements that convey interpretations of circumstances and events within the family. The VP names in example 6, and the sentence names in example 2, are structurally similar except that the phrasal names lack an overt agent, making verb phrasal names principally descriptive.

6.   a)   Sevidzem   [VP sɔ́   vidzə̀m]
                     non-prog-take   everything
                     'receive every offer'/ 'I will receive everything'
     b)   kongnyuy   [VP kòŋ   nyuy]
                     non-prog-love God
                     'the love of God/ God's love'/ 'It is God who loves me'
     c)   Shemlon   [VP shèm   lòn]
                     non-prog-deny misfortune
                     'denier   of misfortune'/ 'This one who ends the

misfortune'

d) Dindzee   [VP dìn   dzee]
                non-prog-direct road
                'lead/show the way'/ 'You show us the way'

e) Sahnyuy   [VP sá'   nyuy
                prog-judge God
                'God is judging'/ 'God is judging us/you/ God is the abiter'

7, represents the basic structure of the names in 5a-e. Personal names have the principal

7.   VP

        V   N
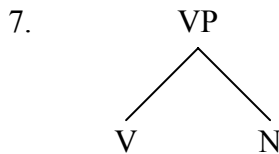
function of identifying people. A name distinguishes and individuates its bearer. To effectively perform this role, a name cannot be indefinitely long. The full meaning of a name can be implied by a recognisable part of the full version (Ekundayo[0], 1977) that is distinct and unambiguous. It is evident from our interpretation of the names in 6a-e that the VP forms represent only part of the full expression corresponding to the full semantic interpretation of a each of the names. Our claim here is that length restriction is what informs verb dominated Nso' personal names, otherwise the names in 6 will reflect the structure in 3. Once the names in 6a-e are considered as declarative statements, it is easy to discern that emphasis is on the theme. The agent or the patient can be implied. Length restriction ignores constituents whose exclusion does not hinder the semantic import of the name or its functional relevance. It is the length restriction interpretive principle that enables native speakers to discern the meaning of VP personal names in Lamnso'

2.3 Noun Dominated Names

Before the gradual encroachment of western civilization into Nso' cultural values and worldview, the bestowal of personal names was gender sensitive. Today, the categorization of personal names following sex distinction is steadily being eroded by the popularity of European names and the readiness

of Nso' married women to discard their maiden names for the surnames of their husbands. Kishani, (2005), notes that part of the coronation rites of a traditional family lord (Fáy or Shuu Fay)[7] in Nso' is the requirement that a child be enthroned alongside the Fáy or Shuu Fay. If such a child is male, he will either be called: Lúkòng, ŋgóng or Túkòv; if the child is female, she either takes the name Bìy, Sheè, Ntàng or Kfɔ̀kfə'. These names are symbolic to the role of their bearers within the family.

Within the Nso' traditional setting it is assumed that children suffering from sickle-cell anaemia are being hounded by evil spirits and need spiritual cleansing. Part of this spiritual rejuvenation is the requirement that a child be given a new name. The belief is that a new name changes the identity of the child and renders him/her unrecognisable to the evil spirits. The first male child in the family is either called Taàlúkòng or Taàbìy. The first female child is given the name Yeèlukòng or Yeèbìy. These names stand as evidence that from Nso' personal names, a competent interpreter can tell not only the sex of the bearer, but the import of a name and the traditional role of the bearer as well as his/her status within family hierarchy.

2.3.1 Lone Word Names

Bìy, Sheè, Kfɔ̀kfɔ̀, Lúkòng, Ngóng, Túkòv etc are regarded as traditional names often linked to traditional idol worship. These lone word names are noun dominated and seek to describe and individuate their bearers within their community. Majority of lone word names are nouns. Unlike the sentence and verb dominated names, these lone word names are sometimes abstract and semantically vague. While considering the names in example 8, notice the plethora of possible acceptable interpretations that such names can be subsumed.

8. a) Nge'   'an unpleasant or undesirable experience, a troublesome person'
   b) Sháŋ   'prison, chain, restriction, curtailment of ones rights'
   c) Vibàn   'hatred, bad faith, angst'
   d) Nsà'   'counter claims that need judgement, responsibility'
   e) Kifɔ̀m   'an abandoned homestead'
   f) Kibvɔ̀r   'dust, powder, an item lacking in substance'

---

[7] the head of a lineage from which several other lineages have stemmed off, and so may be regarded as head of a sub-clan.

A child bearing 8a above, could be meant to reflect the circumstances of birth (the mother may have been in labour for long in the delivery room before the baby was born), home condition (they may have been poverty and lack during the time of birth or family business may have taken a down turn at the time of birth, the birth of the child may also be seen as an end to an illness or an unpleasant psychological condition of a family member). For 8b, a member of the family may have been serving a jail term at the time of birth or an enemy of the family may have been successfully prosecuted and jailed, the basic rights of family members may have been trampled upon etc. 8e and 8f are common nouns. The semantic interpretation of such names is fluid and non-specific.

2.3.2 Noun-Noun Name Forms

Another set of noun dominated personal names whose interpretations are less abstract are personal names derived from two nouns (noun-noun constructs). With such names, as shown in example 9, one noun qualifies another noun.

9.   a)   Kwahtinyuy   [NP kwa'tì   nuyun]
                        thought   God
                        'God's thoughts'
     b)   Tarngwah   [NP tàr   ŋgwá']
                        leader   union
                        'Union leader'
     c)   Wirdzem   [NP wír   ndzə́m]
                        person   disability
                        'a lame person'
     d)   Wirnkor   [NP wír   ŋkòr]
                        person   ŋkòr
                        'somebody from Nkor'8
     e)   Fonlon   [NP fòn   lòn]
                        king   misfortune
                        'master of misfortune'

---

8 Nkòr is a neighboring ethnic group with similar traditions and culture to those of the Nso' people.

Each of the personal names in 9 show that the two different nouns that are dominated by an NP, as represented in 10.

10.   NP

N   N
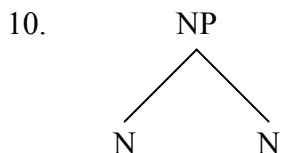
In Lamnso', the predominant noun-noun constructions are those with an Associative Marker (AM), that occurs in-between the two nouns as shown in 10.

11.   a)   kikun ké Lòn   b)   shilív shé bvə́rə̀'
              bed   AM Lòn   heart AM[9] lion
              'Lòn's bed'   'A lion's heart'

Noun-noun constructions like those in 10 are said to be unmarked associative constructions.[10] Personal names like those shown in 9 are marked associative constructions, so distinguished because of their lack of an intervening AM marker between the two nouns (Yuka, 1997). Given that Lamnso' is a Head initial language, the head noun (N_1) is simply being qualified by following noun (N_2) within marked associative constructions. The semantic relationship between N_1 and N_2 makes the dominating NP, more specific than the lone noun names in example 8. Again, the N_1 - N_2 name forms represent complete thoughts that have been abridges into a noun phrase. N_1 and N_2 are drawn from the general lexicon of Lamnso'. Their choices are governed by sociological considerations while their syntactic

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[9] The Associative Marker is a noun modifier which specifies the (adjectival) attributes of a given noun (Grebe 1984). In Lamnso' the AM relates nouns within the structure [N_1 AM N_2]. Such constructions commonly express possession, such that N_2 is the possessor, while N_1 is the possessed.

[10] Radford (1988:39) employs the theory of Markedness to distinguish between marked and unmarked phenomenon. An unmarked phenomenon is that which conforms with universal principles in the language, a marked phenomenon does not.

order is guided by Head Parameter Principle[11]. N_1 syntactically functions as the head noun, while N_2 becomes the qualifier of N_1. Once $[N_1 + N_2]$ within a personal name noun-noun construct switch positions, ungrammatical structures are derived. For instance sLonfon, sNkorwir, sNwahtar

Evidence from section 2 of this paper indicates that the NPSN is principally a sentence merged into a single word item, which then functions as noun. The following section of the paper examines the various restrictions that guide the selection of appropriate lexical units which constitutes sentence names in Lamnso'.

3. Categorial Selectional Restrictions for Nso' Sentence Names

Once one assumes that Nso' names belong to an open lexical category, and that like sentences, name derivation is productive, then the underlying claim is that all sentences in Lamnso' can be adapted to personal names. Such an assumption is capable of generating semantically and socio-culturally unacceptable names that either violate socio-cultural tenets or are simply semantically unintelligible. This section of the paper examines the semantic and socio-cultural restrictions that guide the selection of appropriate lexical units for the formation of Nso' sentence names

3.1. Home Context Condition

Home Context Condition (henceforth HCC) is the most prevalent restriction that guides the selection of a personal name in Nso'. A name chosen to reflect the situation within the family at the time of the birth of a child is thoroughly thought out. Such a name may reflect: the special circumstances of the birth of a child, the social economic, political conditions into which the child was born, the religious affiliation of the family (which God the family worships), the profession of the family line etc.

For an event to satisfy the HCC, it has to be psychologically, sociologically and culturally salient. Such events must be honorable, replete with love and dignity. It must have socio-economic value and revere age and experience to be of high social value. Each name in 12 is primarily determined by a matching HCC.

---

[11] The principle which determines the relative positioning of heads with respect to their complements.

12. a) Senyuy 'It's through God's help' = for a child born after a difficult
delivery'
   b) Keewai 'that which belongs to the market' = for a child delivered in the
market place).
   c) Ngehdzeyela 'whose penury is it?' = (for a child delivered into economic
hardship)
   d) Kongbunri 'he/she with a preference for prayers' = for a child delivered
into a deeply religious family.

It is necessary to note that identical contexts may motivate distinct but
semantically related names and the same name may be motivated by
different circumstances of birth.

The names 12 reveal that acceptable sentences exist that can pass for actual
home contexts; also, that acceptable names can be constructed from potential
home conditions. However, there are events that the Nso' person will not
interpret as actual or potential home conditions. The single sentences in 13
have the structure of personal names. The events they relate constitute
occurrences within the home, but none of them is acceptable as a home
condition to motivate the bestowal of a personal name.

13. a) Jwifonimu   [S jiwi fò   ne   mu]
                        dog non-prog-give compl me
                        'The dog has given me'
     b) Mbiydzenah   [S mbìy dzə   nà']
                        first non-prog-be cow
                        'The cow is primary'
     c) Mberishong   [S m bèrì   shóŋ]
                        I prog-thank thief
                        'I am thankful to the theif'

Their restriction is informed by the lexical items selected as arguments (dog,
cow, and thief). These arguments are looked down on by the Nso' people. 13a
is not a potential HCC because the name declares that a dog offered a child to
the family; a ludicrous thing to say within a community of Nso' people. 13b
states that the family considers a cow important enough to place it above
everything else in the family. 13c eulogises theft, which is seen as a social evil
within Nso' society. Sentences not judged as home conditions strictly limit
the repertoire and the productive capacity of Nso' personal names.

3.2 Denials of Eternal Truths

Eternal truths are maxims, rooted in the folklore as well as in the oral tradition of a people. They are concise statements, which express the obvious truths and the insightful perception of life within a speech community. The predicative elements of such sentences express eternal truths in the habitual form, which indicates the persistence of an event irrespective of time (Frawley and Erlbaum, 1992). The events expressed are often removed from any specific time reference though the same event is conceptually futuristically extended, nonetheless.

Such eternal truths have largely been accepted as proverbs which are quoted often to remind society of its tenets and goals. The denial of an eternal truth is not simply the negation of a generalized statement; it is a refutation of the socio-cultural beliefs of a people. It is possible to have grammatical sentences that negate eternal truths, but sentence names that deny eternal truths are unacceptable as personal names within the Nso' people as shown by the examples below.

14.   a)   (i)   Nuyyshaaven   [S nyuy shaà   ven]
                                    God non-prog-pass you(pl.)
                                    'God surpasses you'
           (ii)   sVershaanyuy   [S vèr shaà   nyuy]
                                    we   non-prog-pass God
                                    'We surpass God'
     b)   (i)   Fondzewir   [S fòn dzə   wír]
                                    king non-prog-be person
                                    'The king is a human being'
           (ii)   sFonyo'dzewir   [S fòn yò' dzə   wír]
                                    king neg non-prog-be person
                                    'The King is not human'

It is offensive to have a name that declares that any human contemplates a status measurement with either a personal god or the God of Moses. 14a, which proclaims that an individual or a group consider themselves superior to God is conceptually unacceptable. The Fòn (king) is generally looked upon as the royal father of the Nso' people and first among the Nso' men. It will be traditionally injurious to conceive of a statement that insinuates that he is not

human except such a reference is metaphorically honourific. Such a sentence is not a candidate for a personal name among the people of Nso'.

3.3 Social Beliefs

The choice of lexical items for the construction of Nso' sentence names is guided by the social factors and beliefs of the people. Sentences that eulogize antisocial behaviour and activities are rejected as personal names. Words like Shóŋ (thief) [smdzeshóŋ] 'I am a theif'; kibaá (madness) [sbòŋkibaá] 'madness is better'; rím (witch) [srìmdzewo] 'you are a witch' etc are not considered worthy candidates for personal names. Conversely, lexical items like kòŋ (love) [Kòŋbunrì] 'lover of prayers'; Kishə'rì (happiness) [bòŋkishé'rì] 'happiness is good' etc are socially highly valued qualities that feature in personal names across the land.

Derogatory terms, abusive words, taboo words, unpleasant connotations etc, are restricted from the repertoire of lexical items that are candidates for Nso' personal names. Such words are low in value on the social hierarchy. Animal names, objects or degrading items are excluded from the membership of lexical items that can constitute a sentence name. Since a name is a reflection of the bearer, no person wants to bear a name that place's him or her lowly in society.

4. Summary and Conclusion

Evidence from our investigation suggest that the general assumption that a personal name is a noun which can be defined with Chomsky's (1986b) feature specification ([±N, ±V]) is not tenable for Nso' personal names. Semantically, each of these names expresses a complete thought process. Structurally Nso' personal names manifest as nouns, phrases and sentences. Where phrasal names occur, there is proof that some constituent(s) whose inclusion will logically yield a basic clause, but whose semantic value can be implied, has been clipped. Apart from the standard categorical selectional restrictions, lexical units that are candidates for personal name composition in Lamnso' are guided by semantic and socio-cultural restrictions. Given the productive nature of the Nso' naming system, these restrictions have largely limited the repertoire of Nso' sentence names. This entails that not all well-formed sentences in Lamnso' are candidates for personal names. Our study of Nso' personal names reveals an interesting correlation between the socio-

cultural world-view of the Nso' people and the linguistic choices of the people.

Acknowledgements

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Abbreviations

pl	Plural
prog	Progressive
non-prog	non-progressive
part	Particle
compl	Completive

Appendix: Phonetic symbols used in this paper

[ˀ] Glottal Stop

['] Simplified representation of the glottal stop

[ə] Schwa

[ŋ] Nasal velar

[₀] Sub dot, signifying a syllabic segment e.g. [o₀]

Communication strategies: English language departments in Iran

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The notion of communicative competence and more specifically strategic competence is examined in this paper. It also deals with the various definitions of strategic competence, communication strategies and taxonomy of communication strategies. The major part of this paper is devoted to the problems of Persian learners of English in general and English language majors/graduates and the cause of their problems in particular. Then the paper concludes with some general suggestions and the pedagogical implications of communication strategy use.

Key words: Communicative Competence; Communication strategy; Persian Learners; Language Teaching; Language Learning.

1. Introduction

The concept of communication strategy came into existence as a result of the inadequacy of the old theories to offer a clear conception of what it means to know a language. Chomsky's view of the linguistic theories is primarily concerned with "an ideal speaker-listener in a completely homogeneous speech community, who knows its language perfectly…" (1965, p. 3). Hymes (1974), on the other hand, questioned the relevance of Chomsky's view to real life situations. Therefore, he used the term "communicative competence" to refer to an alternative theory within which sociocultural considerations have an important role.

Concerning Hymes' communicative competence and Chomsky's linguistic competence, the learner's use of the target language has repeatedly been studied with respect to grammatical correctness and sociolinguistic appropriateness. But according to Canale and Swain (1980), none of the theories of communicative competence were adequate for a communicative approach to language learning because they did not take into consideration

the communicative strategies that the learners employ in order to cope with the communicative problems arising in the course of communication.

The present paper is an attempt to deal with the problems of Persian learners of English in general, English language majors and B.A graduates in particular and the role of communication strategies in this regard.

2. Communicative Competence

The goal of English language teaching is to develop the learners' communicative competence which will enable them to communicate successfully in the real world. Communicating successfully refers to passing on a comprehensible message to the listener. Communicative competence has been one of the great key-words and buzz-words of language teaching for many years. It still is. In recent years, there has been a certain amount of controversy as to what the concept actually comprises, and whether all those, for example, pupils have to learn to do is talk. Canale (1983) believed that communicative competence comprised of grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence and strategic competence.

Strategic competence refers to the individual's ability to use communication strategies, e.g., paraphrase, circumlocution, literal translation, lexical approximation, mime, to get their message across and to compensate for a limited or imperfect knowledge of rules or the interference of such factors such as fatigue, distraction or inattention.

3. Defining Communication Strategies

It is difficult to find a rigorous definition of Communication Strategies which Communication Strategy researchers have reached an agreement on. There have been many definition proposals for the communication strategies of the second language learners. The following two definitions will provide us with an insight into the nature of communication strategies.

- Learners' attempt to bridge the gap between their linguistic competence in the target language and that of the target language interlocutors (Tarone, 1981, p. 288).

- The conscious employment by verbal or non verbal mechanisms for communicating an idea when precise linguistic forms are for some reasons not available to the learner at that point in communication (Brown, 1987, p. 180).

4. Taxonomies of Communication Strategies

Karimnia and Izadparast (2007) asserted that strategic competence was composed of verbal and non-verbal strategies of communication that might be employed to compensate for communication breakdown attributable to performance variables or to insufficient competence. However, there is no agreement among researchers over taxonomy of communication strategies. It is very clear in the literature that a single utterance may be labeled under two different categories. Cook (1993, p. 133) argued that "if the lists were standardized, at last, there would be an agreement about such categories". Researchers have developed and proposed new taxonomies of communication strategies from time to time.

On the basis of previous works on Communication Strategies (Tarone, 1981; Bialystok, 1990), taxonomy of Communication Strategies was developed.

1. Avoidance of Communication Strategies
    1.1. Topic avoidance: A refusal to enter into or continue a discourse because of a feeling of linguistic inadequacy
    1.2. Message avoidance: The learner tries to talk about a particular topic but gives up because it is too difficult

2. L2-based Communication Strategies
    2.1. Approximation: A use of a L2 word which shares the essential feature of the target word e.g. "old objects" for "antique"
    2.2. Circumlocution: A use of an L2 phrase to describe the property, function, characteristics, duty, its purpose or an example of it, e.g. "Something you put your food in to make it cold" (refrigerator)
    2.3. Appeal: An appeal for assistance either implicit or explicit, e.g. "What do you call this in English?" "It's ah ah ah . . ."

3. L1-based Communication Strategies
    3.1. Language switching: A use of a word or phrase from the first language
    3.2. Foreignizing: A use of a word or phrase from L1 with L2 pronunciation

4. Paralinguistic Communication Strategies

    4.1. Gesture: A use of facial expression or head shaking if the learner does not understand

    4.2. Mime: The learner uses gestures as well as verbal output to convey meaning (e.g. clapping hands to indicate 'applause')

5. Modification devices: Communication devices employed in order to keep the conversation going smoothly

    5.1. Comprehension check: A use of expressions such as "Right? Okay? Do you understand?" to check a partner's understanding

    5.2. Clarification request: A request made for repetition or explanation, such as saying "What do you mean?, Again, please, Pardon? You're leaving this Saturday?"

    5.3. Backchannel cues: A use of short utterances such as "uh-huh, yeah, right" to show participation or understanding

    5.4. Self-repair: The learner corrects any mistakes he makes by himself e.g. "I met Peter yesterday. She no he went to Japan."

    5.5. Confirmation check: A repetition of the partner's statement in order to check understanding

    5.6. Pausing: A use of pauses or pause-fillers, such as "uh . . . er . . ." for taking time to think

This taxonomy is not intended to be a final categorization of all existing Communication Strategies.

Thus, Bialystok (1990, p. 61) remarked:

> . . . the variety of taxonomies proposed in the literature differ primarily in terminology and overall categorizing principle rather than in the substance of the specific strategies. If we ignore them, differences in the structure of the taxonomies by abolishing the various overall categories, then a core group of specific strategies that appear consistently across the taxonomies clearly emerges . . . Differences in the definitions and illustrations for those core strategies across the various studies are trivial.

5. Problems of Persian learners of English

Persian learners of English encounter problems in all the language skills. The students in Iran learn English in their native country, where the native

language is Persian. The only way to learn English in Iran is through formal instruction, i.e. inside the classroom where the language teachers at school are native speakers of Farsi. There is little opportunity to learn English through natural interaction in the target language. This is only possible when students encounter native English speakers who come to the country as tourist, and this rarely happens.

Many studies have been conducted in Iran to investigate lexical, syntactic and phonological errors committed by Iranian learners of English. Let's take a look at some of these studies.

Faghih (1997) overviewed language transfer and a renewal of interest in contrastive analysis (CA) as a suitable testing ground for language transfer. He focused on Iranian students' difficulty in learning the English definite article, "the." The CA revealed that there was no single Persian word corresponding exactly to the English definite article.

Ghazanfari (2003) examined interference from the perspective of language proficiency in a study of Iranian English-as-a-Foreign-Language learners. Subjects were given two tests--a proficiency test and a test on similar lexical forms--to investigate whether there was any relationship between the two variables in question. Results indicated that there was a strong negative correlation between learners' language proficiency level and the number of errors they make due to interference.

Keyvani (1980) described how, through the use of two diagrams, one can teach the English present-perfect to Iranian students. One diagram consisted of a time-line divided into "past" and "non-past." The other used an oval to indicate a time-span including the present. Both facilitated comprehension of present-perfect meaning.

Yarmohammadi (1995) focused upon formulating contrasts between American English and modern Persian within the system of reported speech. In order to verify the significance of contrastive points in generating learning problems, a test of about thirty items of Persian sentences with four choices of English utterances as their translations was constructed. One of the two choices was the correct translation for the given Persian sentences. The outcome showed how serious the interference resulting from two conflicting

points in two languages could be and how important the principles of transfer could become in the teaching of languages to non -natives.

Another important area of difficulty that Persian learners of English have is communication. 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.

As far as our experience as teachers of English as a foreign language in different Universities and some other educational institutions is concerned, English language graduates in Iran, where Farsi is the native language, find difficulties in using English for communication. When engaged in authentic communicative situations, they often lack some of the vocabulary and language items they need to get their meaning across. As a result, they can't keep the interaction going for an extended period of time. Monshi-Tousi (1980), for example, performed a study where on English proficiency test, 55 Iranian students studying in the United States scored between levels achieved by Fourth- through seventh-grade native speakers. The subjects indicated that association with Americans and time spent in the United States rather than studying English in Iran contributed to their success in English.

There have been a lot of complaints made about the weakness of school graduates in English who join the universities as English language majors and English learners in general. The weakness of English language learners in general, and English language department majors/graduates more specifically can be attributed to various factors: lack of knowledge on the part of school graduates when they join the university, school and English language departments curricula, teaching methodology, lack of the target language environment and the learners' motivation.

Some of the students, who pass the university entrance exams, do not even know the basics of the language. Some of them know absolutely nothing. How can the teachers teach these students? It is a big question. It is like waking the dead!

In Iran, about one-third of the Associate degree courses and one-sixth of Bachelor degree courses are taught in Farsi. These courses include Islamic Studies, Farsi, Social Studies, Computer Sciences, History, Family planning

and so on. The writers of these lines are in the belief that the remainder of the courses may not be enough to help those graduates communicate freely and effectively in the target language. They are thus likely to face some difficulties in their performance. The researchers suggest that it would be better and helpful if such courses were taught in English rather than in Farsi. Haliday, McIntosh and Strevens (1984, p. 18) when discussing ways of learning a foreign language, said:

> In Nigeria, English is used in almost all the teaching in high school. This has two important results. In the first place, the quality of classroom experience that each pupil receives is much greater outside the English lesson than within it. Some people have said that if the English language lessons were removed entirely from the schools in Nigeria, little or no effect would be noticed on ability of the pupils in English when they came to leave schools. But, in the second place, the children are influenced by class teacher other than those who are trained in English. If those teachers' English is not very good, the pupils will suffer. Teaching in language is an excellent way of teaching a language, but all those who teach subjects in the foreign language need to be able to perform well in it themselves.

The researchers are, therefore, of the opinion that, for English students, all university courses except Farsi language course(s) should be taught in English, which would certainly improve the University students' linguistic ability, which would, in turn, improve their communicative competence.

In order for language learners to use the language more successfully, they should be involved in real-life situation. But in Iran, English is used only as an academic subject, when it is taught in a school or at the university. Without practice, English or any other language can not be acquired. English language graduates don't have enough practice in English; they use Farsi most of the time even after becoming English language teachers. They only use English when they encounter a situation where they are obliged to use English as a medium of communication and this hardly ever happens. We may therefore come to the conclusion that most of those graduates' speaking time is in Farsi. Practice is very important for mastering any language. Halliday, et al. (1984, P. 16) suggested that:

> Oral mastery depends on practicing and repeating the patterns produced by a native speaker of the foreign language. It is the most economical way of thoroughly learning a language …When one has such a control of the essentials of a language; he can almost automatically produce the usual patterns of that language.

This shows the importance of using the target language in language teaching. Teachers in Iran use Farsi to teach difficult words and to explain English grammar. This is indeed a feature of our learning and teaching experience, as we have experienced both learning and school teaching of English. Vocabulary items are still taught in isolation, though the Communicative Language Teaching approach stresses the importance of teaching vocabulary items in context. Listening materials are not used by the majority of schoolteachers, which is most probably because of the limited number of cassette recorders and the large number of teachers at the same school. Therefore, teachers try to read dialogs to their students, and this does not provide the learners with the necessary native speaker model. This also demotivates the learners and make them board. Dialogs are designed to be read by two or three partners, not by the teacher alone, who would read role A and role B with the same voice and intonation. This is probably due to the audio-lingual method. Teachers were taught by this method and Grammar Translation Method. We believe teacher training programs were unsuccessful in helping the teachers to change their methodology. The adopted methodology is claimed to be eclectic and focuses on communicative approaches to language teaching, but because of teachers` practices in the classroom it is more likely a grammar translation method.

Lack of the target language exposure as spoken by its native speakers could be another reason behind the English majors` weakness in communication. Before the Islamic Revolution, the English language departments and some language institutes used to bring over English native teachers to teach. Most of the students` speaking time was in English since they were exposed to the target language as presented by its native speakers. That was a very helpful experience for English major graduates. The English departments and language institutes are no longer interested in doing this. Almost all English professors in departments and institutes are native speakers of Farsi. This means that the students might not have enough exposure to the target

language as spoken by its native speakers, especially with respect to stress and intonation.

Motivation also plays an important role in improving and developing the learners' communicative ability. Motivation is perceived to be composed of three elements. These include effort, desire and affect. Effort refers to the time spent studying the language and the drive of the learner. Desire indicates how much the learner wants to become proficient in the language, and affect illustrates the learner's emotional reactions with regard to language study (Gardner, 1982). Those with integrative motivation have a genuine interest in the target speech community which the learner is aspiring to become a member of. But as far as our experience is concerned, there are not many English majors who desire to be part of an English speaking community. It might be true that a few of them have such desire, but the majority of English majors join the English language departments because it will be easier for them to get a job with a BA in English than in many other majors.

6. Concluding Remarks and Suggestions

Farsi learners face problems in all the language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The great number of erroneous utterances that Farsi learners of English produce in oral performance and their recourse to communication strategies is an indication of how serious the problem is. It is also an indication that the objectives of the English departments in Iran have not yet been achieved and that this situation requires a solution. Based on the above mentioned points, the following suggestions and recommendations can be put forward:

1. As was mentioned earlier, for English students, all university courses except Farsi language course(s) should be taught in English, which would certainly improve the University students' linguistic ability, which would, in turn, improve their communicative competence.

2. Yarmohammadi (1995) said, and we agree with him, that English B.A students should spend the first two years improving their general proficiency and after passing a proficiency test be allowed to take the related specialized courses. Otherwise, they are just given an associate degree.

3. Reading skill development and reading comprehension are considered to be the main objective for the existing general English courses at the universities. Is reading skill sufficient for our needs in the modern context of information explosion era?

4. Methodological considerations and English teaching materials devised for Iranian learners can be very useful if based on the findings of contrastive linguistic analysis complemented by the results of an error analysis of the given problems.

5. The place of Communication Strategies in language teaching has been a source of considerable controversy in the past twenty years, ranging from strong support for training learners in the classroom to opposition to strategy training based on the claim that strategic competence develops in one's native language and is transferable to the target language. Ellis (1984) found that native speakers use communication strategies in their native language, but less than they do in their target language. This is due to language competence acquired.

   The researchers are in support of the idea of raising the learners' awareness of the nature and communicative potential of Communication Strategies by making them conscious of the Communication Strategies existing in their repertoire, and sensitizing them to the appropriate situations. The teachers' role is then to orient the learners and focus their attention on these strategies. This can be done by explaining the nature and types of Communication Strategy to the learners and illustrating them with examples. They might be asked to record their voice in performing a certain task, then to play it back in order to assess their use of Communication Strategies.

6. Students should also be encouraged to take risks and to use Communication Strategies. This means that the learners should use all their available resources to communicate language resources without being afraid of making errors (Yule and Tarone, 1990). Not all Communication Strategies should be encouraged, however. For example, topic avoidance, mumbling, language switch, repetition, and the message abandonment shouldn't be encouraged. Other strategies, such as circumlocution, appeal for help, self-correction, literal translation, word coinage, and all- purpose words, e.g. stuff, things, etc. may be encouraged.

This consciousness- raising of some strategies is important for the following reasons. First, communication strategies can lead to learning by eliciting unknown language items from the interlocutor, especially in the appeal for help strategy. Second, communication strategies are part of language use. Even native speakers use communication strategies in their speech and use time-gaining devices in order to keep the conversation going, such as "you know", "what do you call it?", and other strategies. Finally, the use of a communication strategy is not indication of communication failure; on the contrary, it can be very successful in compensating for the lack of linguistic knowledge.

7. It is also possible to provide learners with L2 models of the use of certain Communication Strategies by means of listening materials and videos which contain communication strategy use, and then to ask learners to identify, categorize and evaluate communication strategy use by native speakers or other L2 speakers. Another approach suggested by Faerch and Kasper (1986) is to record conversations between native and non-native speakers on video, and then let the students view their own recording and analyze their own strategy use. To be good speaker, it is necessary for learners to be good listeners. Careful listening also helps improve pronunciation and reveals how conversational language expresses meaning. Listening to real-life situation is an excellent way to expose students to the different ways in which things can be said, which will help them in their attempts to express themselves. The more the student is exposed to the target language, the faster and easier it will be to assimilate the language.

8. And finally the teachers and learners should understand that the successful language learning is not only a matter of developing grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, and discourse competence, but also the strategic competence which involves the use of Communication Strategies and their role in sending and comprehending message successfully.

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