

*In the Name of Allah,  
the Compassionate,  
the Merciful*



Azarbaijan Shahid Madani University

*Journal of Applied Linguistics  
and Applied Literature:  
Dynamics and Advances*

**License Holder:**

Azarbaijan Shahid Madani University

**Director-in-Charge:**

Dr. Davoud Amini

**Editor-in-Chief:**

Dr. Karim Sadeghi

**Managing Editor:**

Dr. Reza Yalsharzeh

**Address:** Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Literature and Humanities, Azarbaijan Shahid Madani University, 35 kms from Tabriz-Azarshar Road, Tabriz, Iran.

**Telefax:** 041-34327561

**P. O. Box:** 53714-161

**Postal Code:** 5375171379

**URL:**

<http://jalda.azaruniv.ac.ir/>

**Publication Number:**

Volume 10, Issue 1, 2022

**Publication Date:**

Sunday, May, 1

**Price:** 50,000 Rials

**Circulation:** 100 Copies

This Biannual Journal is published with the Registration No. 91/34715

Online ISSN 2821- 0204

Print ISSN 2820 - 8986

## INTERNATIONAL EDITORIAL BOARD



|                              |  |  |
|------------------------------|--|--|
| <b>Gary Barkhuizen</b>       | Professor of Applied Language Studies and Linguistics                          | <i>The University of Auckland, Auckland, New Zealand</i>                   |
| <b>Suresh Canagarajah</b>    | Professor in Applied Linguistics, English and Asian Studies                    | <i>The Pennsylvania State University, State College, USA</i>               |
| <b>Jane M. Ekstam</b>        | Professor of English literature  | <i>Østfold University College, Halden, Norway</i>                          |
| <b>Luise Von Flotow</b>      | Professor of Translation Studies   | <i>University of Ottawa, Canada</i>  |
| <b>Ari Huhta</b>             | Professor in Applied Linguistics and Language Assessment                       | <i>University of Jyväskylä, Jyväskylä, Finland</i>                         |
| <b>Saeed Karimi-Aghdam</b>   | Associate Professor of English Language and Didactics                          | <i>Nord University, Levanger, Norway</i>                                   |
| <b>Claire Jeanne Kramsch</b> | Professor Emerita of Applied Linguistics                                       | <i>University of California Berkeley, Berkeley, California, USA</i>        |
| <b>James P. Lantolf</b>      | Greer Professor Emeritus in Language Acquisition and Applied Linguistics       | <i>The Pennsylvania State University, State College, Pennsylvania, USA</i> |
| <b>Paul Kei Matsuda</b>      | Professor of English and Director of Second Language Writing                   | <i>Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona, USA</i>                       |
| <b>Jayakaran Mukundan</b>    | Professor of English language Studies  | <i>Universiti Putra Malaysia, Serdang, Malaysia</i>                        |
| <b>Lourdes Ortega</b>        | Professor of Applied Linguistics, Bilingualism and Second Language Acquisition | <i>Georgetown University, Washington DC, USA</i>                           |
| <b>Shameem Rafik-Galea</b>   | Professor of Applied Linguistics and TESOL                                     | <i>SEGi University, Petaling Jaya, Selangor, Malaysia</i>                  |
| <b>Paul John Thibault</b>    | Professor of Applied Linguistics   | <i>University of Agder, Kristiansand S, Norway</i>                         |
| <b>Li Wei</b>                | Professor in Applied Linguistics   | <i>University College London, London, United Kingdom</i>                   |



Azarbaijan Shahid Madani University

*Journal of Applied Linguistics  
and Applied Literature:  
Dynamics and Advances*

**License Holder:**

Azarbaijan Shahid Madani University

**Director-in-Charge:**

Dr. Davoud Amini

**Editor-in-Chief:**

Dr. Karim Sadeghi

**Managing Editor:**

Dr. Reza Yalsharzeh

**Address:** Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Literature and Humanities, Azarbaijan Shahid Madani University, 35 kms from Tabriz-Azarshar Road, Tabriz, Iran.

**Telefax:** 041-34327561

**P. O. Box:** 53714-161

**Postal Code:** 5375171379

**URL:**

<http://jalda.azaruniv.ac.ir/>

**Publication Number:**

Volume 10, Issue 1, 2022

**Publication Date:**

Sunday, May, 1

**Price:** 50,000 Rials

**Circulation:** 100 Copies

This Biannual Journal is published with the Registration No. 91/34715

Online ISSN 2821-0204

Print ISSN 2820 - 8986

## EDITORIAL BOARD



|                              |  |  |
|------------------------------|--|--|
| <b>Davoud Amini</b>          | Associate Professor of EFL                       | <i>Azarbaijan Shahid Madani University, Iran</i> |
| <b>Ali Akbar Ansarin</b>     | Professor of EFL                                 | <i>Tabriz University, Iran</i>                   |
| <b>Bahram Behin</b>          | Associate Professor of TESOL                     | <i>Azarbaijan Shahid Madani University, Iran</i> |
| <b>Biok Behnam</b>           | Emeritus Assoc. Professor of Applied Linguistics | <i>Azarbaijan Shahid Madani University, Iran</i> |
| <b>Farahman Farrokhi</b>     | Professor of TESOL                               | <i>Tabriz University, Iran</i>                   |
| <b>Parvin Ghasemi</b>        | Emeritus Professor of English Literature         | <i>Shiraz University, Iran</i>                   |
| <b>Kazem Lotfipour-Saedi</b> | Emeritus Professor of Applied Linguistics        | <i>Tabriz University, Iran</i>                   |
| <b>Ahad Mehrvand</b>         | Associate Professor of English Literature        | <i>Azarbaijan Shahid Madani University, Iran</i> |
| <b>Karim Sadeghi</b>         | Professor of TESOL                               | <i>Urmia University, Iran</i>                    |

## ADVISORY BOARD

|                              |  |  |
|------------------------------|--|--|
| <b>Reza Abdi</b>             | Associate Professor of EFL                 | <i>Mohagheg Ardabili University, Ardabil, Iran</i>       |
| <b>Seyyed Mohammad Alavi</b> | Professor of Applied Linguistics           | <i>University of Tehran, Iran</i>                        |
| <b>Minoo Alemi</b>           | Associate Professor of EFL                 | <i>Islamic Azad University, West Tehran Branch, Iran</i> |
| <b>Behruz Azabdafari</b>     | Emeritus Professor of Applied Linguistics  | <i>Tabriz University, Iran</i>                           |
| <b>Salasih Che Lah</b>       | Professor of Applied Linguistics           | <i>University Sains Malaysia, Pinang, Malaysia</i>       |
| <b>Javad Gholami</b>         | Associate Professor of EFL                 | <i>Urmia University, Urmia, Iran</i>                     |
| <b>Alireza Jalilifar</b>     | Professor of Applied Linguistics           | <i>Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz, Iran</i>          |
| <b>Saeid Ketabi</b>          | Associate Professor of Applied Linguistics | <i>University of Isfahan, Iran</i>                       |
| <b>Farideh Pourgivi</b>      | Emeritus Professor of English              | <i>University of Shiraz, Iran</i>                        |
| <b>Mahnaz Saedi</b>          | Associate Professor of EFL                 | <i>Islamic Azad University, Tabriz Branch, Iran</i>      |

**Language Editors:** Dr. Abolfazl Ramazani & Dr. Foad Behzadpoor

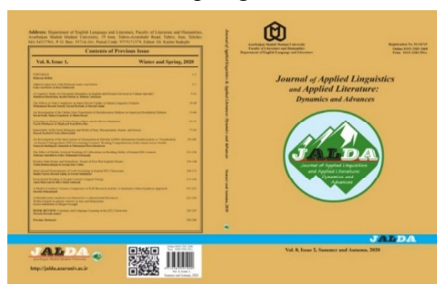
**Production Manager:** Mahsa Mehrangiz

**Typesetting:** Ayshan Computer

## Journal Information

### About Journal

*The Journal of Applied Linguistics and Applied Literature: Dynamics and Advances (JALDA)* is an open access, academic, scholarly, and peer-reviewed journal that follows a double-blind policy. *JALDA* is published both electronically and in print by the Department of English Language and Literature, the Faculty of Literature and Humanities of Azarbaijan Shahid Madani University, Tabriz, Iran. *JALDA* is scheduled for publication biannually in spring and autumn (1<sup>st</sup> April and 1<sup>st</sup> October), with its first issue having been launched in the spring 2013.



### *JALDA* at a glance:

- **Country of Publication:** Iran
- **Publisher:** Azarbaijan Shahid Madani University, Tabriz, Iran
- **Format:** Print & Online
- **Registration No.** 91/34715
- **DOI:** Yes; 10.22049/JALDA.2021
- **Frequency:** Biannual
- **Publication Dates:** 1<sup>st</sup> April and 1<sup>st</sup> October
- **Scope:** Applied Linguistics, Applied Literature, Innovative, Problem-oriented and Applied Studies on the Dynamics between Language and Literary Studies
- **Article Processing Charges:** No (Subject to Change)
- **Type of Journal:** Academic/Scholarly Journal
- **Open Access:** Yes
- **Indexed & Abstracted:** Yes
- **Review Policy:** Double-Blind Peer-Review
- **Copyright:** Creative Commons License (CC BY-NC): Copyright by authors for non-commercial use
- **Archiving :** Authors are requested to disseminate their published work in Academia and/or Researchgate.
- **Depositing:** Articles published in JALDA are also archived in SID, Magiran, Civilica, Noormags by the publisher.
- **Review Time:** Eight Weeks Approximately
- **Contact & Submission e-mail in case of a problem with submission:** davoudamini2014 @ gmail.com
- **Typesetting:** Ayshan Computer
- **Online ISSN:**2821-0204 ; **Print ISSN:** 2820-8986

## **JALDA's Aims and Scope**

*The Journal of Applied Linguistics and Applied Literature: Dynamics and Advances (JALDA)* is an ambitious academic publication which aims to encourage and disseminate cross-disciplinary research targeting real-world problems and real-life concerns where language and/or literature are at the center. Bringing together the now-well-established discipline of *Applied Linguistics* and the thriving subject of *Applied Literature*, *JALDA* stimulates and promotes innovative work within applied studies on language and literature. In the first place, it publishes articles on the two inter-related subjects of *Applied Linguistics* and *Applied Literature*. However, as an essential component of *JALDA's* long-term goals, a new focus has been added, namely the dynamic relationship between language teaching and literature, a fast-growing and dynamic field that requires special attention. In fact, the long-term prospective ambition is to bring this inter-subject dynamic from background to the foreground in the journal. *JALDA's* precise outlook on each of the three intended areas is outlined below in the hope of further illumination on its publication policies and planned purview.

### **1. Applied Linguistics**

The most prevailing definition of *Applied Linguistics* so far, with a consensus on, conceives the field as “the theoretical and empirical investigation of real-world problems in which language is a central issue” (Brumfit, 1997, p. 93). Although real-world problems concerning language may involve each of the three questions regarding the nature of language, its use and its learning, historically, the question of efficient learning and teaching of languages has been a predominant concern among real world problems attended to in *Applied Linguistics*. Accordingly, the following subjects are well-seated areas of investigation within mainstream *Applied Linguistics* which are included in *JALDA's* scope of focus. *JALDA* considers English as a foreign language as the subject of learning:

- Second language vocabulary acquisition
- Grammatical development in L2
- Teaching and learning L2 skills (reading, writing, speaking and listening)
- Technology in language learning and teaching
- Second language curriculum and materials
- Individual differences in second language learning
- Social issues in language learning
- Language teaching methodology
- English for specific purposes
- English as a Lingua Franca
- Language assessment and testing
- English as an international language
- Research methods in applied linguistics
- Language teacher education
- Bilingual education

Although the subject of *Language Learning and Teaching* seems to have already established itself as the mainstream concern in *Applied Linguistics*, the sheer fact that language learning and teaching take place in various ecological conditions, brings forth the warning that ignoring the questions concerning the nature of language and language use might carry with it the risk of blocking our views of the true nature of language learning and teaching as well. *Applied Linguistics* studies need to preserve the flexibility to be inspired by and note the insights from the studies concerning the nature of language and language use, an area which has been labeled as the “*Linguistics Applied*” or “*Applications of Linguistics*” by Davis and Elder (2007). In other words, language pedagogy needs to be examined in its social background in order to be able to reap benefits from the *blessings of the unknown*.

It must be reminded as a word of caution that linguistics is not alone in inspiring *Applied Linguistics Studies*. In fact, attention to the contextual aspects of language learning and teaching highlights the cross-disciplinary nature of *Applied Linguistics*. In this perspective, any research that associates a language-related problem to the core knowledge in psychology, sociology, anthropology, education, neuroscience, economic and political sciences, law, business, etc. counts as *Applied Linguistics*. In this view, *Applied Linguistics* can equally be based in psychology, education, sociology, computer sciences and any other relevant area as it is in linguistics. The intention in these interdisciplinary inquires is to offer reformative, corrective and ameliorative views and suggestions for a language-related real-world problem. In this sense, the discipline of *Applied Linguistics* will be open to the attempts to account for the issues of language learning and teaching alongside its various dimensions as outlined above by giving way to the studies inspired by other language-related studies including the following:

- Corpus Studies
- Discourse Studies
- Economy and language
- Forensic linguistics
- Language and culture
- Language and environment
- Multilingualism
- Neurolinguistics
- Other related areas
- Politics and language
- Translation

According to *JALDA*'s policy formulated here, a few canonical considerations make *Applied Linguistics* distinctive from *Linguistics Studies*. Also, these key features define the nature of work on *Applied Linguistics* that is expected to be submitted for publication in *JALDA*.

- 1) Problem-orientedness
- 2) Language in its ecology
- 3) Cross-disciplinary nature
- 4) Reformative goals
- 5) Real-life data

## **2. Applied Literature**

*Applied Literature* has emerged recently as an effort to draw literary studies more akin to human beings' everyday needs. A problem-oriented view of literature might be alien to most of the scholars in English Literature, one way or another, since the established tradition in literary studies does not concern itself primarily with real-life problems. However, there is an urgent call upon the experts and academicians of English Literature to further concern themselves with the real world, an appeal that needs to be responded effectively. Literary studies seem to be in an urgency to be taken out from the academic world into the real world. Literature needs to be treated as a real-world art concerning itself with people's lives and not simply an academic art that is analyzed and criticized within academic forums.

Inspired by this urgency, *Applied Literature* is defined here as any systematic research where literature can solve or ameliorate a real-world problem. In this sense, literature acts as a stimulus to reform. *Applied Literature* examines the effect of literature on human beings whereby the literary text is in service of dealing with real-life problems. To be able to account for the various aspects of human life in all its contexts, *Applied Literature* must be interdisciplinary in its nature. Furthermore, to meet the essential requirements of a scientific research, it has to give allegiance to a satisfactory level of methodological rigor. By definition, *Applied Literature* is thus:

- 1) Problem-oriented in terms of objectives
- 2) Effect-driven in its rationale
- 3) Multi- disciplinary in its scope
- 4) Method-conscious in its procedure
- 5) Data-based in terms of its subject
- 6) Reform-oriented in its applications

### **What Is Not Applied Literature?**

Articles in *Applied Literature* that are based on the following research orientations, generally classified under *Pure Literature*, do not comply with the policies of *JALDA*:

1. The starting point of the research is based on a piece of literary work rather than a problem in the outside world.
2. The rationale and justification of the study is theory-driven rather than effect-driven.
3. The study commits itself exclusively to the tradition of literary studies without any attempt to invoke insights from other disciplines.
4. The study acts upon literary texts as the only data available for analysis and does not attend to the data from the real-world human life.
5. The study does not imply any reform, amelioration or solution to a real-world problem in its conclusion.

### ***Areas of Research in Applied Literature***

Following are some subjects that can be included in *Applied Literature*. The list is not definitive; *JALDA* encourages initiatives and innovations in this regard:

- ✓ 1) Therapeutic value of literature
- ✓ 2) Trauma studies in literature
- ✓ 3) Literature and ethical development
- ✓ 4) Literature and science
- ✓ 5) Literature and environment
- ✓ 6) Literature for professional training
- ✓ 7) Literary literacy education
- ✓ 8) Other innovative areas

### **3. Dynamics between *Applied Linguistics* and *Applied Literature***

The most ambitious and prospective goal of *JALDA* is to propagate research on real-life problems where both language and literature are at the core. Here, the intention is to deal with language-related problems where literature acts as a source of solution or amelioration to the problem. *JALDA* considers this interdisciplinary preoccupation as a highly promising area of research concern for the specialist in both *Applied Linguistics* and *Literary Studies*. As part of its long-term policy, *JALDA* team fervently encourage researchers to step in this innovative forum of inquiry. Novel as it is, the concept of the research on the *Dynamics* between *Applied Linguistics* and *Literature* can be illustrated with the few following areas of inquiry. The list is inevitably tentative and open for further promotion. *JALDA* is opening a special forum for discussing the options and potentials available regarding the feasibility of this new research area. We ardently invite scholars and experts of the related fields to share their initiatives with us by submitting their prospects in the form of Review Articles or reporting their interdisciplinary research findings.

- 1) The role of literature in language teaching
- 2) The role of Literature in language teacher education
- 3) The role of Literature in language assessment
- 4) The role of Literature in Language teaching curriculum
- 5) Other innovative areas

### **Basic Criteria for Publishing with *JALDA***

A research article published in *JALDA*:

- 1) starts and deals with a real-life problem, where language and/or literature is at the center.
- 2) introduces clear suggestions for tackling problems.
- 3) upholds an iterative relationship between theory and practice.
- 4) involves symptomatic and documented evidence in the form of real-world data.
- 5) may rely on the research data of quantitative, qualitative or combined nature.
- 6) involves a wide spectrum of research designs ranging from highly qualitative ethnographies or case studies to statistics-based experiments



## **SUBMIT MANUSCRIPTS**

### **General Guidelines**

The articles submitted to *JALDA* should follow the APA 7<sup>th</sup> style with some adaptations specific to *JALDA*. Contributing authors are advised to download and read *JALDA's Concise Guide for APA's 7<sup>th</sup> Edition Manual*. Please consult the *Paper Submission Template to JALDA* for submission instructions, guidelines, and contact information of the journal's editors.

### **Online submission**

Manuscripts should be written in English and must be submitted online through our online submission website. **Submit Manuscript** is an online submission and review system where authors can submit manuscripts and track their progress. Registration and login are required to submit items online and to check the status of current submissions.

### **PUBLICATION ETHICS**

*As a member of the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE), JALDA is committed to maintaining the highest standards of publication ethics and to supporting ethical research practices.*

### **Ethics Statement**

#### *Authorship*

The authors' central obligation is to present a concise, accurate account of the research performed as well as an objective discussion of its significance. A paper should contain sufficient detail and references to public sources of information. The results of research should be recorded and maintained in a form that allows analysis and review, both by collaborators before publication and by other scholars for a reasonable period after publication.

Fabrication of data is an egregious departure from the expected norms of scholarly conduct, as is the selective reporting of data with the intent to mislead or deceive, as well as the theft of data or research results from others.

Proper acknowledgment of the work of others used in a research project must always be given. Authors should cite publications that have been influential in determining the nature of the reported work. Information obtained privately, as in conversation, correspondence, or discussion with third parties, should not be used or reported without explicit permission from the investigator with whom the information originated. Information obtained in the course of confidential services, such as refereeing manuscripts or grant applications, cannot be used without permission of the author of the work being used.

Authors must obtain permission for the use of any previously-published materials from the original publisher. Proof of permission must be provided before manuscripts containing previously-published material can be published. Proper credit lines for all previously published material must be included in the manuscript.

Plagiarism constitutes unethical scholarly behavior and is never acceptable. Authorship should be limited to those who have made a significant contribution to the concept, design, execution, or interpretation of the research study. All those who have made significant contributions should be offered the opportunity to be listed as

authors. Other individuals who have contributed to the study should be acknowledged, but not identified as authors.

All collaborators share some degree of responsibility for any paper they co-author. Every co-author should have the opportunity to review the manuscript before it is submitted for publication. Any individual unwilling or unable to accept appropriate responsibility for a paper should not be a co-author.

It is unethical for an author to publish manuscripts describing essentially the same research in more than one journal of primary publication. Submitting the same manuscript to more than one journal concurrently is unethical and unacceptable. When an error is discovered in a published work, it is the obligation of all authors to promptly retract the paper or correct the results.

#### **JALDA's Commitment Form**

JALDA's Commitment Form for Publication Ethics Observance, Assignment of the Financial Rights, Disclosure of Potential Conflicts of Interest and Introduction of Authors can be downloaded in *MS Word Format* or *PDF Format* on JALDA's website. The form includes the following 4 sections:

1. Commitment to scholarly publication ethics and introduction of the corresponding author
2. Assignment of the financial rights to publish an article
3. Disclosure of potential conflicts of interest
4. Introducing the authors, their order of appearance, and their contribution

Please read the terms of this agreement, use the Word file or PDF file of the Commitment Form, fill in and sign it, and send the document as one of the required files upon submission.

#### **Author Guidelines**

Articles submitted to the *Journal of Applied Linguistics and Applied Literature: Dynamics and Advances (JALDA)* should represent outstanding scholarship and make original contributions to the field. The Editors will assume that an article submitted for their consideration has not previously been published and is not being considered for publication elsewhere, either in the submitted form or in a modified version. The articles must be written in English and not include libelous or defamatory materials. The articles should be between 4,000 and 8,000 words (including the abstract and references). JALDA operates a double-blind peer-review process. To facilitate this process, authors are requested to ensure that all submissions, whether first or revised versions, are anonymous. Authors' names and institutional affiliations should appear only on the web-fillable sheet. All authors are asked to submit five files including the Main File of the article (anonymous), Title Page (containing authors' names, affiliations, email and ORCID), Authorship Form (containing all authors' short biographies and Photo), Authorship and Conflict of Interest Form and Supplementary Persian Abstract.

JALDA (previously *Journal of Applied Linguistics and Discourse Analysis*) has been published since 2016 as *the Journal of Applied Linguistics and Applied Literature: Dynamics and Advances*. As part of the Open Access policy, publishing articles in JALDA is *free of charge* for authors. The similarity rate of all submissions to JALDA is checked through plagiarism-detecting software before being processed for peer review.

# JALDA

Volume 10, Issue 1, Winter and Spring, 2022

---

## CONTENTS

|   |         |
|---|---------|
| <b>EDITORIAL</b>  | 1-2     |
| <i>Bahram Behin</i>   |         |
| JALDA's Interview with Professor Jean-Marc Dewaele  | 3-12    |
| <i>Davoud Amini</i>   |         |
| Is Iranian EFL Teachers' Professional Competence Significantly Correlated with Their Job Performance? If Yes, How Much and How? | 13-34   |
| <i>Afsheen Rezai; Zeinab Azizi; Ehsan Namaziandost</i>  |         |
| Development and Validation of KOLB 4.0 Learning Style Questionnaire   | 35-55   |
| <i>Shokouh Rashvand Semiyari; Mahnaz Azad</i>   |         |
| Enhancing English Vocabulary Retention Among Iranian Trainee Teachers Through Literature-Based Interactive Input-Output Tasks   | 57-78   |
| <i>Sara Salehpour; Biok Behnam; Zohreh Seifoori</i>   |         |
| A Survey of EFL Teachers' Research Engagement   | 79-98   |
| <i>Mehdi Mehranirad; Foad Behzadpoor</i>  |         |
| "We examine the relationship ...": Grammatical Subject in Research Article Abstracts: Disciplinary and Functional Analysis      | 99-118  |
| <i>Seyed Foad Ebrahimi; Maryam Farnia</i>   |         |
| A Corpus-Based Cross-Disciplinary Analysis of Objectivity Manifestations in Academic Texts                                      | 119-140 |
| <i>Mohammad Saber Khaghaninejad; Maryam Azarian; Fatemeh Javanmardi</i>   |         |
| A Thematic Analysis of Anthems of Ghana's Public Universities: A Case of Six  | 141-154 |
| <i>Cosmas Rai Amenorvi; Richard Baffour Okyere</i>  |         |
| Ethical Conversation with the Other in Conrad Aiken's "Silent Snow, Secret Snow": A Levinasian Reading                          | 155-167 |
| <i>Mohammadreza Touzideh; Farshid Nowrouzi Roshnavand</i>   |         |

|   |         |
|---|---------|
| The Spiritual Shelley: A Study of the Ideological Sublime in Percy B. Shelley's "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty"<br><i>Masoud Farahmandfar; Ghiasuddin Alizadeh</i>            | 169-180 |
| The Ambrose of Lost in the Funhouse:<br>A Confluence of Quantum Mechanics, Dasein, and Baroque<br><i>Ali Emamipour; Farideh Pourgivi</i>                                    | 181-199 |
| Thirst for Knowledge in Patricia Cornwell's Postmortem<br><i>Mehri Nour Mohamad Nezhad Baghayi; Abolfazl Ramazani; Sara Saei Dibavar</i>                                    | 201-217 |
| Hybridity, Mimicry, and the Uncanny: Postcolonial Character in Bharati Mukherjee's The Bride Tree<br><i>Masoumeh Baei; Behzad Pourgharib; Abdolbaghi Rezaei Talarposhti</i> | 219-234 |
| <b>BOOK REVIEW:</b> "Exploring Language Assessment and Testing: Language in Action (2nd edition)"<br><i>Rajab Esfandiari</i>  | 235-239 |
| <b>Persian Abstracts</b>  | 241-252 |



## **EDITORIAL**

**Bahram Behin**

*Associate Professor, Department of English Language and Literature,*

*Azərbaycan Şahid Mədani University, Tabriz, Iran*

*Bahram.behin@gmail.com*

### **Dear JALDA Reader**

In an interview with JALDA, Wendy Steiner (2021) raises questions about ‘applied literature,’ a subject JALDA claims to cover alongside ‘applied linguistics.’ Before that, Farshid Sadatsharifi (2019), an Iranian scholar working on ‘applied literature’ in the context of Persian Literature, had partly answered such questions by stating that “... once in the academic context, literature is driven into a set of enclaves that are diminutive and far from everyday ordinary life” (p.3). For him, applied literature as part of literary studies sets literature free from the confinement of academic context and brings literature into everyday life. Examples for applied literature are the employment of language used in great literary works in the advertising industry, journalism, oratory and the like, which can lead to a systematic handling of each case for the sake of bridging the gap between literature and everyday life. (Other examples for applied literature by Sadatsharifi can be found in his interview with JALDA.)

One might argue that literature has undoubtedly everyday uses because literary works are written and published and read by people all over the world. This is a significant point that should be considered by both those working on literature and those working on applied literature. Although not ‘natural,’ what happens beyond the confinement of academic context in the ‘real’ world is of enormous value to those in academic contexts who are employed and paid to, partly at least, solve problems and improve peoples’ lives. The fact that there are people such as Sadatsharifi concerned about applied literature in academic contexts implies that the problem is inside university, not outside it. Life goes on outside universities with ‘literature for people’ alongside many other things. But some academics have realized that the relationship between knowledge and the ‘real’ world does not seem agreeable, although there are movements in literary studies that claim for their affinity to and connection with ‘reality.’ This topic, like any topic in today’s

multifarious views of things, requires essential debates and discussions to make the topic fruitfully operational. Hereby those interested in the topic are courteously invited to contribute to it through JALDA. (We are recently receiving relevant articles, which is a promise for a clearer future.) Meanwhile, one suggestion is intended here to be used as an entrance to the field: Let's replace the top-down theory-oriented approaches to literature, a common activity in humanities and social sciences, with bottom-up approaches, a strategy to observe the 'real' world. The realizations of bottom-up approaches in the discipline of linguistics can be, say, corpus linguistics, in applied linguistics, which applies the findings in linguistics to different real world issues, again corpus linguistics as well as systematic study of context-bound issues in foreign language learning and teaching (FLLT) as suggested by Dakowska (2018), and in literature, the role it might play in the 'real' world and how literary texts might be read for contextual purposes. Theories within the confines of universities should give way to life world elements to enter universities so that the gap between universities and the real world could be overcome by two way bridges. (See Behin, *Applied Literature: Literature and Life World* (Forthcoming)).

### References

- Dakowska, M. (2018). How to deal with applications in foreign language learning and teaching (FLLT). In M. Pawlak and A. Mystkowska-Wiertelak (eds), (2018). *Challenges of Second and Foreign Language Education in a Globalized World*. Springer.
- Sadatsharifi, F. (2019). JALDA's interview with Dr. Farshid Sadatsharifi. *Journal of Applied Linguistics and Applied Literature*, 7(1), 3-6.
- Steiner, W. (2021). JALDA's interview with Professor Wendy Steiner. *Journal of Applied Linguistics and Applied Literature*, 9(1), 3-7.

Dr. Bahram Behin  
*Founding Editor-in-Chief*  
*Journal of Applied Linguistics and Applied Literature: Dynamics and Advances*  
May 1, 2022



## **JALDA's Interview with Professor Jean-Marc Dewaele**

**Interview by Dr. Davoud Amini**

*Associate Professor of TEFL , Department of English, Faculty of Literature and Humanities, Azarbaijan Shahid Madani University, Tabriz, Iran  
d.amini@azaruniv.ac.ir davoudamini2014@gmail.com*



**Jean-Marc Dewaele**

**Jean-Marc Dewaele** (Ph.D. in Romance languages and literature, Free University of Brussels, 1993) is *Professor of Applied Linguistics and Multilingualism* at the Department of Languages, Cultures and Applied Linguistics, Birkbeck, University of London. He does research on individual differences in psycholinguistic, sociolinguistic, pragmatic, psychological and emotional aspects of Second Language Acquisition and Multilingualism. Professor Dewaele is particularly interested in the interface between applied linguistics and psychology. He has published widely on multilingual emotions and Foreign Language Enjoyment and Anxiety. He has published over 300 papers and chapters, seven books and seven special issues. Professor Dewaele is the author of the monograph *Emotions in Multiple Languages* in 2010

(2nd ed. in 2013). He is founding member and former president of the International Association of Multilingualism (2016-2018), Convenor of the AILA

Research Network Multilingualism, former president of the European Second Language Association (2007-2011), and member of Executive Committee of the International Association for the Psychology of Language Learning (2016-2022). He is the former General Editor of the International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism (2013-2018) and current General Editor of *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*. Jean-Marc Dewaele won the Equality and Diversity Research Award from the British Association for Counseling and Psychotherapy (2013) and the Robert C. Gardner Award for Outstanding Research in Bilingualism (2016) from the International Association of Language and Social Psychology and the Best Paper Award (2017), and the Distinguished Scholarship Award (2022) from the European Second Language Association. Professor Dewaele has answered JALDA's questions about emotion research in SLA studies in an offline interview with Davoud Amini, Associate Professor of TEFL at Azarbaijan Shahid Madani University.

**DA: --- Dear Professor Dewaele, thank you for accepting our invitation to take part in this interview.**

**J-MD:** ---- My Pleasure.

**DA:** ---- Applied linguistics and language education emanated in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century mainly from linguistic studies which were then complemented by the research on social aspects of communication. An extensive and rigorous attention to the psychological phenomena in language learning and teaching has been only the latest adjunct in this area. Today, a major portion of conceptualizations on the processes involved in language acquisition and use are overridden by the theoretical inspirations from such psychology-based fields as cognitive psychology, educational psychology, social psychology and psycholinguistics. The recent surge of interest in affective aspects of L2 learning and teaching has been viewed as the “affective turn” (Pavlenko, 2013) and “emotional turn” (White, 2018). From a historical point of view, how has the research on psychological dimensions of language learning contributed to the redefinition or rebirth of Language Education Research giving the way to TESL or SLA studies to be recognized as distinct academic disciplines?

**J-MD:** ---- This is an interesting question but it carries some unfounded assumptions: the word “overridden” implies that it was imposed by force, against better judgment. This is certainly not the case for the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) where researchers are free to choose their framework. Of course, the ubiquity of cognitive approaches means that young researchers may be unaware of different views. I did draw attention to the importance of emotions and personality variables in applied linguistics in Dewaele and Pavlenko (2002), Dewaele (2005, 2011). It is not that they had been completely ignored in earlier research but the research had never reached a wider audience. The tide started to change in the early 2010s, partly because of an influential paper (MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012) that introduced Positive Psychology to SLA researchers. It provided an excellent theoretical basis and a wide range of “positive” variables that could be linked with measurements of proficiency and progress in the L2. I explained in Dewaele (2021) how this interest in emotions and the psychology of SLA resulted from fortuitous and happy encounters at conferences with like-minded researchers who felt that their research interests were not reflected in the programs of conferences or in the mainstream SLA journals.

**DA:** ---- In your insightful review article “The flowering of positive psychology in foreign language teaching and acquisition research” (Dewaele et al., 2019), you have contended that the year 2016 celebrated a full integration of positive psychology into the mainstream applied linguistics research due to TEFL researchers' remarkable focus on positive emotions and positive personality traits. We know that the affective concerns in language education had already been observed by the proponents of humanistic language teaching (e.g., Arnold, 1998, 1999) without leaving a profound impact on mainstream English pedagogy. To what extent, in your opinion, the broadening of our views on L2



**learning—from linguistic development to the whole person development in lights of positive psychology this time—is going to be reflected in the actual practice of language pedagogy?**

**J-MD:** ---- It was wonderful to observe the growing interest in the emotional aspects of foreign language learning and use. It is true that researchers like Jane Arnold had looked at some aspects of this, using the word “affect” rather than emotion, in publications aimed at teachers with a clear pedagogical angle. Our own work (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014) was explicitly addressed at researchers, offering them new concepts and instruments – like Foreign Language Enjoyment – that allowed them to test our hypotheses in their own countries with different language combinations. The studies had obvious pedagogical implications, but they were based on hard data that allowed replication. This is irresistible to any good researcher: Can a new instrument be used to dis/confirm the findings in an influential previous study? Also, our research extended existing research (including our own) on Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (Horwitz et al., 1986). We argued in favor of a more holistic approach, including not just negative emotions but also positive ones in the research design. We realize now that the call for such a balanced approach was exactly what the field needed at that point in time. There was a growing realization that fighting anxiety in the classroom was a dead end. Indeed, teachers whose only focus was to lessen their students’ anxiety may have forgotten that boosting their students’ enjoyment in the course and helping them manage their anxiety in a positive and safe emotional environment was more likely to lead to success. Anxiety is very much linked to personality and hence hard to reduce. Removing the challenge in the classroom, for example, in order to reduce students’ anxiety, has the unfortunate consequence of eliminating students’ basis for enjoyment, namely finding the delicate balance between increasing skills and increasing challenge. The result would be low anxiety but also low enjoyment and high boredom; a lethal emotional combination that guarantees low engagement, reduced motivation and weak performance. The year 2016 was a milestone because MacIntyre, Gregersen and Mercer edited the book *Positive Psychology in SLA*, which put the topic on firmly on the map. It acted as a flag and a rallying cry, and it coincided with the creation by the same editors and contributors of the *International Association for the Psychology of Language Learning* that organized a conference every two years since its creation.

**DA:** ---- **Emotion researchers within instructed second language acquisition have tried to come up with convincing justifications for the relevance of emotions. What are some of the mechanisms through which language classroom emotions such as achievement emotions, academic emotions and moral emotions impinge upon second language achievement?**

**J-MD:** The words “tried to come up with convincing justifications for the relevance of emotions” has some unfortunate connotations and incorrect assumptions. It implies that emotion researchers tried but did not actually succeed in producing a convincing case. The word “justification” implies that they did something wrong in explaining the relevance of emotions. The simplest way to answer this is to point to the thriving field of psychology where multiple journals have the word “emotion” in their title. Just because it took applied linguists some time to look over the fence and to enlighten their fellow researchers does not mean there is any doubt about the relevance of emotions in all contexts of society. The term “achievement emotions” comes from educational psychology. Some applied linguists have adopted the Control Value Theory as a theoretical basis for their own research; others have adopted the Broaden-and-Build theory from Positive Psychology. Meta-analyses have shown that Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety is moderately negatively correlated with FL performance (Botes, Dewaele, & Greiff, 2020) and that Foreign Language Enjoyment is moderately positively correlated with FL performance (Botes, Dewaele, & Greiff, to appear). We have compared positive emotions with the fuel that powers FL performance and progress, and anxiety as the cold shower that can leave learners shivering and silent in a corner.

**DA: --- SLA theories inspired by the Dynamic Systems Theory, Chaos theory and Complexity theory argue for dynamic interactions between a set of social, instructional and individual difference variables and an unstable relationship between them over time. In such a view, a trivial change in one of those factors can potentially end up with an immense alteration in the outcome of learning. This is conceivable in reference to the Butterfly Effect which can somehow support the central role of emotional experiences in language learning. Can we think of a hypothetical situation where a single emotional experience –let’s say contempt– leads to a profound and lasting effect on the learner’s course of language development?**

**J-MD: ---** One of the most important findings on the relationships between emotions, FL performance and ultimate progression in the FL is that they are highly dynamic, constantly fluctuating and hence that there is always a degree of unpredictability because of the complex interactions between learner-internal and learner-external variables (MacIntyre, 2017). This means that even if two individuals had identical personality and linguistic profiles, they would still have their own unique FL learning journeys. It is impossible to know in advance what event might turn out to have an effect. It might not necessarily be emotional at the time. In Dewaele (2013), I referred to the character Raimund Gregorius in Pascal Mercier’s novel *Night Train to Lisbon*, in which Raimund, a Swiss-German teacher of Latin, ancient Greek and Hebrew lacks interest in modern languages until one morning, on his way to school, he encounters a mysterious woman about to jump off a bridge. He convinces her not to be through with the suicide and, detecting a foreign accent in her French, he asks her what her mother tongue is. She answers

‘Português’ and the sound of that word acts as a trigger for him. He develops a passion for Portuguese. It is a nice illustration of how one innocuous word can act like a butterfly and have both a small immediate effect and long after-effects.

**DA: --- In your highly-cited paper “The two faces of Janus? Anxiety and enjoyment in the foreign language classroom” (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014), you have argued for the coexistence of the two prototypical positive and negative emotions, i.e., anxiety and enjoyment in the language classroom. Elsewhere, you have described the two emotions as the right and left feet of the language learner (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2016). A similar argument about the interactions between positive and negative phenomena in the language learning context has been encouraged by MacIntyre et al. (2019). How can positive and negative emotions coexist and interact with each other in a language learning classroom?**

**J-MD: ---** I think all of us are constantly experiencing a range of both positive and negative emotions, except maybe in a state of deep meditation. I may feel happy and elated when walking in a beautiful park but a nagging little pain in my feet may temper the joy, and a loud conversation of two walkers just behind me may irritate me. The walkers may overtake me, the pain may subside, but a sudden burst of rain may drench me. Coming home wet, I may still feel that overall it was a good walk and that a cup of hot tea will make me fully happy again. In other words, emotions are complex and highly dynamic. It is therefore not surprising that learners may go through a rollercoaster of emotions when they have to perform in the FL class. We defined Foreign Language Enjoyment as “a complex emotion, capturing interacting dimensions of challenge and perceived ability that can reflect the human drive for success in the face of difficult tasks” (Dewaele and MacIntyre, 2016, p. 216). By “complex” we meant that it could include joy, excitement, pride, social support, laughter, interest, creativity, and a sense of belonging. Some participants described how they were simultaneously feeling very anxious, very excited and very happy to be presenting in front of their classmates. The crucial point was that the presence of one emotion did not imply the absence of other emotions. Others explained that they felt neither anxiety nor enjoyment because they were utterly bored and disengaged. We found a weak negative relationship between enjoyment and anxiety in Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014), which allowed us to claim that these are truly independent dimensions. The same pattern emerged in most studies since (for an overview, see Dewaele, 2022).

**DA: --- My next question regards the specific focus of JALDA, i.e., the relationship between literature and language teaching. Theoretically-speaking, imagination, play, art and literature can play key roles in language learning and teaching. You have underlined the role of “imagination for future self” (Dewaele et al., 2019, p. 3) which has also been discussed by Dörnyei (2009)**

**under L2 Motivational Self-System. This role becomes more interesting in lights of the “Simulation Theory” (Oatley, 2011, 2012) according to which engagement in art and literature can instigate identical emotional experiences as in the real world. What are your suggestions for the researchers interested in the interaction between art forms such as literature and music, on the one hand, and language teaching, on the other?**

**J-MD:** ---- I have not done any research on the link between the arts and language teaching, but having been a FL teacher of French for many years, I know that literature and music can bring joy to the classroom, and can cause a deeper interest in the FL culture. Many FL learners fell in love with the novels of a particular author, or the films of a particular director, or the songs of a particular singer belonging to a specific FL culture. They then decided to find out more about that person, about that person’s geographical, cultural and sociohistorical context. It could include food, sports, religion, architecture, theatre, dance, etc. In other words, learners do not just want to acquire a FL as a neutral tool for communication, they want to be thrilled by new ideas, discover new horizons, and try out exciting new identities.

**DA:** ---- **Despite the fact that affective phenomena have proved to play a significant role in explaining second language teaching and acquisition, they hardly lend themselves to systematic examinations. This has posed some methodological difficulties to the researchers interested in affective aspects of language learning so that the research in this area seems to be in need of alternative approaches. For example, there has lately been an upsurge in structural equation modeling used to account for the complicated interactions between the emotional, motivational and cognitive dimensions of SLA. Boudreau et al. (2018) resorted to the innovative idiodynamic method for examining the relationship between anxiety and enjoyment. What are your suggestions to the researchers in the field for overcoming the methodological obstacles?**

**J-MD:** ---- I disagree with the statement that emotions don’t lend themselves to systematic examination. They do! Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) collected and analyzed data on learner emotions through an online questionnaire from 1746 FL learners from all over the world studying a wide range of FLs. My colleagues and myself have since collected data from thousands of participants and reported on sources of enjoyment, anxiety, boredom, as well as their combined effects on FL performance and progress. The search for alternative approaches is not because there is a problem with questionnaire-based research. Questionnaires are an essential tool in our field (Dörnyei & Dewaele, to appear). It is just good scientific practice to triangulate. In other words, it is helpful to use different methods to answer the same research questions. These can include different statistical methods, or the

idiodynamic method but also different epistemological and methodological approaches such as qualitative approaches and case-studies such as in Dewaele and Pavelescu (2021). We need studies with different degree of granularity, and studies with different time windows. The variety in approaches allows us to establish big universal patterns, interesting local differences, and unique individual patterns. All researchers face obstacles and the ones in the area of emotion and FL learning are not more challenging than in other fields. Each method has its strengths and weaknesses. It's enough to make the most of them, to acknowledge the limitations and to combine them in different types of mixed-methods designs like the one we used in Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) to overcome the limitations of a single method.

**DA: ---- And as the last question, where does the research on language learning emotions go from here?**

**J-MD: ----** In Dewaele and Li (2020) and Dewaele (2022) we have pleaded for more longitudinal work and for more invention studies to optimize learner emotions. We need to find what teaching strategies can help learners experience the right combinations of emotions to allow them to perform well, to progress quickly and to thrive in the FL classroom (see for example, Li & Xu, 2019).

**DA: ---- Thank you, dear professor Dewaele, for sharing your valuable insights with me and JALDA's audience.**

**J-MD: ----** You're welcome.

### References

- Arnold, J. (1998). Towards more humanistic English teaching. *ELT Journal*, 52(3), 235-242. <https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/52.3.235>
- Arnold, J. (1999). *Affect in language learning*. Cambridge University Press.
- Botes, E., Dewaele, J.-M., & Greiff, S. (2020). The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale and academic achievement: An overview of the prevailing literature and a meta-analysis. *The Journal for the Psychology of Language Learning*, 2, 26–56.
- Botes, E., Dewaele, J.-M., & Greiff, S. (in press). Taking stock: A meta-analysis of the effects of Foreign Language Enjoyment. *Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching*.
- Boudreau, C., MacIntyre, P. D., & Dewaele, J.-M. (2018). Enjoyment and anxiety in second language communication: An idiodynamic approach. *Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching*, 8, 149-170.

<https://doi.org/10.14746/ssl.2018.8.1.7>

- Dewaele, J.-M. (2005). Investigating the psychological and the emotional dimensions in instructed language learning: Obstacles and possibilities. *The Modern Language Journal*, 89(3), 367-380. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.2005.00311.x>
- Dewaele, J.-M. (2011). Reflections on the emotional and psychological aspects of foreign language learning and use. *Anglistik. International Journal of English Studies*, 22(1), 23-42.
- Dewaele, J.-M. (2013). Second and additional language acquisition. In Li Wei (Ed.), *Applied Linguistics* (pp. 46-68). Wiley-Blackwell.
- Dewaele, J.-M. (2021). Research on emotions in Second Language Acquisition: Reflections on its birth and unexpected growth. In A. Al Hoorie & F. Szabo (Eds.), *Researching Language Learning Motivation: A Concise Guide* (pp. 125-134). Bloomsbury.
- Dewaele, J.-M. (2022). Enjoyment. In S. Li, P. Hiver & M. Papi (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Second Language Acquisition and Individual Differences* (pp. 190-206). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003270546-16>
- Dewaele, J.-M., Chen, X., Padilla, A. M., & Lake, J. (2019). Flowering of positive psychology in English language teaching and acquisition research. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 10, Article 2128. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.02128>
- Dewaele, J.-M. & Li, C. (2020) Emotions in Second Language Acquisition: A critical review and research agenda. *Foreign Language World* [Chinese 外语界], 196(1), 34-49.
- Dewaele, J.-M., & MacIntyre, P. D. (2014). The two faces of Janus? Anxiety and enjoyment in the foreign language classroom. *Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching*, 4, 237-274. <https://doi.org/10.14746/ssl.2014.4.2.5>
- Dewaele, J.-M., & MacIntyre, P. D. (2016). Foreign language enjoyment and foreign language classroom anxiety: The right and left feet of FL learning? In P. D. MacIntyre, T. Gregersen, & S. Mercer (Eds.), *Positive Psychology in SLA* (pp. 215-236). Multilingual Matters.
- Dewaele, J.-M., & Pavelescu, L. (2021). The relationship between incommensurable emotions and willingness to communicate in English as a foreign language: A

- multiple case study, *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching*, 15(1), 66-80. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17501229.2019.1675667>
- Dewaele, J.-M. & Pavlenko, A. (2002). Emotion vocabulary in interlanguage. *Language Learning*, 52(2), 265-324.
- Dörnyei, Z. (2009). The L2 motivational self-system. In Z. Dörnyei & E. Ushioda (Eds.), *Motivation, language identity and the L2 self* (pp. 9-42). Multilingual Matters.
- Dörnyei, Z., & Dewaele, J.-M. (in press). *Questionnaires in second language research: Construction, administration and processing* (3<sup>rd</sup> edition). Routledge.
- Horwitz, E., Horwitz, M., & Cope, J. (1986). Foreign language classroom anxiety. *The Modern Language Journal*, 70, 125-132.
- Li, C., & Xu, J. (2019). Trait emotional intelligence and classroom emotions: A positive psychology investigation and intervention among Chinese EFL learners. *Frontiers in Psychology. Language Sciences*, 10, 2453. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.02453>
- MacIntyre, P. D. (2017). An overview of language anxiety research and trends in its development. In C. Gkonou, M. Daubney, & J.-M. Dewaele (Eds.), *New insights into language anxiety: Theory, research and educational implications* (pp. 11-30). Multilingual Matters.
- MacIntyre, P. D., & Gregersen, T. (2012). Emotions that facilitate language learning: The positive broadening power of the imagination. *Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching*, 2, 193-213.
- MacIntyre, P. D., Gregersen, T. & Mercer, S. (Eds.). (2016). *Positive Psychology in SLA*. Multilingual Matters.
- MacIntyre, P. D., Gregersen, T., & Mercer, S. (2019). Setting an agenda for positive psychology in SLA: Theory, practice, and research. *Modern Language Journal*, 103, 262–274. <https://doi.org/10.1111/modl.12544>
- Oatley, K. (2011). *Such stuff as dreams: The psychology of fiction*. Wiley-Blackwell.
- Oatley, K. (2012). *The passionate muse: Exploring emotion in stories*. Oxford University Press.

- Pavlenko, A. (2013). The affective turn in SLA: from 'affective factors' to 'language desire' and 'commodification of affect' in D. Gabryś-Barker and J. Bielska (Eds.), *The affective dimension in second language acquisition* (pp. 3-28). Multilingual Matters.
- White, C. J. (2018). Emotional turn in applied linguistics and TESOL: Significance, challenges and prospects in J. de Dios Martínez Agudo (Ed.) *Emotions in second language teaching: Theory, research and teacher education* (pp. 19-34). Springer.





## Is Iranian EFL Teachers' Professional Competence Significantly Correlated with Their Job Performance? If Yes, How Much and How?

Afsheen Rezaei<sup>1,\*</sup>, Zeinab Azizi<sup>2</sup>, and Ehsan Namaziandost<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Corresponding author, Assistant Professor, Department of English,  
University of Ayatollah Ozma Borujerdi, Lorestan, Iran  
Orcid: 0000-0001-9010-0168 Email: afsheen.rezaei@abru.ac.ir

<sup>2</sup> Assistant Professor, Department of English, University of Ayatollah  
Ozma Borujerdi, Lorestan, Iran  
Orcid: 0000-0002-7492-1932 Email: zeinab.azizi@abru.ac.ir

<sup>3</sup> Lecturer, University of Applied Sciences and Technology, Ahvaz,  
Iran, & Mehrarvand Institute of Technology, Abadan, Iran  
Orcid: 0000-0002-8393-2537 Email: e.namazi75@yahoo.com

### Abstract

The present study sought out to examine the relationship between Iranian EFL teachers' professional competence and job performance quantitatively and qualitatively. To this end, a total of 330 EFL teachers, including males (n = 185) and females (n = 145) for the quantitative part, as well as a sample of 25 high school English teachers, consisting of males (n = 11) and females (n = 14) for the qualitative part were selected using a random sampling method in Khorramabad City and Borujerd City, Iran. The participants responded to an EFL Teachers' Job performance Questionnaire, an EFL Teachers' Professional Competence Questionnaire, and a reflective written statement. The collected data were analyzed through a Pearson correlation analysis, a multiple regression analysis, and a standard thematic coding analysis. Findings evidenced a positive correlation between the participants' professional competence and their job performance. Additionally, the results evidenced that the participants' job performance was mainly impacted by *skills*, *knowledge*, and *attitudes* factors, comprising their professional competence. The complementary qualitative findings yielded four overarching themes: "increased job effectiveness", "improved teaching self-efficacy", "increased teaching motivation", and "promoted organizational acceptance". The study concludes with offering a range of implications and avenues for further research.

**Keywords:** thematic coding analysis, EFL teachers, job performance, professional competence

### ARTICLE INFO

Research Article

Received: Friday, November 5, 2021

Accepted: Friday, April 8, 2022

Published: Sunday, May 1, 2022

Available Online: Friday, April 8, 2022

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.22049/jalda.2022.27481.1368>

Online ISSN: 2821-0204; Print ISSN: 28208986



© The Author(s)

## **Introduction**

One of the bedrocks in all nations is education. It includes all the teaching and training efforts provided systematically to change an individual's or a group of individuals' attitudes and behaviors (Sukrapi & Muljono, 2014). It is a systematic human-conscious endeavor designed and presented by governments to prepare and guide individuals for a better future. A nation's development is tied with the productivity of its education system. In a sense, a quality education system can guarantee a nation's development by educating quality human resources (Asmarani et al., 2021; Sulastri et al., 2020). When quality human resources are trained by the quality education system, they are capable of creating more useful things and bringing positive social, economic, political, and cultural changes.

One of the crucial elements in a quality education system making its educational objectives realized is teachers (Komila, 2019). For this purpose, teachers need to be competent, knowledgeable, responsible, committed, and active to design and offer fruitful learning opportunities for students. Teachers should be equipped with sufficient Professional Competence (PC) (Asmarani et al., 2021). As such, a teacher with a high PC has sufficient pedagogical content knowledge (e.g., the subject matter she/he teaches), is skilled at teaching educational materials effectively, and privileges positive attitudes toward instruction (Saberri & Sahragard, 2019).

Given these points, it is quite essential to make a sustainable effort for the improvement of teachers' PC. To satisfy this urgent need, many teacher training courses are held daily to equip teachers with the required knowledge, skills, and attitudes. As the PC of teachers is honed by empowering them in an education system, teachers' Job Performance (JP) is significantly improved. When teachers are capable of applying effective skills to facilitate students' learning, an education system can achieve its goals optimally and efficiently (Nabila, 2016). In this regard, it may be argued that one of the underlying reasons for the low quality of English education in the Iranian high schools is the poor performance of English teachers (Davari & Aghagolzadeh, 2015; Riazi, 2005). And, the poor performance may be ascribed to the low PC of the high school English teachers. The high school English teachers who do their job duties well can cultivate students' spirit and motivation for continued learning (Nabila, 2016). Therefore, we can define teachers' JP as the learning activities implemented in schools with achievement orientations. Teachers' JP deals with how a high school English teacher designs and plans a lesson, implements learning tasks, and measures students' learning outcomes (Kuhlman & Knezevic, 2013).

Because high school English teachers' PC can be a strong predictor of their JP, it is of paramount importance to determine how much their PC is correlated with their JP. However, a survey of the past literature indicates that the correlation between high school English teachers' PC and JP is under-researched in the EFL context of Iran. Therefore, the present study is an early attempt to bridge this long-lasting gap by exploring the correlation between Iranian high school English teachers' PC and JP quantitatively and qualitatively. This study's findings may make

allowance for empowering the Iranian high school English teachers by amending pitfalls in their PC and, accordingly, making the way for their quality performance in teaching English at high schools.

## **Literature Review**

### **EFL Teachers' Professional Competence**

The term competence, according to Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2003), is defined as "the ability to do something well" (p. 125). Similarly, in human and social sciences, competence is defined as "a roughly specialized system of abilities, proficiencies, or skills that are necessary to reach a specific goal" (Weinert, 2001, p. 25). In educational settings, teachers' competence includes their knowledge, skills, and attitudes to perform the intended job duties well. With a focus on JP, competent teachers are capable of integrating knowledge, skills, and attitudes to act responsibly and effectively within educational settings (Kunter et al., 2013).

The competence of teachers comprises four distinct sub-components (Nabila, 2016; Vázquez et al., 2020; Weinert, 2001). The first one is *pedagogical competence* referring to teachers' sound, board, current knowledge about the subject area, knowledge of students' learning, and teaching skills. The second one is *personality competence* dealing with teachers' attitudes and understanding of school stakeholders and their capabilities of assessing teaching and learning processes. The third one is *social competence* concerned with teachers' abilities to benefit from the incentives within educational settings and their potentials to realize educational objectives (Dubovicki & Brust Nemet, 2015). The last one is *professional competence* treating teachers' readiness and abilities to do instructional duties in an adequate, independent, and responsible way. It should be stressed that PC covers pedagogical, personality, and social competencies, enabling teachers to facilitate learning processes.

For EFL teachers, PC has been defined in terms of knowledge base, skills, and attitudes, and values (Kartal & Başol, 2019; Khodamoradi & Maghsoudi, 2020; Koster & Dengerink, 2008; Richards, 1998; 2010). The knowledge base comprises three different kinds of knowledge, namely content, pedagogical content, and legislation and regulation. The skills include the competency in planning to teach, designing learning environments, managing learning and teaching processes, and administering assessment practices. The attitudes and values include being committed to national and international ethical requirements, having positive attitudes toward students, communication and cooperation, and personal and professional development. As the previous studies (Helterbran, 2008; Syafar, 2014) have demonstrated, when teachers are professionally competent, they are humble and helpful to provide clear clarifications, discuss a lot and push students to think and challenge the conventional wisdom, keep classes interested, are relatable, are easy to access, and make the class's atmosphere comfortable, address students' concerns about teaching, prioritize practices over theoretical concepts, expect

students to do high quality works, make the learning materials understandable for all students, have a sense of humor, and make the class activities fun.

As Brown (2002) stresses, EFL teachers' PC is developed over an extensive period. In this regard, three key points should be considered. First, EFL teachers should constantly upgrade their knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Second, EFL teachers' professional needs and interests do not remain fixed over time. Third, PC develops when there is an ongoing and personal commitment that values and cares for the educational organization and its stakeholders.

### ***Teachers' Job Performance***

The term performance is taken from "to perform", meaning that doing tasks well in terms of quality and quantity in a responsible way (Kohli & Deb, 2008). According to Cai and Lin (2006), JP is defined as the duties which an individual is supposed to carry out well to lay the groundwork for the achievement of an organization's objectives. In the case of teachers' JP, it includes all the activities facilitating student learning (Jacob et al., 2018; Kartini et al., 2020). In a sense, it is defined as the educational duties done in a committed and responsible way to increase students' achievements.

The previous studies (Butar, et al., 2020; Li et al., 2018; Soodmand Afshar & Doosti, 2016) have demonstrated that teachers' JP is extensively affected by their commitment and loyalty to students, schools, and society, their abilities to design and develop high-quality materials, their managerial capabilities to run classes in a disciplined way, their creativities in planning and implementing learning activities, their interests in cooperating with other school stakeholders; and their personalities to be honest and friendly. According to Supardi (2014), to show quality performance, teachers' abilities should meet some criteria: to design lesson plans, implement learning activities, create positive interpersonal relationships, develop and administer assessment practices, carry out enrichment programs, and plan and administer remedial programs. From another perspective, as Suparlan (2005) notes, teachers' JP can be assessed in terms of their functions. In this regard, it can be argued that teachers' JP is acceptable if they act as educators, teachers, counselors, and coaches within the school setting. According to performance standards of teachers, they do well if a) they work individually with students; b) prepare and plan learning activities; c) use efficiently media learning; d) engage students in a range of learning experiences; and e) lead actively their classes (Adoniou & Gallagher, 2017). Toraby and Modarresi (2018) researched the views of students toward a quality teacher. He found that in the views of students, a quality teacher is cooperative, patient, consistent, fair, flexible, willing, open-minded, and democratic.

With respect to EFL teachers, Moafian and Pishghadam (2009) conducted a study to verify the determining factors of JP. They reached a model with different dimensions: *teaching accountability* (e.g., I enter the classroom well-prepared.), *interpersonal relationships* (e.g., I respect all my students.), *attention to all* (e.g., I engage all learners in learning activities.), *examination* (e.g., I am fair in designing

and administering assessment practices.), *commitment* (e.g., My pedagogical knowledge is updated.), *learning boosters* (e.g., I improve my students' self-efficacy.), *creating a sense of competence* (e.g., I can motivate my students well.), *teaching boosters* (e.g., I can manage my classes well.), *physical and emotional acceptance* (e.g., My appearance is neat.), *empathy* (e.g., I avoid belittling my students.), *class attendance* (e.g., I attend to my class on time.), and *dynamism* (e.g., I am a creative teacher.). In sum, what can be implied from the literature is that EFL teachers' JP is a very complex concept, being affected by various factors.

### ***Linkage Between EFL Teachers' PC and JP***

In the past literature, a range of studies has investigated the linkage of teachers' PC and JP. We review critically some of them to lay the groundwork for the current study. In a study, Sukrapi and Muljono (2014) explored the correlation between teachers' (n = 74) PC and JP in Kepenuhan of Rokan Hulu districts. Their findings evidenced a significant positive correlation between the teachers' PC and JP. Likewise, in a quantitative study, Althausser (2015) investigated the effects of job-embedded professional development on elementary teachers' general and personal efficacy. Her findings documented that sustained professional development can be a strong predictor for the teachers' self-efficacy. Furthermore, Rahmatullah (2016) examined the relationship between teachers' job effectiveness and PC with JP in Indonesia. The results documented a significant positive relationship between the participants' effectiveness and PC with JP. Moreover, Nabila (2016) scrutinized the effects of teachers' pedagogical competence and PC on performance both conceptually and empirically in Trowulan District, Indonesia. Their findings disclosed that the teachers with high pedagogical competence and PC performed better in designing and implementing teaching and assessment practices. Besides, Kartini et al. (2020) explored the effects of principal leadership, academic supervision, and PC on JP among teachers (n = 128) in Indonesia. Their findings indicated that the teachers' JP was highly affected by principal leadership, academic supervision, and PC. Likewise, Murkatik et al. (2020) examined if teachers' PC and pedagogical competence can affect JP. The results unraveled that the two competencies are strong predictors of the participants' JP. Further, in the research by Asmarani et al. (2021), the correlation between teachers' PC and work productivity was examined in Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 1 Batang Hari, Indonesia. Their findings revealed a significant positive correlation between the participants' PC and job productivity. Finally, Rahmayanti et al. (2021) investigated the effects of PC, work motivation, and work discipline on senior high school teachers' JP in Pematang Regency, Indonesia. They found that the participants' JP was highly influenced by their PC, work motivation, and work discipline.

As can be inferred from the above-alluded studies, there are some noticeable limitations with them which call for further studies. First, the studies above only used quantitative design and the qualitative aspects of the effects of teachers' PC on JP have remained unexplored. Second, the samples of the studies were not large enough. This might have jeopardized the generalizability of the findings. Third, the correlation between EFL teachers' PC and JP is largely under-researched in Iran. To

fill up these lacunas, the present study explores the correlation between EFL teachers' PC with JP both quantitatively and qualitatively. To meet these aims, the following research questions were put forward:

1. Is there any significant correlation between Iranian EFL teachers' professional competence and job performance?
2. Which professional competence factors determine Iranian EFL teachers' job performance?
3. In which ways can Iranian EFL teachers' professional competence impact their job performance?

## **Method**

### **Research Design**

The researchers used an explanatory mixed-methods design to meet the present study's objectives. The explanatory mixed-methods design includes two distinct phases where the quantitative is followed by qualitative (Riazi, 2016). To complement or elaborate more on the quantitative findings obtained in the first phase, the qualitative data are collected and analyzed in the second phase. The underlying reason, indeed, for running the explanatory mixed-methods design was to reach triangulation. According to Mackey and Gass (2016), by using different methods and integrating different types of data, triangulation helps researchers to increase the validity and credibility of findings, as well as to overcome fundamental biases that might arise due to using a single method. Hence, the present study benefitted from an explanatory mixed-methods design to further our understanding of the correlation between EFL teachers' PC and JP in the Iranian context.

### **Participants**

The present study was run in Lorestan Province, in spring 2021. The researchers selected a total of 330 high school English teachers in Khorramabad City and Borujerd City using a random sampling method. As Riazi (2016) notes, a random sampling method provides an equal opportunity for all individuals in a population to participate in a study. The primary reason for the selection of the participants was their availability to the researchers. They included both males ( $n = 185$ ) and females ( $n = 145$ ) and aged from 21 to 57 years old. They held B.A. ( $n = 210$ ), M.A. ( $n = 106$ ), and Ph.D. ( $n = 14$ ) degrees. The participants' teaching experiences ranged from 2 to 29 years old. For the qualitative part, the researcher selected a sample of 25 of the participants who took part in the quantitative part. They were both males ( $n = 11$ ) and females ( $n = 14$ ) and their ages ranged from 25 to 55. They held B.A. ( $n = 12$ ), M.A. ( $n = 11$ ), and Ph.D. ( $n = 2$ ) degrees.

To access the participants, the first researcher referred to the Deputy Education of the education offices in Khorramabad City and Borujerd City and explained to them the present study's objectives in detail. With the agreement of the

Deputy Educations, he took the phone number of the English teachers who were working in the offices at that time. Next, the researchers called them one-by-one, introduced themselves, provided a detailed explanation about the study, and asked if they were willing to participate in it. Afterward, for those who agreed to participate in the study, the researchers sent the questionnaires and reflective written statement coupled with written consent in Persian via email, WhatsApp, and Telegram. It is worth noting that the researchers underlined that the participation was voluntary and the participants could withdraw from the study as they wished. Additionally, the researchers ensured the participants that their responses would remain confidential and they informed them about the final findings.

### **Instruments**

The researchers used three different instruments to obtain the required data. The first instrument was the EFL Teachers' Job performance Questionnaire (ETJPQ). ETJPQ, developed and validated by Moafian and Pishghadam (2009), was used to measure the participants' JP. It entailed 49 items and addressed diverse dimensions of JP, including *teaching accountability* (e.g., I answer students' questions patiently.), *interpersonal relationships* (e.g., I understand my students.), *attention to all* (e.g., I provide equal learning opportunities for students.), *examination* (e.g., I turn back the test-sheets soon.), *commitment* (I value my students' class attendance.), *learning boosters* (e.g., I appraise my students in different ways.), *creating a sense of competence* (I know all the students well.), *teaching boosters* (e.g., I feel confident in teaching.), *physical and emotional acceptance* (e.g., I have a good accent.), *empathy* (I'm not too much strict.), *class attendance* (e.g., I leave the class on time.), *dynamism* (e.g., I am energetic.). The items were designed in a five-point Likert scale ranging from completely disagree (1) to completely agree (5).

The second instrument was the EFL Teachers' Professional Competence Questionnaire (ETPCQ). ETPCQ, designed and validated by Khodamoradi and Maghsoudi (2020) was employed to gauge the participants' PC. ETPCQ was comprised of two parts. The first part addressed demographic information, such as gender, age, teaching experiences, and academic degree. The second part measured the participants' knowledge, skills, and attitudes. The knowledge factor included 12 items (e.g., I think child development/psychology knowledge is important.), the skills factor consisted of 14 items (e.g., I think action research skill (doing small-scale research in the class is important).), and the attitudes factor contained 10 items (e.g., I think having commitment and feeling responsible is important.). The items were developed in a five-point Likert scale from completely disagree (1) to completely agree (5).

The third instrument was a reflective written statement. It was used to disclose how PC may affect JP from the participants' perspectives. For this purpose, they were invited to reflect upon the following prompt:

Dear teachers,

Kindly write down how EFL teachers' professional competence may affect their job performance. In a sense, you are kindly supposed to reflect on how your professional competence might have affected your job performance over your teaching at high schools. We appreciate it if your report be around 300-400 words in length.

It is worth pointing out that the researchers got the questionnaires and the reflective written statement translated into Persian by two experts in translation. Next, to assure that the contents in both English and Persian versions were the same, a back-translation was done. The primary purpose of translating the instruments was to increase the reliability and validity of the participants' responses through avoiding any probable misunderstanding.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

The researchers took some steps to carry out the present study. At the first step, they recruited two professional translators to translate the questionnaires and the reflective written statement into Persian. At the second step, they piloted the questionnaires on 63 high school English teachers to measure their reliabilities. The results of reliability indices for ETJPQ and ETPCQ yielded 0.87 and 0.92, respectively, which were found acceptable for the present study's purposes. At the third step, they invited two university professors specialized in Applied Linguistics at Lorestan University to evaluate the questionnaires and the reflective written statement in terms of wording, content, question sequencing, and bias. In line with the university professors' comments, some minor modifications were made to some items. At the fourth stage, they invited 12 EFL teachers to respond to the questionnaires and the reflective written statement. They were asked to report if the items are understandable enough and if there were any problems with them. At the fifth stage, the researchers sent the digital format of the questionnaires to the participants via email, WhatsApp, and Telegram. The questionnaires started with the written consent and if the participants agreed with its content, they were led to the items of the questionnaires. The questionnaires were accompanied by a voice podcast in which the researchers explained how the participants can answer the items. At the last stage, the researchers sent the digital format of the written reflective statement to 25 EFL teachers who responded to the questionnaires via email, WhatsApp, and Telegram. The participants' responses were stored in a digital database such that the researchers could use them later.

### **Data Analysis Procedures**

As the collected data were qualitative and quantitative, the data analysis procedures were governed by the two approaches. Concerning the quantitative part,



SPSS version 23 was used to calculate the descriptive statistics, like mean and standard deviation, as well as inferential statistics, such as Pearson correlation analysis and multiple regression analysis. The Pearson correlation analysis was used to unveil the kind and amount of the relationship between the EFL teachers' PC and JP. And, the multiple regression analysis was run to disclose how much of the variance in the participants' JP can be determined by the PC's factors.

About the qualitative data, the researchers used a standard thematic coding analysis. The underlying reason to utilize the thematic coding analysis was its robust theoretical foundation and applicability easy. As Cresswell and Poth (2018) note, the thematic coding analysis is a form of qualitative analysis involving recording and identifying texts liked by a common idea or theme. It allows researchers to index texts into categories and, thus, establish a "framework of thematic ideas about it" (Gibbs, 2007). By following the procedures suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006), they extracted inductively the recurring themes that represented the effects of the EFL teachers' PC on JP. In doing so, they went through some distinct stages. At the first stage, the first researcher read and reread the participants' reports as much as she could become familiarized with their underlying meanings. At this stage, he ensured that the meanings of the participants are clear enough for him. At the second stage, he examined carefully the reports to code them. Coding is defined as highlighting the participants' words in terms of codes to describe their contents (Richards & Richards, 1995). For this purpose, he underlined the statements representing the codes with colored pens and continued adding new codes as he reviewed the reports. At the third stage, he collated together all the data into themes verified by the codes. The codes allowed the first researcher to get a clear understanding of the main points recurring through the data. At the fourth stage, he inspected the codes meticulously to detect an initial draft of the themes. At this stage, the vague and irrelevant codes were discarded. At the fifth stage, he tried to define and name the extracted themes. At the last stage, he examined the extracted themes and excerpts to assure that they match together. It should be noted that having analyzed the data, the researchers measured the consistency and credibility of the findings. For the consistency, they recruited two coding analysts to code the data independently (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). They went through the data and coded them independently. The inter-reliability of their coding results yielded 0.87 which was considered acceptable for the present study. For the credibility, they used a member-checking strategy (Cresswell & Poth, 2018; Patten, 2000). For this purpose, they invited five participants to examine if the extracted themes and excerpts represented adequately their intended meanings. They participants examined the extracted themes and excerpts and confirmed that the findings highly represented their intended meanings.

## Results

### Quantitative Results

The first research question examined if there was any significant correlation between Iranian EFL teachers' PC and JP. Before running the Pearson Correlation test, it was essential to check out if the normality assumption was met. For this purpose, the researchers used the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. The obtained findings revealed that the data were normally distributed since the statistic for the PC scale was ( $KS_{(330)} = .098, p > .05$ ) and for JP scale was ( $KS_{(330)} = .094, p > .05$ ). Next, the researchers calculated the descriptive statistics of the EFL teachers' PC and JP, reported in Table 1. As seen, for the EFL teachers' PC, the mean of 3.23 with the SD of 0.73, and for their JP, the mean of 3.20 with SD of 0.82 were calculated, in order.

**Table 1**

*Descriptive Statistics of the EFL Teachers' PC and JP*

|                         | N   | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|-------------------------|-----|------|----------------|
| Professional competence | 330 | 3.23 | 0.73           |
| Job performance         | 330 | 3.20 | 0.82           |

The correlation between the EFL teachers' PC and JP is presented in Table 2.

**Table 2**

*Correlation between EFL Teachers' PC and JP*

|                         |                     | Job performance |
|-------------------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| Professional competence | Pearson Correlation | 0.721           |
|                         | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .000            |
|                         | N                   | 330             |

As Table 2 reports, there was a positive correlation between the EFL teachers' PC and JP with a coefficient of 72.1% ( $r = 0.721, p < 0.01, N = 330$ ). The findings indicate that the EFL teachers who are more professionally competent are better performers in school settings.

The second research question investigated how much of the variation in the EFL teachers' JP could be attributed to the factors of PC. To this end, the researchers used multiple regression analysis. Prior to proceeding with the main analysis, the researchers examined the normality assumption. First of all, to assess

for outliers, the value of the Mahalanobis distance was compared against a critical value using a chi-square table. The maximum value of Mahalanobis distance (10.764) was less than the critical value (16.266), showing no outliers. To check out the linearity assumption, the relationship between the sub-components of PC was checked on the scatterplot matrix, and no curvilinear relationship was observed. Further, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was run to check out the normality of the collected data from the sub-components of PC scale. The calculated results are *knowledge* (KS = .077), *skills* (KS = .085), and *attitudes* (KS = .064) which were all above the significance level ( $P > .05$ ). Thus, this assumption was also met. After checking all the assumptions, the multiple regression analysis was run to assess the effects of the PC's factors on JP.

**Table 3**  
*Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis on the Effects of PC Dimensions on JP*

|                   | Sum of Squares | df  | Mean Square | F       | Sig. | R    | R <sup>2</sup> |
|-------------------|----------------|-----|-------------|---------|------|------|----------------|
| <b>Regression</b> | 115.793        | 3   | 38.598      | 117.984 | .000 | .721 | .521           |
| <b>Residual</b>   | 106.649        | 326 | .327        |         |      |      |                |
| <b>Total</b>      | 222.442        | 329 |             |         |      |      |                |

As Table 3 reports, ANOVA analysis reveals that the regression model in this question reaches the statistical significance ( $F = 117.984, p < 0.001$ ). Moreover, the value of R<sup>2</sup> (0.521) is significant, implying that 52.1% of the variance in the Iranian EFL teachers' JP can be accounted for by their PC dimensions. The next step is to determine the factors which highly contribute to the prediction of EFL teachers' JP.

**Table 4**  
*The Results of Multiple Regression Analysis for PC Dimensions*

| Dimensions | Unstandardized Coefficients |            | Standardized Coefficients | t     | Sig. |
|------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|-------|------|
|            | B                           | Std. Error | Beta                      |       |      |
| (Constant) | .550                        | .145       |                           | 3.803 | .000 |
| Knowledge  | .257                        | .047       | .269                      | 5.532 | .000 |
| Skills     | .314                        | .051       | .329                      | 6.176 | .000 |
| Attitudes  | .248                        | .048       | .255                      | 5.130 | .000 |

Dependent Variable: JP

As reported in Table 4, regarding the Beta values of the PC's sub-components, the EFL teachers' JP is impacted by *Skills* ( $\beta = .329, p < .001$ ), *Knowledge* ( $\beta = .269, p < .001$ ), and *attitudes* ( $\beta = .255, p < .001$ ), respectively.

### **Qualitative Results**

The third research question explored in which ways the Iranian high school English teachers' PC could impact their JP. The results of the standard thematic coding analysis yielded four overarching themes: "increased job effectiveness", "improved teaching self-efficacy", "increased teaching motivation", and "promoted organization acceptance". These themes along with the related excerpts are detailed below.

#### ***Increased Job Effectiveness***

The first recurring theme that emerged from the data was "increased job effectiveness". The participants underlined that as they are equipped with a high PC, their job effectiveness increases significantly. That is, with a high level of professional competence, they are at a better position to offer their instructions more effectively. In this respect, one of the participants remarked:

*It is a reality that to perform teaching duties in an acceptable way, we, EFL teachers, should be competent professionally. For example, if I don't have good grammatical competence, I can't instruct the grammatical structures well. Hence, this makes my students can't learn them and my teaching effectiveness decreases.*

Resonated with the previous statements, one of the participants stressed that their teaching effectiveness is completely tied with their PC. Without a good PC, he claimed that his teaching is far away from the intended effectiveness. To support his claim, he asserted:

*Being equipped with enough knowledge and skills is of paramount importance for me. For example, one of my colleagues has good knowledge and skills in designing and administering quality assessment practices. This has resulted in a significant improvement in his students' achievement. So, all students, parents, and school officials confirm that his job effectiveness is really good.*

#### ***Improved Teaching Self-efficacy***

The other theme receiving remarkable attention from the participants was "improved teaching self-efficacy". The participants pinpointed that when they enjoy a high PC, their teaching self-efficacy improves significantly. That is, with a high PC, they believe in their capabilities to handle obligations, challenges, and tasks

related to teaching English in their classes. In this respect, one of the participants quoted:

*During my initial years at work, I didn't have any self-efficacy to handle my job. When a problem was raised, I got confused and anxious. However, as my professional competence has improved over time, I feel that now I am able to design, manage, and finish my classes successfully.*

In corroborating with the previous statement, the participants asserted that with a high PC, they feel confident in embark on new teaching activities, leading to more promising learning achievements for their students. In this respect, one of the participants wrote down:

*Let me write down how a high professional competence leads to a better self-efficacy in teaching. For example, since I have good knowledge in syllabus design curriculum development, I feel confident in designing and developing useful supplementary materials for the students who need more input, interaction, and output.*

### ***Increased Teaching Motivation***

The next recurring theme that received considerable attention from the EFL teachers was “increased teaching motivation”. This term refers to teachers’ motivation and eagerness to design, implement, and evaluate their teaching activities. The participant noted that a high PC can act as a strong factor to increase their teaching motivation. By increasing teaching motivation, they put more time and energy into doing their job duties. In support of this, one of the participants noted:

*It is crystal clear that there is a mutual relationship between motivation and achievement. I mean, as I have the required knowledge and skills to do effectively my teaching duties, I get more promising achievements. These promising achievements make me motivated to improve my professional competence and job performance.*

Similarly, the participants stressed that as a high PC helps them to handle their teaching challenges and obligations, they remain motivated to keep working well in their classes. In this respect, one of the EFL teachers remarked:

*My motivation to do my teaching duties is immensely affected by my professional competence. For example, since I took some courses in research in applied linguistics at my M.A. study, I am skilled at running action research in my classes. This, in turn, enables me to find practical solutions when I face a problem. In this way, I don't lose my motivation in difficulties.*

### ***Promoted Organizational Acceptance***

The last theme that emerged from the participants' reports was "promoted organizational acceptance". This term indicates the degree to which teachers are praised, acknowledged, and promoted at schools due to their JP. The participants asserted that their organizational acceptance is closely related to their PC. The following excerpt represents this:

*What I can write fairly is that a high professional competence can guarantee teachers' acceptance and promotion in the ministry of education. For example, when an English teacher excels at listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills, he/she may act as a role model for students. Therefore, the students get on the right track and achieve more success. Accordingly, this makes the students and their parents respect the English teacher.*

In congruent with the previous statement, the participants noted that in prestigious schools, the English teachers who are professionally competent can get more promotions. In support of this, one of the participants reported:

*I work at a talented school. The students are really intelligent and eager to learn. This condition demands too much content area knowledge and skills to meet their needs and interests. For instance, I have to be proficient in organizing the teaching elements to work together well. Of course, I should say that I have a very good organizational acceptance in the department education since all stakeholders know that I am a competent teacher and I am doing well at my school.*

### **Discussion**

The first research question investigated if there was any significant correlation between Iranian high school English teachers' PC and JP. The results documented a positive correlation between the EFL teachers' PC and their JP. The findings indicated that the EFL teachers with a high PC might have benefited from the required knowledge, skills, and attitudes to handle successfully teaching tasks, obligations, and challenges in their jobs. The study's findings are largely congruent with those of the previous studies (e.g., Asmarani et al., 2021; Kartini et al., 2020; Murkatik et al., 2020; Nabila, 2016; Rahmatullah, 2016; Rahmayanti et al., 2021; Sukrapi & Muljono, 2014), reporting that teachers' PC was correlated positively with their JP. In sum, the study's findings confirmed that the higher PC, the better JP the EFL teachers show in educational settings.

The second research question examined which PC's factors determine the Iranian high school English teachers' JP. The results disclosed that the EFL teachers' JP was affected by *skills, knowledge, and attitudes*, respectively. The findings documented that all the factors of the PC are in demand such that the EFL teachers could do their job duties well. In line with the findings, it can be argued that if EFL teachers improve their knowledge, but, at the same time neglect the skills and

attitudes factors, they cannot take over their teaching challenges and obligations. These findings are in line with the previous studies (e.g., Khodamoradi & Maghsoudi, 2020; Uztosun, 2018), reporting that the EFL teachers' PC is comprised of knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

The third research question explored in which ways Iranian high school English teachers' PC impacts their JP. The results yielded four overarching themes, namely "increased job effectiveness", "improved teaching self-efficacy", "increased teaching motivation", and "promoted organizational acceptance". The findings disclosed that the EFL teachers with a high PC could show better job effectiveness, reach a higher level of teaching self-efficacy, get more motivated, and benefit from a better organizational acceptance. The results may be explained from this view that as the EFL teachers were competent professionally, they might have cultivated the essential knowledge, skills, and attitude to handle tasks, obligations, and challenges related to their teaching (Khodadadi & Maghsoodi, 2020). These findings lend credence to the previous studies, reporting that PC is a determining factor for teachers' job effectiveness (Tleuzhanova & Madenyatova, 2014), teachers' teaching motivation (Aji et al., 2019), and teachers' teaching self-efficacy (Ghanizadeh & Moafian, 2011; Hatlevik, 2017).

The study's findings support this view that PC is a complex notion, including a range of knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, and personal characteristics who enable a teacher to act professionally in different situations (Koster & Dengerink, 2008). By acting professionally in different situations, a teacher can do job duties well and show a good JP. Additionally, a possible explanation for the findings may be ascribed to the reality that having a good PC is more essential for EFL teachers than mathematics and science teachers. Because an EFL teacher not only needs the content area and pedagogical knowledge but also needs to be skilled at using language skills (e.g., listening, speaking, reading, and writing), cooperative skills, and interpersonal skills to create an interactive environment in the classroom (Brown, 2002). This all affects directly his/her JP.

Furthermore, the study's findings may be illuminated from the perspective of Life Syllabus theory (Pishghadam & Zabihi, 2012). In line with this theory, it might be argued that a syllabus should cover both scientific knowledge and practical knowledge. The English classes need to provide a setting wherein EFL learners can make correct connections between scientific knowledge and practical knowledge. To meet this valuable objective, EFL teachers must be professionally competent in terms of knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Otherwise, the educational objectives might not be realized adequately. Additionally, one more explanation for the results may be attributed to the participants' job motivation. Along with Koster et al. (2005), it may be argued that as the EFL teachers believed in ethics, accountability, understanding students, cooperative learning, interactive teaching, individual differences in learning, creativity, and long-life learning, they might have got more motivated, resulting in designing, implementing, and evaluating teaching activities appropriately.

Besides, the study's findings may be explained in light of the Self-efficacy theory of Bandura (1989). In alignment with this theory, it may be argued that the EFL teachers who believed in their capabilities to organize and implement teaching activities, they might have gained more promising performance. In actual fact, according to this theory, the EFL teachers might have avoided situations and tasks which found beyond their knowledge and skills. In contrast, if they felt confident in their abilities, they might not have dared to enter challenging situations and demanding tasks. Besides, to illustrate the study's findings, we can refer to Self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000). In line with theory, it may be argued that the EFL teachers' motivation to carry out their job duties might have stemmed from their innate psychological needs. That is, they might have been needed competence (i.e., feeling of self-efficacy), autonomy (i.e., feeling of control), and relatedness (i.e., feeling related to the outside setting). If these needs of the EFL teachers had been satisfied, it might have brought positive consequences in their jobs. These findings receive support from the previous studies (Aziz et al., 2014; Wetipo et al., 2015), reporting that teachers' PC is a strong predictor of their teaching motivation.

Another line of discussion for the study's results is that the EFL teachers who were competent professionally, might have been acknowledged more by other educational stakeholders. As Aziz et al. (2014) noted, the EFL teachers might have liked to be perceived as quality teachers in their educational settings. This promoted organizational acceptance and position may have acted as a strong incentive for them to hone their PC, and, accordingly, enable them to be more successful performers. Finally, the study's results may be linked to this view that the EFL teachers who privileged a high PC might have achieved higher job effectiveness (Sengottuvel & Aktharsha, 2015). That is, they might have better efficacy in instruction strategies, classroom and students' management, interpersonal relations with others, assessment, and feedback.

### **Conclusion**

As mentioned above, the present study purported to explore the relationship between Iranian EFL teachers' PC and JP qualitatively and quantitatively. The study's findings indicated that there was a positive correlation between the EFL teachers' PC and JP. Additionally, the study's results documented that the EFL teachers' JP was mainly impacted by *skills*, *knowledge*, and *attitudes* factors of their PC. Moreover, the qualitative findings yielded four overarching themes, namely "increased job effectiveness", "improved teaching self-efficacy", "increased teaching motivation", and "promoted organizational acceptance". Based on the findings, it can be concluded that an EFL teacher with a high PC can handle better teaching demands and difficulties. That is, when an EFL teacher has a good command of knowledge, skills, and attitudes, they will be in a better position to meet the educational requirements. In sum, the English learning at state Iranian high schools won't be successful, unless the English teachers are professionally competent.



In light of the study's findings, some implications are suggested for different stakeholders. First, the policy-makers in the ministry of education of Iran should be aware of the significance of PC and recruit the teachers who are professionally competent. Second, the syllabus designers and developers in Teacher Education Centers in Iran should give particular attention to cultivating PC among student-teachers majoring in applied linguistics. For this purpose, it is essential that some courses be dedicated to training teacher education issues, in general, and PC, in particular. Third, education officials need to hold teachers training workshops to renew the EFL teachers' PC. At these workshops, trainers are supposed to focus on raising the needed knowledge, skills, and attitudes to handle teaching demands well. Fourth, EFL teachers should accept that their JP is highly tied with their PC and, thus, try their best to raise and keep updated by joining teacher training courses and reading textbooks and articles. Finally, as the development of PC requires lifelong learning, EFL teachers should be involved in cultivating it continuously by reflecting upon their teachings and benefiting from colleagues' experiences and comments.

Given the limitations imposed on the current study, some suggestions for further research are recommended. As the sample of the present study was restricted to two education departments, further studies need to be carried out with larger samples in other parts of the country to increase the generalizability of the findings. Furthermore, as the sample of this study was selected from state high schools, more studies can include EFL teachers at private language institutes. Moreover, interested researchers can explore how the EFL teachers' PC affects students' achievements at state high schools and private language institutes. Besides, further research can be carried out to further our understanding of the roles of gender, teaching experience, education level, and service location on the EFL teachers' PC. Likewise, as the participants of the present study were high school English teachers, it is worth investigating university teachers' perceptions of PC and its linkage with their JP. Last but not least, since the current study addressed the correlation between EFL teachers' PC and JP, more studies are needed to disclose the relationship between PC and job satisfaction, job motivation, job effectiveness, job burnout etc. among Iranian EFL teachers.

### References

- Adoniou, M., & Gallagher, M. (2017). Professional standards for teachers-what are they good for? *Oxford Review of Education*, 43(1), 109-126. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03054985.2016.1243522>
- Aji, A. P., Martono, S., & Fakhruddin, F. (2019). The effect of teacher motivation in mediating commitment and professional competence on teacher's performance of vocational school in Blora Regency. *Educational Management*, 8(2), 150-156. <https://journal.unnes.ac.id/sju/index.php/eduman/article/view/32889>
- Althausen, K. (2015). Job-embedded professional development: Its impact on teacher self-efficacy and student performance. *Teacher Development*, 19(2), 210-225. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13664530.2015.1011346>

- Asmarani, A., Sukarno, S., & El Widdah, M. (2021). The relationship of professional competence with teacher work productivity in Madrasah Aliyah. *Nidhomul Haq: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam*, 6(2), 220-235. <https://doi.org/10.31538/ndh.v6i2.1365>
- Aziz, F., Akhtar, M., & Rauf, M. (2014). Relationship between teachers' competencies and motivation at higher education level in Pakistan. *Pakistan Annual Research Journal*, 50(1), 163-174.
- Bandura, A. (1989). Human agency in social cognitive theory. *American Psychologist*, 44(9), 1175-1184. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.44.9.1175>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101. doi: 10.1191/1478088706qp063oa
- Brown, H. D. (2002). English language teaching in the post-method era: Toward better diagnosis, treatment, and assessment. In J. C. Richards & W. A. Renandya, *Methodology in language teaching: An anthology of current practice* (pp. 9-18). Cambridge University Press.
- Butar, N. Y. B., Bross, N., & Kanto, D. S. (2020). What drives teaching performance at school? The determinants of school teacher performance. *Journal of Economics and Business*, 3(4), 1624-1630. <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3753211>
- Cai, Y., & Lin, C. (2006). Theory and practice on teacher performance evaluation. *Frontiers of Education in China*, 1(1), 29-39. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11516-005-0004-x>
- Cresswell, J. W., & Poth, Ch. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2017). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. SAGE Publications.
- Davari, H., & Aghagolzadeh, F. (2015). To teach or not to teach? Still an open question for the Iranian education system. In C. Kennedy (Ed.), *English language teaching in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Innovations, trends and challenges* (pp. 11-19). British Council.
- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2000). The "what" and "why" of goal pursuits: Human needs and the self-determination of behavior. *Psychological Inquiry*, 11(4), 227-268. [https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327965PLI1104\\_01](https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327965PLI1104_01)
- Dubovicki, S., & Brust Nemet, M. (2015). Self-assessment of the social competence of teacher education students. *The New Educational Review*, 42, 227-238. <https://doi.org/10.15804/tner.2015.42.4.19>

- Ghanizadeh, A., & Moafian, F. (2011). The relationship between Iranian EFL teachers' sense of self-efficacy and their pedagogical success in language institutes. *Asian EFL Journal*, 13(2), 249-272.
- Gibbs, G. R. (2007). The nature of qualitative analysis. In *Analyzing qualitative data* (pp. 1–9). SAGE Publications.
- Hatlevik, O. E. (2017). Examining the relationship between teachers' self-efficacy, their digital competence, strategies to evaluate information, and use of ICT at school. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, 61(5), 555-567. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00313831.2016.1172501>
- Helterbran, V. R. (2008). The ideal professor: Student perceptions of effective instructor practices, attitudes, and skills. *Education*, 129(1), 125-138.
- Jacob, B. A., Rockoff, J. E., Taylor, E. S., Lindy, B., & Rosen, R. (2018). Teacher applicant hiring and teacher performance: Evidence from DC public schools. *Journal of Public Economics*, 166, 81-97. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpubeco.2018.08.011>
- Kartal, G., & Başol Ç. H. (2019). Generic teacher competencies and the English language teacher education program in Turkey. *Novitas-ROYAL (Research on Youth and Language)*, 13(2), 133-154.
- Kartini, D., Kristiawan, M., & Fitria, H. (2020). The influence of principal's leadership, academic supervision, and professional competence toward teachers' performance. *International Journal of Progressive Sciences and Technologies*, 20(1), 156-164.
- Khodamoradi, A., & Maghsoudi, M. (2020). Development and validation of the English language teacher competencies questionnaire. *Journal of Language and Translation Studies (JLTS)*, 53(1), 195-167. DOI: 20.1001.1.22285202.1399.53.1.6.6
- Kohli, A., & Deb, T. (2008). *Performance management*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Komila, M. (2019). EFL teachers' professional competence and their effect on student education. *European Journal of Research and Reflection in Educational Sciences*, 7(12), 1-5.
- Koster, B., & Dengerink, J. J. (2008). Professional standards for teacher educators: How to deal with complexity, ownership and function. Experiences from the Netherlands. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 31(2), 135-149. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02619760802000115>
- Koster, B., Brekelmans, M., Korthagen, F., & Wubbels, T. (2005). Quality requirements for teacher educators. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 21(2), 157-176. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2004.12.004>
- Kuhlman, N., & Knezevic, B. (2013). *The TESOL guidelines for developing EFL standards*. Alexandria, VA: ESOL International Association.

- Kunter, M., Klusmann, U., Baumert, J., Richter, D., Voss, T., & Hachfeld, A. (2013). Professional competence of teachers: Effects on instructional quality and student development. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 105*(3), 805-820. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0032583>
- Li, M., Pérez-Díaz, P. A., Mao, Y., & Petrides, K. V. (2018). A multilevel model of teachers' job performance: Understanding the effects of trait emotional intelligence, job satisfaction, and organizational trust. *Frontiers in Psychology, 9*, 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2018.02420>
- Mackey, A., & Gass, S. M. (2015). *Second language research: Methodology and design*. Routledge.
- Moafian, F., & Pishghadam, R. (2009). Construct validation of a questionnaire on characteristics of successful Iranian EFL teachers. *Pazhuhesh-e Zabanha-ye Khareji, 54*, 127-142. <https://www.sid.ir/en/journal/ViewPaper.aspx?id=170947>
- Murkatik, K., Harapan, E., & Wardiah, D. (2020). The influence of professional and pedagogic competence on teacher's performance. *Journal of Social Work and Science Education, 1*(1), 58-69. <https://doi.org/10.52690/jswse.v1i1.10>
- Nabila, H. (2016, September). The influence of pedagogic competence and professional competence on the performance of teachers social studies in Trowulan district. In *ICEBESS (International Conference on Ethics of Business, Economics, and Social Science) Proceeding* (pp. 556-565).
- Patten, K. (2000). *Research report*. Washington: Washington State University.
- Pishghadam, R., & Zabihi, R. (2012). Life syllabus: A new research agenda in English language teaching. *TESOL Arabia Perspectives, 19*(1), 23-27.
- Rahmatullah, M. (2016). The relationship between learning effectiveness, teacher competence and teachers performance Madrasah Tsanawiyah at Serang, Banten, Indonesia. *Higher Education Studies, 6*(1), 169-181. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/hes.v6n1p169>
- Rahmayanti, R., Haryati, T., & Miyono, N. (2021). Impact of professional competence, motivation and work discipline on teacher performance. *Economic Education Analysis Journal, 10*(2), 229-239. <https://doi.org/10.15294/eeaj.v10i2.46181>
- Riazi, A. (2005). The Four language stages in history of Iran. In A. M. Y. Lin, & P. W. Martin (Eds.), *Decolonization, globalization: language in education policy and practice*. Multilingual Matters.
- Riazi, A. M. (2016). *The Routledge encyclopedia of research methods in applied linguistics*. Routledge.
- Richards, J. C. (1998). *Beyond training*. Cambridge University Press.
- Richards, J. C. (2010). Competence and performance in language teaching. *RELC Journal, 41*(2), 101-122. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0033688210372953>

- Richards, T., & Richards, L. (1995). Using hierarchical categories in qualitative data analysis. In U. Kelle (Ed.), *Computer-aided qualitative data analysis: Theory, methods, and practice* (pp. 80-95). SAGE Publications.
- Saberi, L., & Sahragard, R. (2019). Designing and validating teachers' professional development scale: Iranian EFL contexts in focus. *International Journal of Instruction*, 12(1), 1609- 1626.
- Sengottuvel, A., & Aktharsha, U. S. (2015). Teacher effectiveness and professional competency in school education. *International Journal of Management*, 6(1), 181-190.
- Soodmand Afshar, M., & Doosti, M. (2016). Investigating the impact of job satisfaction/dissatisfaction on Iranian English teachers' job performance. *Iranian Journal of Language Teaching Research* 4(1), 97-115.
- Sukrapi, M., & Muljono, P. (2014). The relationship between professional competence and work motivation with the elementary school teacher performance. *Asian Journal of Humanities and Social Studies*, 2(5), 1-6. <https://www.ajouronline.com/index.php/AJHSS/article/view/1346>
- Sulastri, S., Fitria, H., & Martha, A. (2020). Kompetensi Profesional Guru dalam Meningkatkan Mutu Pendidikan. *Journal of Education Research*, 1(3), 258-264.
- Supardi. M. (2014). *Teacher performance*. PT Raja Grafindo Persada.
- Suparlan. (2005). *Manajemen Guru Efektif*. Hikayat.
- Syafar, A. (2014). Self-assessment of certified EFL teachers in central Sulawesi on their professional competence. *Jurnal Pendidikan Humaniora*, 1(3), 304-319.
- Tleuzhanova, G. K., & Madenyatova, A. M. (2014). The professional competence of teachers: Which skills and knowledge contribute to a teacher's effectiveness? *Education & Science Without Borders*, 5(9), 146-148.
- Toraby, E., & Modarresi, G. (2018). EFL teachers' emotions and learners' views of teachers' pedagogical success. *International Journal of Instruction*, 11(2), 513-526.
- Uztosun, M. S. (2018). Professional competences to teach English at primary schools in Turkey: A Delphi study. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 41(4), 549-565.
- <https://doi.org/10.1080/02619768.2018.1472569>
- Vázquez, V. P., Lancaster, N., & Callejas, C. B. (2020). Keys issues in developing teachers' competences for CLIL in Andalusia: Training, mobility and coordination. *The Language Learning Journal*, 48(1), 81-98. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09571736.2019.1642940>
- Weinert, F. E. (2001). Concept of competence: A conceptual clarification. In D. S. Rychen & L. H. Salganik (Eds.), *Defining and selecting key competencies* (pp. 45-65). Hogrefe & Huber Publishers.

Wetipo, W., Rante, Y., Wambraw, O., & Bharanti, E. (2015). The mediating effect of job satisfaction and job motivation to influence school leadership, teacher competence and experience of teachers on performance of teachers in SMA/SMK in Jayawijaya, Indonesia. *Journal of Resources Development and Management*, 15, 10-16.

Woodford, K., Jackson, G., & Jane, B. (Eds.). (2003). *Cambridge advanced learner's dictionary*. Cambridge University Press.

### Authors' Biographies

---



**Afsheen Rezai** holds a Ph.D. in TEFL. In 2019, Rezai joined the Department of English, Ayatollah Borujerdi University, as a faculty member. His areas of interest include Teacher Education, Second Language Assessment and Testing, and Online Education. He has had some publications in domestic and international journals.



**Zeinab Azizi** holds a Ph.D. in TEFL. In 2020, Azizi joined the Department of English, Ayatollah Borujerdi University, as a faculty member. Her areas of interest include Online Education, Teacher Education, and Sociocultural Studies. She has published some papers in domestic and international journals.



**Ehsan Namaziandost** was born in Shiraz Province of Iran in 1987. He holds an MA degree in TEFL from Islamic Azad University of Ahvaz. He got his Ph.D. in TEFL at Islamic Azad University, Shahrekord, Iran. His main interests of research are CALL, TEFL, Second Language Acquisition, Educational Psychology, Motivation and Anxiety, EFL Teaching and Learning, Language Learning and Technology, Teaching Language Skills, and Language Learning Strategies. His research papers and articles have been published in different international journals. Ehsan is an international reviewer who did more than 1080 reviews, up to now, and handled 100 papers as Editor. Ehsan is a member of editorial boards of *Current Psychology*, *Journal of Psycholinguistic Research*, *Language Testing in Asia*, *Frontiers in Psychology*, *Frontiers in Education*, *International Journal for Educational Integrity*, *BMC Psychiatry*, *BMC Psychology*, *SAGE Open*, *Journal of Language and Education*, *Dialogic Pedagogy: An International Online Journal*, *International Journal of Language Education*, *Education Research International*, *Studies in English Language and Education (SiELE)*, and *CALL-EJ*. Ehsan is also an Associate Editor in *Frontiers in Psychology*.

---



## Development and Validation of KOLB 4.0 Learning Style Questionnaire

Shokouh Rashvand Semiyari<sup>1,\*</sup> and Mahnaz Azad<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Corresponding author: Assistant Professor, TEFL Department, Faculty of Humanities, Islamic Azad University, East Tehran Branch, Tehran, Iran  
ORCID:0000-0002-0126-9875  
Email: Sh\_Rashvand@yahoo.com, Sh.Rashvand@iauet.ac.ir

<sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor, TEFL Department, Faculty of Humanities, Islamic Azad University, East Tehran Branch, Tehran, Iran, ORCID:0000-0001-5782-5108  
Email: mahnaz.azad@yahoo.com; mahazad@iauet.ac.ir

### Abstract

A great deal of individual difference with reference to learners' beliefs, thoughts, and behaviors can be explained in terms of the learning style the individuals adopt during the learning process. These learning styles have been labeled initiating, experiencing, creating / imagining, reflecting, analyzing, thinking, deciding, acting, and balancing according to Kolb and Kolb (2013). This research was conducted to develop and validate a multidimensional structure of the Kolb learning style inventory v. 4.0 (KLSI 4.0) in an Iranian context. KLSI 4.0 which is conceptualized in Experiential Learning Theory was then developed and evaluated through a series of validation procedures. Eight hundred thirty-three EFL learners studying English as ESP in IAU East Tehran Branch participated in the main phase of this study. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) through Structural Equation Modeling validated the proposed nine types KLSI 4.0. The outcomes of the initial piloting of the KLSI 4.0 did not show an acceptable fit due to high degree of correlation between some factors under the broad construct of learning style. Three factors indicating the highest degree of correlation were thus merged and the model was run again with modified six-factor LSI. Findings confirmed that learning style is a multidimensional construct in which the six factors are conceptually related. Reliability and validity estimates were examined and provided satisfactory psychometric properties of the inventory. In fact, the six-factor-correlated model of KLSI 4.0 revealed an acceptable model fit. Pedagogical implications and suggestions for further research were also discussed. The CFA applied in the research is distinguished from the initial assumptions in the literature and is more straightforward than originally presumed. This paper might be therefore used as a starting empirical point for further cross-validation analyses and educational implications.

*Keywords:* learning style, validation procedures, confirmatory factor analysis, structure equation modeling

### ARTICLE INFO

Research Article

Received: Friday, May 14, 2021

Accepted: Friday, April 8, 2022

Published: Sunday, May 1, 2022

Available Online: Friday, April 8, 2022

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.22049/jalda.2022.27097.1254>

Online ISSN: 2821-0204; Print ISSN: 2820-8986



© The Author(s)

## **Introduction**

Learning styles have been the focus of many scholars within the past decades as they have to do with the way learning takes place (Fletcher et al., 2008). Kolb and Kolb (2013) classified the learning styles as initiating, experiencing, creating, reflecting, analyzing, thinking, deciding, acting, and balancing. Many studies have been carried out on learning styles and their impact(s) on learners' achievement / success within the few past decades. The Kolb learning style questionnaire in different versions have been used in plenty of studies up to now and shown appropriate reliability and validity (e.g., Kayes, 2005; Yahya, 1998). However, the Kolb learning style v.4 has not been validated to date. The learners who took the Kolb Learning Style Inventory version 3.2 (KLSI 3.2) sometimes report difficulty in answering the items. They report that the feedback they get from the learning style inventory (LSI) gives them more insight than has been the case when a normative Likert rating scale version is used. This is because the social desirability response bias in the rating scales fails to define a clear learning style, that is, they say they prefer all learning modes. Kayes (2005) views KLSI as the most influential model that has been proposed to-date.

## **Literature Review**

### **The Learning Styles: Backgrounds and Characteristics**

Learners should be aware of the significance and goals of knowledge, skills, and perceptions which are important in their future success (Laguador, 2013). During the learning process, learners make some mistakes along the way. However, they need to recognize that they will finally learn at some point. They gradually change from someone who did not have any appreciation of the specific knowledge to someone who does. Learning is composed of change and variation and it has a permanent impact on learners' behavior. Santrock (2005) defines learning as an approximately long-lasting variation in behavior that arises from experience.

Learning styles refer to the preferred ways the learners often choose to process information. They also describe an individual's typical mode of thinking, analyzing, or problem solving. The Kolb LSI is different from other tests of learning style (LS) due to its unique nature. It is in fact based on a comprehensive theory of learning and development and is known as the Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) put forward by Kolb (1984). As name displays, it has to do with experiential learning process and de-emphasizes the fixed learning parameters (Turesky & Gallagher, 2011). In this theory, experience plays the most important role in the learning / understanding of human beings and development. ELT views learning as "the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience and results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience" (Kolb, 1984, p. 41). The Original ELT Model proposed by Kolb (1984) displays two models of gaining experience, that is, Concrete Experience (CE) and Abstract Conceptualization (AC) as well as two modes of transforming experience, including Reflective Observation (RO) and Active Experimentation (AE). Previous studies on KLSI versions 1-3.1 highlighted four LS including Diverging, Assimilating, Converging, and Accommodating. Further empirical and clinical studies over the



past years have shown that the original four LS types can be refined into a nine LS that could better define the unique patterns of individual learning styles and decrease the ambiguities represented by borderline in the old four style typology (Boyatzis & Mainemelis, 2000; Erickmann et al., 2004; Kolb & Kolb, 2005a; 2005b).

Learners must be aware of their learning styles in order to be motivated to create the other learning styles (Gyeong & Myung, 2008). The LSI is not a criterion-referenced test and is not usually used for the purpose of prediction, selection, placement, etc. Such measurement is based on a single test score that runs counter to the ELT which focuses on the individual uniqueness. The purpose of LSI is to raise learners' understanding of their learning from experience. By increasing awareness of how the individuals learn, learners' capacity of their learning process will be enhanced and they would be able to monitor and choose the most appropriate learning approaches under various circumstances. By exposing the learners to different learning styles, raising their consciousness and talking about those learning styles, the educators could pave the way for them to create the best path for themselves along with the learning process. That is why the inventory is not regarded as a test, but preferably as an experience to understand how an individual learns best. It is crystal clear that the score obtained from the inventory should not be treated as absolute but rather a starting point to explore how an individual learns best. Rogers (2009) emphasized the importance of awareness of learning styles and believed that it can help the learners recognize their strengths, accept their weak points, and work more efficiently with other peers in group.

### **Different types of Learning Styles**

There are numerous learning styles in the literature and the differences among all these learning styles lie in the platform in which learning occurs. Kolb and Kolb (2013) believe that if learning is to take place, it needs a space. This space is not solely limited to the physical environments but rather it is multidimensional. These dimensions consist of physical, cultural, institutional, social, and psychological features according to Kolb and Kolb (2013).

The learning styles themselves have been defined differently by many scholars in the course of time. Shuell (1986) confirms that learning styles refer to different ways individuals usually use to process and organize information confronting the social and / or environmental stimuli. Lohri-Posey (2003) proposed that "learning styles indicate an individual's preferential focus on different types of information, the different ways of perceiving information, and the rate of understanding information" (p. 54). Lucas and Corpuz (2007) believe that learning styles describe an individual's mode of thinking, remembering, or problem solving. Abante et al. (2014) relate learning styles to the variations in one's ability to accumulate and assimilate information. They add individuals' learning styles are the methods that enable them to gather and use knowledge in the most appropriate manner. The new KLSI 4.0 introduced by Kolb and Kolb (2013) representing nine style types described briefly as hereunder:

The *Initiating style* deals with experiences and situations. It involves active experimentation (AE) and concrete experience (CE).

The **Experiencing** style is characterized by the ability to find meaning from deep involvement in experience. It draws on concrete experience (CE) while balancing active experimentation (AE) and reflective observation (RO).

The **Imagining** style refers to imagining possibilities by observing and reflecting on experiences. It combines the learning steps of concrete experience (CE) and reflective observation (RO).

The **Reflecting** style relates to connecting experience and ideas through sustained reflection. It draws on reflective observation (RO) while balancing concrete experience (CE) and abstract conceptualization (AC).

The **Analyzing** style deals with integrating ideas into concise models and systems through reflection. It combines reflective observation (RO) and abstract conceptualization (AC).

The **Thinking** style refers to disciplined involvement in abstract reasoning and logical reasoning. It draws on abstract conceptualization (AC) while balancing active experimentation (AE) and reflective observation (RO).

The **Deciding** style relates to using theories and models to decide on problem solutions and courses of action. It combines abstract conceptualization (AC) and active experimentation (AE).

The **Acting** style is a strong motivation for goal directed action that integrates people and tasks. It draws on active experimentation (AE) while balancing concrete experience (CE) and abstract conceptualization (AC).

The **Balancing** style balances the experience, conceptualization, experimentation, and observation.

As is clear all the LS types can be represented on the two dimensions of Abstract Conceptualization-Concrete Experience and Active Experimentation-Reflective Observation as confirmed by Kolb and Kolb (2013).

### **Empirical Perspectives**

There are various studies that have touched upon questionnaire validation in different fields of study in education. Yasar and Cogenli (2013) analyzed the validity and reliability of inventories that were used in program evaluation studies. They found content validity and Cronbach Alpha Coefficient have been furnished in almost all inventories. They also added there were many inventories that have been applied with no validity and reliability studies. Mohamad et al. (2014) developed three sets of questionnaires including Index of Learning Style (ILS), Students' Perception in Cognitive Dimension (SPCD), and students' Cognitive Mastery Achievement Test (CMAT). They assessed the validity and reliability of these questionnaires and found the values of reliability based on Cronbach Alpha lied within appropriate value ranges. The construct and content validity were also satisfactory according to the outcomes. Alvarado et al. (2016) validated a questionnaire to measure research skills with engineering students. Questionnaire validation was performed by literature review, semantic and content validation by

experts from three Latin American universities finishing with a factorial and reliability validation. The instrument was applied to 150 students (75.3% men and 24.7% women) who were enrolled in the basic level of engineering. The statistical results to validate the questionnaire (that is, validity and reliability) have been significant. Herrmann and Wichmann-Hansen (2017) assessed the validity of quality in PhD processes questionnaire (QPPQ) scales with special attention to factorial, convergent and discriminatory validity. Results were promising concerning the scale's psychometric properties and indicators of validity. In other words, the QPPQ offered itself as a theoretically grounded and thoroughly tested instrument for the purpose of evaluating and developing PhD programs at a local level or for researching PhD process in general.

Ishii et al. (2012) developed and validated the Adult Hypopituitarism Questionnaire (AHQ) as a disease-specific, self-administered questionnaire for evaluation of quality of life (QOL). The AHQ showed good reliability and validity for evaluating QOL in adult patients with hypopituitarism. Yousef (2019) examined the reliability and validity of the learning style construct conceptualized by Honey and Mumford (1986) in educational settings in the United Arab Emirates. The outcomes suggested that the learning styles questionnaire (LSQ) had moderate internal consistency in both samples. The inter-correlations revealed positive (weak to modest) correlations among the four learning styles for both samples, implying a lack of support for the two bipolar dimensions proposed by Kolb (1984). Lugman and Khalid (2021) developed and validated LS scale for E-learners. The items of the scale were generated empirically and were administered to a sample of 360 participants. The 48-item scale based on eight distinctive and interpretable factors appeared through factor analysis. This was the simplest method that could predict the accuracy and comprehensible interpretation of each factor. In addition, each factor was observed based on the theoretical relevance of items and items content. The findings showed that the newly constructed scale was a significant addition to assess learning styles particularly of e-learners in the context of Pakistan.

### **Purpose of the Study**

Kolb and Kolb (2006) believe that education has been interwoven with some kind of variation. In the past, learners were considered as passive recipients of knowledge that education was to provide for them (Guyton, 2000). Many contemporary scholars, by the contrary, believe that this method would be unable to improve students' knowledge as it ignores the individual differences and disregards the share of experience in learning (Bringle & Hatcher, 1999). A shift to experiential learning acknowledges various learning styles (Pedrosa et al., 2006). The individuals' learning styles fall into four distinct categories according to the previous versions of the KLSI Studies and feedback from various learners all over the world confirmed that such categorization was not convenient to them. The reason was that their learning styles might have been classified in a way that did not seem to be true / accurate. It means a person might enjoy two or - at times - more learning styles simultaneously, while these inventories failed to make a distinction between all of them. The nine learning style typology came into existence to address such a problem consequently. It is so while such inventory has not been validated by

other researchers – at least in an Iranian context. This study has been conducted to reduce the confusions introduced by borderline cases in the old four style typology, find out whether this new version is more effective than the previous ones and figure out how it works and suits with different individuals. In fact, the study was designed to conceptualize and validate KLSI v. 4.0 based on experiential learning theory and attempted to provide an adjusted, valid, and easy way to administer an instrument to determine students' learning styles. It also highlighted the fact that learners can possess more than one learning style at the same time. To this end, one main research question was proposed as follows:

Do the hypothesized new nine style types of KLSI v. 4.0 have an acceptable model fit in an Iranian context?

## **Method**

### **Participants**

The sample of participants consisted of 919 university male and female students from IAU East Tehran Branch who was selected through convenient sampling technique. To obtain representative outcomes, the participants of the study were relatively large and drawn randomly to meet the prerequisite for validation study as already confirmed by Bodnar et al. (2013). Nonetheless to say, the participants were homogenous with respect to their levels of English proficiency. Most of them were low intermediate as determined by a test of PET (Preliminary English Test) administered by the researchers at the beginning of the research process.

After checking the data, it was evident that some students left out some items. To remove the ambiguities arisen from the missing data, the researchers had to omit them from the study and 833 participants remained. Their age range was between 18-25 years old. The researchers gave them clear explanations / instructions on how to fill out the questionnaire. They were assured that their responses would be kept confidential and would be used for the research purposes only. The time allocated for completing the questionnaire was between 25-30 minutes. All the participants were requested to sign an ethics consent form.

### **Instrumentation**

Based on ELT and KLSI 4.0, the researchers of this study designed a learning style questionnaire including sixty-six items based on nine style types suggested by Kolb and Kolb (2013). The scale was devised to detect / evaluate the Iranian EFL learners' LS in processing / organizing information, recognizing mode of thinking, remembering, or problem solving. Scale items were collected from two sources: the guide to the KLSI 4.0 (Kolb & Kolb, 2013) and semi-structured interviews with the Iranian EFL learners. The researchers used and adapted some items from the validated questionnaires that have been proved to have acceptable psychometric features. This procedure is strongly recommended by Dornyei and Taguchi (2010) as an important technique for item generation. Students' semi-

structured interview was another main source used for item generation in this study. The researchers followed Dornyei and Taguchi (2010) instructions and involved the learners in the item generation procedures to enhance the quality of item pool. Fifty students were chosen to have a 25-30-minute interview about their LS. Analysis of the transcription provided some information that aided the researchers to devise items for the new scale. The nine style types of LSI were developed with a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 6 (always true).

### **Data Collection Procedure**

Learning styles are assumed to guarantee learners' success and are usually associated with some dynamics. Students might adopt various learning styles under different circumstances. KLSI 4.0 (translated versions) was administered to the participants. The respondents were asked to answer the questionnaires at their own pace. They were permitted to ask for any ambiguities while replying the questionnaires. Once all the required data were collected in-person, they were transformed into codes and then entered into SPSS v. 24 program.

### **Data Analysis**

Questionnaire validation is an important procedure used for assessing the usefulness of instruments as already confirmed by Dornyei and Taguchi (2010). In the following paragraphs, the researchers present relevant procedures to estimate Reliability and Validity of the nine style types of KLSI v. 4.0:

#### ***Reliability***

The researchers estimated Cronbach's alpha as the basic criterion of reliability for the large sample of the participants ( $n = 833$ ) as it could yield an accurate estimate of internal consistency according to Brown (2001).

#### ***Validity***

To examine the validity of the questionnaire, the following procedures were met:

- To examine *Face Validity* (whether the questionnaire had an appropriate look to the respondents), the researchers asked some respondents who were quite similar to the participants to answer the questions and make judgements about them. An interview was also carried out by 15 Iranian EFL learners to assess whether the items were readable, clear and appropriate due to the length. Three items were paraphrased and one item was deleted at this step.

- To evaluate *Content Validity* (whether the content of the questionnaire lies compatible with the theoretical basis of what it was supposed to measure), the researchers asked some TEFL experts to go through all items and give technical

comments about them. They were supposed to evaluate wording, consistency of construct and item relevance as well as the theoretical rationale of the questionnaire.

- To assess *Construct Validity* (whether the questionnaire could measure whatever construct it was supposed to measure), Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was applied. As Mueller and Hancock (2008) propose, this is a statistical method that is used in the development of an instrument and / or approval of its subscales.

## **Results**

The results of this study fall into two distinct parts as hereunder:

### **The Results of the Initial Piloting of the Questionnaire**

At this stage, the KLSI 4.0 was administered to 350 participants to see how it worked in reality. The outcomes were analyzed and reported through two phases briefly discussed as below:

#### **Confirmatory Factor Analysis**

To investigate the degree to which the nine-factor LSI might fit the data, Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was utilized to evaluate the hypothesized nine-factor structure of LSI. In fact, the CFA is usually used to examine the relationships between the items and factors as well as the relationship among the factors themselves. Such relationships need to be empirically validated as already confirmed by Viswanathan (2005). The maximum likelihood method was applied to estimate the features involved in the nine-factor measurement model. The variance-covariance matrix was applied to carry out CFA. This CFA was conducted by exploiting Version 22 of IBM AMOS statistical program (Arbuckle, 2013). Before implementing CFA, all its statistical assumptions and considerations were taken into account. The assumption of normality was considered by investigating univariate normality and multivariate normality. The assumption of univariate normality was checked by examining all the skewness and kurtosis values of indicators of the nine constructs and all of them were between -3 and +3, and -8 and +8, respectively (Kline, 2016). Multivariate normality was inspected using Mardia's normalized multivariate value which was 2.42, showing the tenability of multivariate normality (Mardia, 1974). Also, as model estimation in SEM is very sensitive to missing values and outliers, the data was checked for these values and 12 missing values were deleted listwise (less than 1% of data). Further, no univariate or multivariate outliers were found in the dataset. The descriptive statistics of LSI scale was presented in Table 1.

**Table 1**  
*Descriptive Statistics of Nine-Factor KLSI 4.0 (N = 350)*

|     | Mean | Std. D | Skewness | Kurtosis   |       |            |
|-----|------|--------|----------|------------|-------|------------|
|     |      |        |          | Std. Error |       | Std. Error |
| i1  | 4.03 | 1.13   | -0.64    | 0.08       | 0.13  | 0.17       |
| i2  | 3.17 | 1.27   | -0.05    | 0.08       | -0.87 | 0.17       |
| i3  | 4.02 | 1.19   | -0.50    | 0.08       | -0.08 | 0.17       |
| i4  | 3.44 | 1.32   | -0.15    | 0.08       | -0.85 | 0.17       |
| i5  | 4.58 | 1.06   | -0.72    | 0.08       | 0.41  | 0.17       |
| i6  | 4.61 | 1.04   | -0.75    | 0.08       | 0.60  | 0.17       |
| i7  | 3.99 | 1.01   | -0.47    | 0.08       | 0.40  | 0.17       |
| i8  | 3.89 | 1.23   | -0.35    | 0.08       | -0.36 | 0.17       |
| i9  | 4.31 | 1.28   | -0.70    | 0.08       | 0.12  | 0.17       |
| i10 | 3.45 | 1.29   | -0.09    | 0.08       | -0.67 | 0.17       |
| i11 | 4.19 | 1.19   | -0.55    | 0.08       | -0.17 | 0.17       |
| i12 | 4.81 | 1.00   | -1.08    | 0.08       | 1.52  | 0.17       |
| i13 | 3.27 | 1.33   | -0.05    | 0.08       | -0.88 | 0.17       |
| i14 | 4.48 | 1.10   | -0.63    | 0.08       | 0.13  | 0.17       |
| i15 | 4.90 | 0.98   | -0.98    | 0.08       | 1.21  | 0.17       |
| i16 | 3.80 | 1.38   | -0.30    | 0.08       | -0.60 | 0.17       |
| i17 | 4.87 | 0.93   | -0.91    | 0.08       | 1.09  | 0.17       |
| i18 | 4.44 | 1.05   | -0.50    | 0.08       | 0.25  | 0.17       |
| i19 | 4.41 | 1.03   | -0.53    | 0.08       | 0.20  | 0.17       |
| i20 | 4.13 | 1.35   | -0.39    | 0.08       | -0.67 | 0.17       |
| i21 | 4.13 | 1.10   | -0.38    | 0.08       | -0.03 | 0.17       |
| i22 | 4.23 | 0.86   | -0.76    | 0.08       | 1.89  | 0.17       |
| i23 | 4.29 | 0.95   | -0.57    | 0.08       | 0.69  | 0.17       |
| i24 | 4.42 | 1.10   | -0.57    | 0.08       | 0.20  | 0.17       |
| i25 | 4.56 | 0.89   | -0.71    | 0.08       | 1.12  | 0.17       |
| i26 | 3.34 | 1.51   | -0.11    | 0.08       | -1.05 | 0.17       |
| i27 | 3.28 | 1.32   | 0.12     | 0.08       | -0.67 | 0.17       |
| i28 | 4.44 | 1.01   | -0.65    | 0.08       | 0.31  | 0.17       |
| i29 | 4.80 | 1.15   | -0.88    | 0.08       | 0.36  | 0.17       |
| i30 | 4.29 | 1.11   | -0.49    | 0.08       | -0.04 | 0.17       |
| i31 | 4.45 | 1.08   | -0.58    | 0.08       | 0.06  | 0.17       |
| i32 | 4.25 | 1.07   | -0.68    | 0.08       | 0.38  | 0.17       |
| i33 | 4.01 | 1.23   | -0.52    | 0.08       | -0.21 | 0.17       |
| i34 | 4.32 | 1.17   | -0.56    | 0.08       | -0.08 | 0.17       |
| i35 | 4.00 | 1.12   | -0.57    | 0.08       | 0.16  | 0.17       |

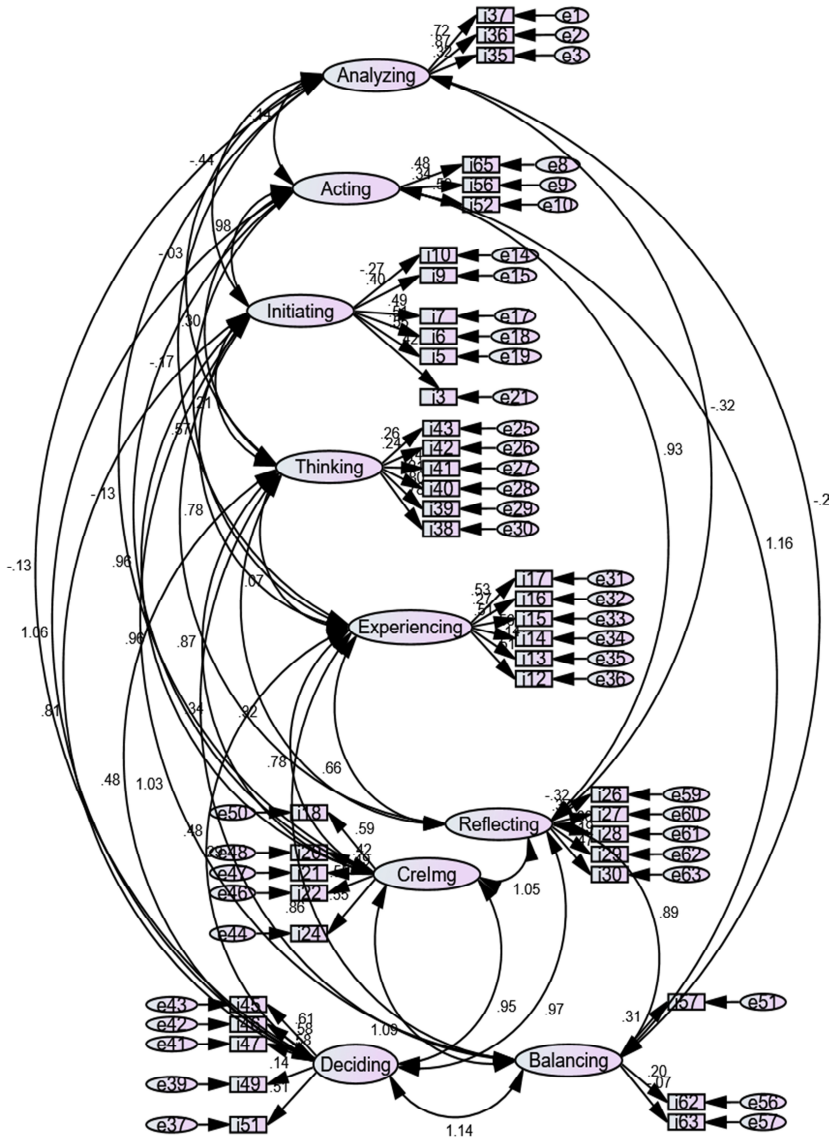
|     | Mean | Std. D | Skewness | Kurtosis   |       |            |
|-----|------|--------|----------|------------|-------|------------|
|     |      |        |          | Std. Error |       | Std. Error |
| i36 | 3.65 | 1.40   | -0.18    | 0.08       | -0.80 | 0.17       |
| i37 | 3.21 | 1.35   | 0.11     | 0.08       | -0.72 | 0.17       |
| i38 | 3.55 | 1.56   | -0.13    | 0.08       | -1.03 | 0.17       |
| i39 | 3.49 | 1.40   | -0.14    | 0.08       | -0.75 | 0.17       |
| i40 | 4.27 | 1.05   | -0.60    | 0.08       | 0.39  | 0.17       |
| i41 | 4.61 | 1.03   | -0.72    | 0.08       | 0.40  | 0.17       |
| i42 | 3.14 | 1.44   | 0.23     | 0.08       | -0.79 | 0.17       |
| i43 | 2.94 | 1.31   | 0.17     | 0.08       | -0.82 | 0.17       |
| i44 | 4.16 | 1.18   | -0.65    | 0.08       | -0.10 | 0.17       |
| i45 | 4.27 | 1.06   | -0.72    | 0.08       | 0.44  | 0.17       |
| i46 | 4.99 | 1.04   | -1.14    | 0.08       | 1.27  | 0.17       |
| i47 | 4.37 | 1.25   | -0.65    | 0.08       | 0.00  | 0.17       |
| i48 | 4.13 | 1.13   | -0.37    | 0.08       | 0.08  | 0.17       |
| i49 | 4.21 | 1.38   | -0.70    | 0.08       | -0.12 | 0.17       |
| i50 | 3.73 | 1.20   | -0.31    | 0.08       | -0.32 | 0.17       |
| i51 | 3.80 | 1.00   | -0.33    | 0.08       | 0.11  | 0.17       |
| i52 | 4.95 | 0.98   | -0.99    | 0.08       | 1.14  | 0.17       |
| i53 | 4.75 | 1.00   | -0.73    | 0.08       | 0.66  | 0.17       |
| i54 | 4.32 | 1.11   | -0.61    | 0.08       | 0.25  | 0.17       |
| i55 | 4.18 | 1.19   | -0.36    | 0.08       | -0.24 | 0.17       |
| i56 | 4.27 | 1.17   | -0.63    | 0.08       | 0.11  | 0.17       |
| i57 | 4.21 | 1.01   | -0.43    | 0.08       | 0.35  | 0.17       |
| i58 | 5.01 | 0.92   | -0.95    | 0.08       | 1.30  | 0.17       |
| i59 | 4.36 | 1.01   | -0.35    | 0.08       | -0.08 | 0.17       |
| i60 | 3.40 | 1.22   | -0.33    | 0.08       | -0.40 | 0.17       |
| i61 | 2.52 | 1.36   | 0.54     | 0.08       | -0.67 | 0.17       |
| i62 | 4.47 | 1.24   | -0.88    | 0.08       | 0.29  | 0.17       |
| i63 | 2.48 | 1.50   | 0.61     | 0.08       | -0.79 | 0.17       |
| i64 | 4.29 | 1.19   | -0.61    | 0.08       | 0.13  | 0.17       |
| i65 | 3.76 | 1.20   | -0.10    | 0.08       | -0.50 | 0.17       |
| i66 | 2.88 | 1.31   | 0.28     | 0.08       | -0.68 | 0.17       |

### Complete Structural Model

In order to specify the model fit and to determine the associations between the factors, the full structural model was drawn in Version 22 of IBM AMOS to yield results for the analysis. Figure 1 demonstrates the complete structural model:



**Figure 1**  
*Nine-Factor Correlated Model of KLSI 4.0*



Non-surprisingly, the model did not indicate an acceptable fit according to criteria under examination including GFI, PGFI, RMSEA, and SRMR. It was not surprising as there was high correlation between some of the nine factors under the broad construct of LS. By re-checking the items of each factor, it was evident that

three factors had the capability to be combined as they evaluated almost the same traits. These three factors were detected by the researchers and some TEFL experts after careful examination of the analyzed data and in consultation with the authorized statistician in this field. The factors displaying high degree of correlation were *Initiating / Deciding*, *Experiencing / Acting*, and *Analyzing / Thinking*. As mentioned earlier, they showed great overlapping, high degree of correlation and in essence, they examined the same traits. The researchers under the supervision of the statistician in charge came to conclusion to merge these factors and run the model again.

### **The Results of the Adjusted Main Study of the Questionnaire**

After careful investigation, some items were proved to have the same nature (assessing the same traits) and thus excluded from the KLSI 4.0. The modified KLSI 4.0 led to 30 items six-factor LSI. The modified six-factor LSI was administered to 833 participants of the main study. The findings are worth heeding within two statistical phases as below:

#### **Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)**

To investigate the degree to which the modified six-factor LSI might fit the data, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using structural equation modelling (SEM) was utilized. As mentioned earlier, the CFA is usually used to examine the relationships between the items and factors as well as the relationship among the factors themselves. Such relationships need to be empirically validated as already confirmed by Viswanathan (2005). The maximum likelihood method was applied to estimate the features involved in the six-factor measurement model. The variance-covariance matrix was applied to carry out CFA. This CFA was conducted by exploiting Version 22 of IBM AMOS statistical program (Arbuckle, 2013). Before implementing CFA, all its statistical assumptions and considerations were taken into account. The assumption of normality was considered by investigating univariate normality and multivariate normality. The assumption of univariate normality was checked by examining all the skewness and kurtosis values of indicators of the nine constructs and all of them were between -3 and +3, and -8 and +8, respectively (Kline, 2016). Multivariate normality was inspected using Mardia's normalized multivariate value which was 2.42, showing the tenability of multivariate normality (Mardia, 1974). Also, as model estimation in SEM is very sensitive to missing values and outliers, the data was checked for these values and 12 missing values were deleted leastwise (less than 1% of data). Further, no univariate or multivariate outliers were found in the dataset. The descriptive statistics of LSI scale was presented in Table 2.

**Table 2**  
*Descriptive Statistics of Modified Six-Factor KLSI 4.0 (N = 833)*

| Indicator | Mean  | Std. D | Skewness |            | Kurtosis |            |
|-----------|-------|--------|----------|------------|----------|------------|
|           | value | value  | value    | Std. Error | value    | Std. Error |
| i1        | 2.94  | 1.31   | 0.17     | 0.08       | -0.82    | 0.17       |
| i2        | 3.14  | 1.44   | 0.23     | 0.08       | -0.79    | 0.17       |
| i3        | 4.61  | 1.03   | -0.72    | 0.08       | 0.40     | 0.17       |
| i4        | 4.27  | 1.05   | -0.60    | 0.08       | 0.39     | 0.17       |
| i5        | 3.49  | 1.40   | -0.14    | 0.08       | -0.75    | 0.17       |
| i6        | 3.55  | 1.56   | -0.13    | 0.08       | -1.03    | 0.17       |
| i7        | 4.87  | 0.93   | -0.91    | 0.08       | 1.09     | 0.17       |
| i8        | 3.80  | 1.38   | -0.30    | 0.08       | -0.60    | 0.17       |
| i9        | 4.90  | 0.98   | -0.98    | 0.08       | 1.21     | 0.17       |
| i10       | 4.48  | 1.10   | -0.63    | 0.08       | 0.13     | 0.17       |
| i11       | 3.27  | 1.33   | -0.05    | 0.08       | -0.88    | 0.17       |
| i12       | 4.81  | 1.00   | -1.08    | 0.08       | 1.52     | 0.17       |
| i13       | 4.44  | 1.05   | -0.50    | 0.08       | 0.25     | 0.17       |
| i14       | 4.13  | 1.35   | -0.39    | 0.08       | -0.67    | 0.17       |
| i15       | 4.13  | 1.10   | -0.38    | 0.08       | -0.03    | 0.17       |
| i16       | 4.23  | 0.86   | -0.76    | 0.08       | 1.89     | 0.17       |
| i17       | 4.42  | 1.10   | -0.57    | 0.08       | 0.20     | 0.17       |
| i18       | 3.34  | 1.51   | -0.11    | 0.08       | -1.05    | 0.17       |
| i19       | 3.28  | 1.32   | 0.12     | 0.08       | -0.67    | 0.17       |
| i20       | 4.44  | 1.01   | -0.65    | 0.08       | 0.31     | 0.17       |
| i21       | 4.80  | 1.15   | -0.88    | 0.08       | 0.36     | 0.17       |
| i22       | 4.29  | 1.11   | -0.49    | 0.08       | -0.04    | 0.17       |
| i23       | 3.80  | 1.00   | -0.33    | 0.08       | 0.11     | 0.17       |
| i24       | 4.21  | 1.38   | -0.70    | 0.08       | -0.12    | 0.17       |
| i25       | 4.37  | 1.25   | -0.65    | 0.08       | 0.00     | 0.17       |
| i26       | 4.99  | 1.04   | -1.14    | 0.08       | 1.27     | 0.17       |
| i27       | 4.27  | 1.06   | -0.72    | 0.08       | 0.44     | 0.17       |
| i28       | 4.21  | 1.01   | -0.43    | 0.08       | 0.35     | 0.17       |
| i29       | 4.47  | 1.24   | -0.88    | 0.08       | 0.29     | 0.17       |
| i30       | 2.48  | 1.50   | 0.61     | 0.08       | -0.79    | 0.17       |

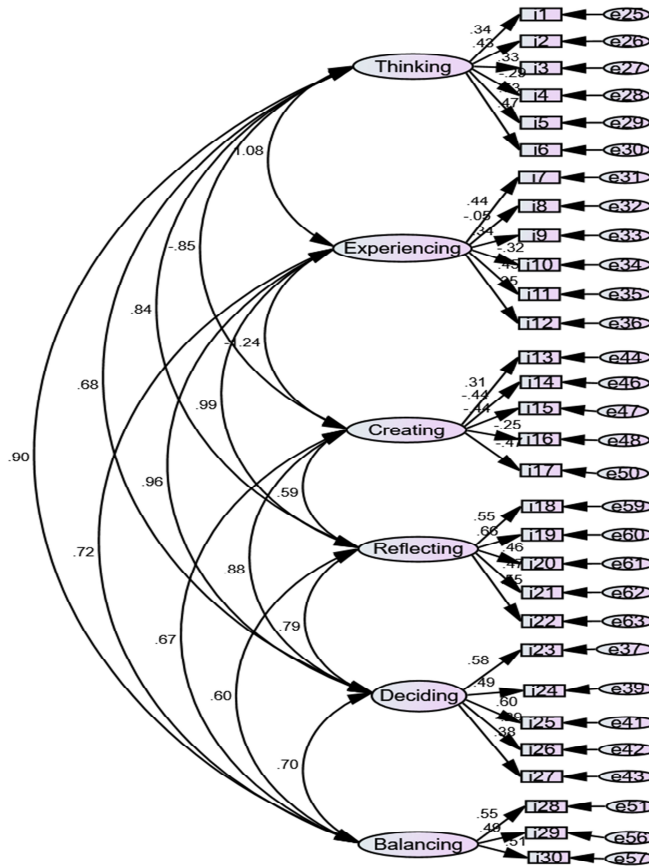
Note: i = Indicators of Constructs

### Complete Structural Model

In order to specify the model fit and to determine the associations between the factors, the full structural model was drawn in Version 22 of IBM AMOS to yield results for the analysis. Figure 2 demonstrates the complete structural model:

**Figure 2**

*Six-Factor Correlated Model of Modified KLSI 4.0*



*Note.* All item parameter estimates and latent variables correlations were significant ( $P < .001$ )

Table 3 demonstrates the fit indices for the full structural model:

**Table 3**

*Fit Statistics of the Structural Model*

|             | $\chi^2$ (CMIN/DF) | df  | RMSEA | GFI | PGFI | SRMR |
|-------------|--------------------|-----|-------|-----|------|------|
| KLSI v. 4.0 | 4.05               | 380 | 060   | 90  | 45   | 0.07 |

While there is no fixed and / or agreed-upon guidelines with respect to which fit indices are necessary to be reported (Kline, 2013), the researchers reported the following fit indices to examine the model fitness:

- Chi squared ( $\chi^2$ ) test (CMIN / DF)
- The Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI)
- The Parsimony Goodness-of-Fit Index (PGFI)
- The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)
- The Standardized Root Mean Square of Residual (SRMR)

The structural model showed good fit to the data:

- Chi square = 1540.19, df = 380, p = .000 (CMIN / DF = 4.05)
- GFI = 0.90
- PGFI = 0.45
- RMSEA = 0.060 (90% CI: 0.055-0.064)
- SRMR = 0.07

As was quoted above, the first fit indices were the ratio of Chi-square ( $X^2$ ) to the degree of freedom (*df*). As Chi-Square test of model fit is very sensitive to the sample size and it yields a significant result when a sample size is big,  $X^2 / df$  was reported to address that drawback of Chi-square test, with values between 2 and 5 indexing an acceptable model fit (Meyers et al., 2013). Such value was 4 in this study, signifying an acceptable fit. Then two residual fit indices which investigate the extent to which a model is successful in reproducing observed correlation / covariance matrix including root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), and standardized root mean square of residual (SRMR) were reported. The RMSEA of above model was .06, indicating a good fit with regard to the model parsimony when model complexity is considered. This showed, to some extent, that a good model setup was established, and there was a good balance between model parsimony and model complexity. SRMR value which was also indicative of a good model fit was .07, which was lower than the benchmark value of .08 (Hu & Bentler, 1999). Two absolute fit indices including Goodness-of-Fit (GFI) and Parsimony Goodness-of-Fit (PGFI) which are useful in justifying the model complexity (i.e., the number of estimated parameters) were also examined. As was observed, GFI (it is conceptually similar to  $R^2$  value in multiple regression) which shows to what extent variance in observed correlation / covariance matrix is accounted for by the

imposed model, was a close to the recommended value of .95 (Byrne, 2016), and PGFI approximated the recommended value of .50 (Byrne, 2016; Meyers et al., 2013).

To recap, the modified six-factor correlated model of KLSI v. 4.0 revealed an acceptable model fit ( $X^2 = 1540.19$ ,  $df = 380$ ;  $p < .001$ ;  $X^2 / df = 4.05$ ; GFI = .90; AGFI = .45; RMSEA = .06 [.05, .06]; SRMR = .07). The pictorial representation of the model accompanying with all the standardized regression weights generated using maximum likelihood estimation method (ML) were given in Figure 2. In addition, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient values of all the latent constructs were estimated (Analyzing / Thinking  $\alpha = .83$ ; Experiencing / Acting  $\alpha = .72$ ; Creating  $\alpha = .76$ ; Reflecting  $\alpha = .77$ ; Initiating / Deciding  $\alpha = .80$ ; Balancing  $\alpha = .74$ ) and all of them were greater than the benchmark value of .7, indicating a fairly acceptable internal consistency of the modified six-factor of KLSI 4.0.

### **Discussion**

To enhance experiential learning in a way admitting the distinctive LS of individuals, the instructors need to measure their students' learning styles as efficiently as possible. However, the scales that have been used in the past enjoyed some restrictions. Although the initial version of KLSI was somehow brief and to the point, lack of reliability and validity limited the implications. By developing a new LSI, this study was intended to improve the previous version of KLSI. The assessment of learning style based on the new version allowed the students to choose more than one learning style at the same time. To this end, the validation procedures of CFA with reliability and validity estimates were examined. In devising the questionnaire, utmost care was given to avoid long / ambiguous sentences, complex / confusing wordings, double-barreled / unclear items, etc. This is the first instrument devised to allow the educators to collect information from respondents about their LS on modified-six-style typology in an Iranian context to the researchers' knowledge. CFA confirmed that the subscales of the new six style type of KLSI v. 4.0 were conceptually related to each other under the broad construct of LS. In this study, reliability tested by internal consistency and validity examined through face, content, and construct validity were satisfactory. With respect to face validity, the researchers asked some respondents who were quite similar to the participants to answer the questions and make judgements about them. By testing face validity, it was found out that the items were quite important for producing meaningful results. The content validity deals with the representativeness of the subject matter. TEFL experts were asked to test whether the items assess the relevant content. They came to the conclusion that content validity evaluation was positive. Content validity yielded more rigorous statistical justifications than does the face validity. Construct validity displaying the ability of an instrument to test an abstract concept (construct) was also evaluated through CFA.

Reliability which denotes to the degree to which an evaluating instrument creates stable and consistent outcomes over time / occasion was also examined. In

testing the reliability, the new six style types of KLSI v. 4.0 were found to have high internal consistency. The values of Cronbach alpha showed all the items in the factor were highly correlated with each other confirming the fact that random errors were minimized in the factor. In other words, the research instrument proved to comprise acceptable internal consistency. In essence, as confirmed by Kumar et al. (2011), while there is a predominant LS, learners must be emphasized to incorporate alternative styles under given circumstances. Newly-developed KLSI aimed at encouraging the students to use other LSs simultaneously. It allows them to be familiar with different LSs and it might reinforce and facilitate their learning. The results of this study are consistent with those reported by Manolis et al. (2013). They emphasized the revolutionary concept of LSs and the fact LSs move along a continuum. The outcomes are also in line with Pfeifer and Borozan (2011) that postulated LSs are not static rather they are dynamic and are inclined to constant variation. The findings are also compatible with those quoted by O'Connor and Yballe (2007). They viewed LSs as unstable properties that are vulnerable to change.

### **Conclusion and Implications**

The results of the study indicated that there was a significant correlation among six subscales / factors which measured the construct of LS. Thus the factors correlated significantly with each other. This confirms that the instrument has good construct validity. The findings also show that the questionnaire can be a clear and valid research tool. Devising the questionnaire will provide new data in this area and thus contributes to education. An important pedagogical implication is that LSI is applicable to other fields of study as well. These data are useful to extend teachers' understanding of their students' confidence as they may be aware of their right LS. Educators must know about the students' learning styles in order to adjust their own teaching methods and enhance the students' learning as much as possible (Kolb & Kolb, 2006). Having assured students are aware of their true LS, EFL practitioners are also encouraged to design instructional activities as per students' true LS. The EFL instructors will be able to know about LS that is preferred by the learners and allow them to customize the style of teaching / learning according to their students' tastes. Analysis of each item appearing in KLSI 4.0 having the high reliability shows KLSI 4.0 can identify students' LS appropriately. EFL teachers will be also motivated to devise new teaching methods for detecting, challenging, and alerting less knowledgeable students to transform them to more competent and self-confident ones (Teng, 2016). In spite of the satisfactory outcomes generated from this study, some limitations were also recognized as follows:

- The instrument did not cover all the proposed dimensions of LS arisen from ELT due to the fact that integration of all dimensions could result in developing an instrument with many items, making it difficult to be used / administered.
- Validity and reliability of the instrument were evaluated just in one Iranian university. Thus the generalization of the findings should be done with outmost care.

Further studies are still required to adapt items and extend the results to other context with other participants with different backgrounds, proficiency levels and occupations. Comparing LSI to similar tools to determine the concurrent validity would be also recommended for future research studies. Bias analysis among participants was not taken into account in this study either, which is recommended as well.

### References

- Abante, M. E. R., Almendral, B. C., Manansala, J. E., & Manibo, J. (2014). Learning styles and factors affecting the learning of general engineering students. *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development*, 3(1), 16-27. <https://doi.org/10.6007/IJARPED/v3-i1/500>
- Alvarado, F. C., Leon, M. P., & Colon, A. M. O. (2016). Design and validation of a questionnaire to measure research skills: Experience with engineering students. *Journal of Technology and Science Education*, 6(3), 219-233. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3926/jotse.227>
- Arbuckle, J. L. (2013). *IBM SPSS Amos 22 user's guide*. Amos Development Corporation. URL: <http://amosdevelopment.com>.
- Bodnar, M., Namiesnik, J., & Konieczka, P. (2013). Validation of a sampling procedure. *Trends in Analytical Chemistry*, 51, 117-126. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.trac.2013.06.011>
- Boyatzis, R. E., & Mainemelis, C. (2000). *An empirical study of pluralism of learning and adaptive styles in a MBA program*. (Working paper). Department of Organizational Behavior, Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, OH.
- Brangle, R. G., & Hatcher, J. A. (1999). Reflection in service learning: Making meaning or experience. *Educational Horizons*, 77(4), 179-85. <https://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/slceeval/23>
- Brown, J. D. (2001). *Using surveys in language programs*. Cambridge University Press.
- Byrne, B. M. (2016). *Structural equation modelling with AMOS: Basic concepts, applications, and programming (3rd ed.)*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315757421>
- Dornyei, Z. & Taguchi, T. (2010). *Questionnaires in second language research: Construction, administration, and processing*. Routledge.
- Eickmann, P., Kolb, A.Y., & Kolb, D. A. (2004). Designing learning. In F. Collopy & R. Boland (Eds.), *Managing as designing: Creating a new vocabulary for management education and research* (pp. 241-247). Stanford University Press.
- Fletcher, S., Potts, J., & Ballinger, R. (2008). The pedagogy of integrated coastal management. *The Geographical Journal*, 174(4), 374-386. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40205256>



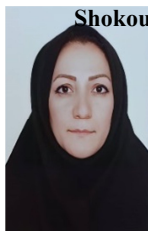
- Guyton, E. (2000). Social justice in teacher education. *The Educational Forum*, 64, 108–114. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131720008984738>
- Gyeong, J. A., & Myung, S. Y. (2008). Critical thinking and learning styles of nursing students at the baccalaureate nursing program in Korea. *Contemporary Nurse*, 29(1), 100–109. <https://doi.org/10.5172/conu.673.29.1.100>
- Herrmann, K. J., & Wichmann-Hansen, G. (2017). Validation of the quality in PhD processes questionnaire. *Studies in Graduate and Postdoctoral Education*, 8, 2, 189-204. <https://doi.org/10.1108/SGPE-D-17-00017>
- Honey, P. & Mumford, A. (1986). *Using your learning styles*, 2nd ed. Peter Honey.
- Hu, L. T., & Bentler, P. M. (1999). Cutoff criteria for fit indexes in covariance structure analysis: Conventional criteria versus new alternatives. *Structural Equation Modeling*, 6(1), 1–55. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10705519909540118>
- Ishii, H., Shimatsu, A., Okimura, Y., Tanaka, T., Hizuka, N., Kaji, H., Hanew, K., Oki, Y., Yamashiro, S., Takano, K., & Chiharak, K. (2012). Development and validation of a new questionnaire assessing quality of life in adults with hypopituitarism: Adult hypopituitarism questionnaire (AHQ). *PLoS ONE*, 7(9), 1-9. DOI: 10.1371/journal.pone.0044304
- Kayes, D. C. (2005). Internal validity and reliability of Kolb's learning style inventory version 3 (1999). *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 20(2), 249–257. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10869-005-8262-4>
- Kline, R. B. (2013). *Beyond significance testing: Statistical reform in the behavioral sciences (2nd ed.)*. American Psychological Association.
- Kline, R. B. (2016). *Principles and practice of structural equation modeling (4<sup>th</sup> ed.)*. Guilford.
- Kolb, D. A. (1984). *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development*. Prentice-Hall.
- Kolb, A. Y., & Kolb, D. A. (2005a). Learning styles and learning spaces: Enhancing experiential learning in higher education. *Academy of Management Learning and Education*, 4(2), 193-212. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amle.2005.17268566>
- Kolb, A. Y., & Kolb, D. A. (2005b). *The Kolb learning style inventory 3.1: Technical specifications*. Hay Resources Direct.
- Kolb, A. Y., & Kolb, D. A. (2006). Learning styles and learning spaces: A review of the multidisciplinary application of experiential learning theory in higher education. In R. R. Sims, & S. J. Sims (Eds.), *Learning styles and learning: A key to meeting the accountability demands in education* (pp. 45–92). Nova Science Publishers.
- Kolb, A.Y., & Kolb, D. A. (2013). *The Kolb learning style inventory 4.0: A comprehensive guide to the theory, psychometrics, research on validity and educational applications*. Experience Based Learning System.

- Kumar, L. R., Voralu, K., Pani, S. P., & Sethuraman, K. R. (2011). Association of kinesthetic and read-write learner with deep approach learning and academic achievement. *Can Med Educ Journal*, 2, 23–27. <https://doi.org/10.36834/cmej.36538>
- Laguador, J. M. (2013). Developing students' attitude leading towards a life-changing career. *Educational Research International*, 1(3), 28-33.
- Lohri-Posey, B. (2003). Determining learning style preferences of students. *Nurse Educator*, 28(2), 54-64. <https://doi.org/10.1097/00006223-200303000-00002>
- Lucas, M., & Corpuz, B. (2007). *Facilitating learning: A meta-cognitive process*. Lorimar Publishing.
- Luqman, N. & Khalid, R. (2021). Development and validation of LS scale for E-learners. *SAGE Open*, 11(2), 1-15. <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440211022324>
- Manolis, C., Burns, D., Assudani, R., & Chinta, R. (2013). Assessing experiential learning styles: A methodological reconstruction and validation of the Kolb learning style inventory. *Learning & Individual Differences*, 23(1), 44-52. DOI: 10.1016/j.lindif.2012.10.009
- Mardia, K. V. (1974). Applications of some measures of multivariate skewness and kurtosis in testing normality and robustness studies. *Indian Journal of Statistics*, 37(2), 115–128. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25051892>
- Meyers, L. S., Gamst, G., & Guarino, A. J. (2013). *Applied multivariate research: Design and interpretation (2nd ed.)*. SAGE Publications.
- Mohamad, M. M., Sulaiman, N. L., Sern, L. C., & Salleh, K. M. (2014). Measuring the validity and reliability of research instruments. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 204, 164-171. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.08.129>
- Mueller, R. O., & Hancock, G. R. (2008). Best practices in structural equation modeling. In J. W. Osborne (Ed.), *Best practices in quantitative methods* (pp. 488–508). SAGE Publications. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412995627>
- O'Connor, D., & Yballe, L. (2007). Team leadership: Critical steps to great projects. *Journal of Management Education*, 31(2), 292–312. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1052562905282158>
- Pedrosa de Jesus, H. T., Almeida, P. A., Teixeira-Dias, J. J., & Watts, M. (2006). Students' questions: Building a bridge between Kolb's learning styles and approaches to learning. *Education and Training*, 48(2/3), 97–111 <https://doi.org/10.1108/00400910610651746>
- Pfeifer, S., & Borozan, D. (2011). Fitting Kolb's learning style theory to entrepreneurship learning aims and contents. *International Journal of Business Research*, 11(2), 216–223. URL: <http://www.aibe.org/1555-1296,1554-5466>
- Rogers, K. (2009). A preliminary investigation and analysis of student learning style preferences in further and higher education. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 33(1), 13-21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03098770802638234>

- Santrock, J. (2005). *Psychology essentials 2*. McGraw-Hill.
- Shuell, T. J. (1986). Cognitive conceptions of learning. *Review of Educational Research*, 56, 411-436. <https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543056004411>
- Teng, L. S. (2016). Changes in teachers' beliefs after a professional development project for teaching writing: Two Chinese cases. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 42(1), 106–109. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02607476.2015.1135228>
- Viswanathan, M. (2005). *Measurement error and research design*. SAGE Publications. <https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781412984935>
- Turesky, E. F., & Gallagher, D. (2011). Know thyself: Coaching for leadership using Kolb's experiential learning theory. *Coaching Psychologist*, 7(1), 5–14. URL: <http://www.bps.org/1748-1104>
- Yahya, I. (1998). Wilcoxon and Prosser's factor analysis on Kolb's (1985) LSI data: Reflections and re-analysis. *The British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 68, 281-286. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.2044-8279.1998.tb01290.x>
- Yasar, S., & Cogenli, A. G. (2013). Determining validity and reliability of data gathering instruments used by program evaluation studies in Turkey. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 131, 504-509. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2014.04.156>
- Yousef, D. A. (2019). Exploring the reliability and validity of the learning styles questionnaire (LSQ) in an Arab setting. *Quality Assurance in Education*, 27(4), 446-464. <https://doi.org/10.1108/QAE-10-2018-0113>

### Authors' Biographies

---



**Shokouh Rashvand Semiyari** received her B.A. degree in English Language Translation from Islamic Azad University Central Tehran Branch and her M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in English Language Teaching from Islamic Azad University, Central Tehran Branch and Tabriz Branch, respectively. In 2015, Rashvand joined the Department of English, Islamic Azad University, East Tehran Branch as a lecturer. Since then, she has had over twenty publications on English Teaching and Testing issues in domestic and international journals. She has supervised some MA students. Since 2019, she has also been the Educational Deputy of Humanities.



**Mahnaz Azad** received her B.A. degree in English Language Translation from Islamic Azad University, Central Tehran Branch and her M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in English Language Teaching from Islamic Azad University, Science and Research Branch. In 2016, Azad joined the Department of English, Islamic Azad University, East Tehran Branch as a lecturer. Since then, she has had over twenty publications on English Teaching and Testing issues in domestic and international journals. She has supervised some MA students. Since 2020, she has also been the manager of *Iranian Journal of Learning and Memory*.

---





## **Enhancing English Vocabulary Retention Among Iranian Trainee Teachers Through Literature-Based Interactive Input-Output Tasks**

**Sara Salehpour<sup>1</sup>, Biok Behnam<sup>2,\*</sup>, and Zohreh Seifoori<sup>3</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>*PhD Candidate in TEFL, Tabriz Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tabriz, Iran  
Email: s.salehpour2017@yahoo.com*

<sup>2</sup>*Corresponding author: Associate Professor in TEFL, Department of English, Faculty of Literature and Foreign Languages, Tabriz Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tabriz, Iran  
Email: behnam\_biok@yahoo.com ORCID: 0000-0002-8936-0701*

<sup>3</sup>*Associate Professor in TEFL, Department of English, Faculty of Literature and Foreign Languages, Science and Research Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran  
Email: zseifoori2005@yahoo.com ORCID: 0000-0002-4296-8226*

### **Abstract**

To surmount the obstacles a deficient productive vocabulary retrieval places in the way of EFL teachers, the current study sought to ascertain whether or not involving trainee teachers in interactive input-output activities enhance their vocabulary retention. To this end, a convenience sample including 49 Iranian EFL trainee teachers were recruited to take part in a quasi-experimental pretest-posttest-delayed posttest study. Having been grouped into three comparison groups, the participants were exposed to the same literary texts; however, the differential treatment of the study entailed three different interaction modes (individual, collaborative, and collaborative-cooperative) and two types of input / output processing (non-reciprocal and reciprocal). A repeated measure analysis of covariance (RM ANCOVA) was performed on the participants' achievements in the pre- post- and delayed posttest measures and the results revealed that the two groups involved in literature-based interactive (collaborative and collaborative-cooperative) reciprocal input-output activities showed significantly higher levels of vocabulary retention compared to the group exposed to literature-based individual non-reciprocal input-output tasks. Additionally, contributing to significantly higher levels of long-term retention, the collaborative-cooperative mode of interaction was found to be more effective than the collaborative one. The findings corroborated the need for including literature-based interactive input-output tasks in EFL teacher training curriculum.

*Keywords:* input-output tasks, interactive vocabulary learning, literature-based approach, teacher training course, vocabulary retention

### ARTICLE INFO

Research Article

Received: Sunday, May 16, 2021

Accepted: Thursday, April 19, 2022

Published: Sunday, May 1, 2022

Available Online: Thursday, April 19, 2022

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.22049/jalda.2022.27233.1315>



© The Author(s)

## **Introduction**

Gaining unrestricted access to a rich internally-developed lexical database is undoubtedly a burning ambition of everyone interested in acquiring a good command of a second / foreign language (L2 / FL) knowledge. Such a fierce desire for vocabulary learning, as corroborated theoretically (Cameron, 2001; Lewis, 2000; McCarthy, 1990), may be attributed to the contributory role of vocabulary knowledge in serving a broad range of communicative needs of language users. Functioning as the building blocks of both language comprehension (i.e., reading and listening) and production (i.e., speaking and listening) skills (Chen & Chun, 2008), an in-depth vocabulary knowledge not only serves the learners' general need for language comprehension and use, but also could profit teachers to retain their position of power and authority in today's communicative classrooms.

The prominence of vocabulary in language acquisition and its leading role in facilitating an effective communication have compelled those in charge of language teaching programs to place a special emphasis on vocabulary development tasks / activities. Despite its central position in language teaching / learning curriculums, vocabulary has always been presumed to be a problematic domain the bulk of communication breakdowns could be attributed to (Cook, 2013). To reach a clear realization of the reason behind such deficiency, the discrimination made by Nation (2001) between receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge should be taken into account. Relying upon Nation's (2001) classification, to effectively navigate an L2 / FL-mediated communication, along with adequate receptive vocabulary knowledge to comprehend the interlocutor's message, there is a need for high levels of productive (expressive) vocabulary knowledge to convey the intended message.

As claimed by Min and Hsu (2008), an absolute majority of language users can easily retain a high proportion of newly-learned receptive vocabulary for a relatively long period of time; however, their productive vocabulary knowledge falls into decline within a limited time span. The disequilibrium between receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge, therefore, could account for the majority of communication breakdowns experienced by language users. A workable vocabulary enhancement system, therefore, needs to strike a balance between productive and receptive vocabulary knowledge. The necessity of adopting such a balanced system seems to be of paramount importance in teacher training and apprenticeship programs intended to help trainee teachers to become academically well-versed in language teaching.

Although gaining native-like competence in English vocabulary, as a potentially endless area of language learning, seems to be a faint possibility owing to the lack of authentic material exposure in EFL contexts like Iran, English teachers are in desperate need of an advanced knowledge of productive vocabulary to retain their dominant position in language learning classrooms. Having the chance to deal with many EFL trainee teachers, the authors of the current paper came to the conclusion that trainee teachers involved in academic TEFL training programs, as

future EFL teachers, in spite of possessing a wide repertoire of English vocabulary, could only put a smattering of this knowledge into actual practice while speaking or writing. Relying on a multiplicity of theoretical frameworks (e.g., Krashen's (1977) input hypothesis, Swain's (1985) comprehensible output hypothesis, Rosenblatt's (1978) transactional theory of literary works, and Long's (1981) interaction hypothesis), the current quasi-experimental study set out to explore whether going through a three-tenet cycle of vocabulary learning including iterative exposure to authentic language input, interactive word-processing, and comprehensible language output production could profit Iranian EFL trainee teachers to improve in terms of vocabulary retention.

## **Literature Review**

### **Vocabulary Retention**

The process of vocabulary retrieval, known as "vocabulary retention", is referred to as the ability to retrieve a word from memory after a specific time span (Richards & Schmidt, 2002). This ability, according to Richards and Schmidt (2002), is largely a function of teaching quality, materials quality, and learner motivation. As claimed by Gairns and Redman (1986), although the constant repetition of unknown vocabulary items enables learners to commit new words, and the meaning thereof, to their short-term memory, vocabulary retention, known generally as the ability to effectively retrieve proper vocabulary items from long-term memory, is in need of more elaborate strategies. A large body of research, therefore, has been conducted to delve into the best strategies for committing new words to both long-term and short-term memory. Given the findings of these studies, L2 / FL learners can take advantage of critical reading strategies (Khabiri & Pakzad, 2012), T-coding methods (Sadeghi Beniss & Ehsani Moghadam, 2016) semantic mapping (Nilfroushan, 2012), word list methods (Baleghizadeh & Ashoori, 2010), and mnemonic strategies (Kayaalt, 2018) to boost vocabulary retention. Notwithstanding the fundamental differences between the strategies enumerated above, there is a great deal of common ground between them on the significance of input processing quality in vocabulary retention.

### **Comprehensible Input**

Input, generally defined by Carroll (2001) as the communicatively intended language data either heard or read by language learners, has been attached special significance by many scholars in the field of L2 / FL acquisition (e.g., Ellis, 2007; Ellis & Wulff, 2015; VanPatten, 2004). Nonetheless, they are not unanimous in attaching the same prominence to the role it plays in promoting language acquisition. Such dissension between second language acquisition (SLA) pioneers is easily traceable in different theories that underpin different input-based L2 / FL instruction such as Krashen's (1982) monitor theory, VanPatten's (1996; 2004) model of input processing, the theory of emergentism (Ellis, 2007), and the interaction hypothesis (Gass 2003; Gass & Mackey, 2007). Nonetheless, all the theories enumerated above provided a fertile ground for a major reform of language education system which, according to Ellis (2012), "involves the manipulation of the input that learners are exposed to or are required to process" (p. 285).

What accounts for both L1 and L2 acquisition from Krashen's (1977) point of view is an innate mental structure called language acquisition device (LAD) which is put into action by the sufficient quantity of comprehensible input ( $i+1$ ). Comprehensible input, according to Krashen (1982) is "the only causative variable for SLA" (p. 57) and includes language structures that are beyond learners' current level of competence. Although Krashen's (1977) input hypothesis aroused considerable controversy over the adequacy of comprehensible input per se to develop L2 / FL language knowledge, it was helpful in turning the spotlight on the prominence of input in SLA. Such prominence has triggered numerous studies in the investigation of issues related to the effective type of language learning input. One branch of investigation concentrated on the use of literary texts which can serve as authentic language input for L2 / FL teaching purposes.

Literary texts, as the kind of language which closely reflects the language used by native speakers in real life situations, are rich and natural sources of target language use which basically concern genuine feelings of the writers (Bobkina & Romero, 2014). The richness and authenticity of these texts may account for their superiority over designed (controlled) texts written to allow learners cultivate a particular language skill (Norland & Pruet-Said, 2006). Additionally, literary texts serve as a means of art presentation which, at the same time, allow language use. Such dual function of literary texts would be another reason why designed texts are mainly superseded by literary ones.

### **Comprehensible Output**

Notwithstanding the broad consensus on the significance of comprehensible input, as a vital ingredient in SLA, the input-based instructional methods of L2 / FL teaching fueled controversies among the scholars of the field. One of the persuasive arguments about the input hypothesis has been put forward by White (1987) who believed that the hypothesis underestimates the importance of comprehension difficulties or input incomprehensibility in enhancing the process of SLA through the negative feedback they provide. Swain (1985) was another pioneer who provided empirical evidence that the one-dimensional view on input fails to promote SLA, showing the contributory role of meaningful language production, referred to as *output*, in improving the accurate use of language. In Swain's (1985) view, "comprehensible output is a necessary mechanism of acquisition independent of the role of comprehensible input" (p. 252). This view, labeled as the comprehensible output hypothesis, is characterized by the emphasis placed on language production and compensates for the drawbacks of comprehension-only approaches including the lack of automaticity in language use, overemphasizing semantic processing, underestimating syntactic processing, and incomplete interlanguage systems (Zhang, 2011).

Regarding the specific domain of L2 / FL vocabulary, as pinpointed by Shirzad et al. (2017), most of the instructional methods draw upon one or both of the two deep-rooted hypotheses about input / output consideration: Krashen's (1977) input hypothesis and Swain's (1985) output hypothesis. Nonetheless, there is no empirical evidence whether or not the language pedagogies underpinned by each or



both of the two theories took account of the reciprocal relationship between input and output.

### **Interactive (Collaborative / Cooperative) Language Teaching**

In an attempt to compensate for the inadequacy of comprehensible input, Long (1981) proposed the interaction hypothesis, stating that participation in conversation with native speakers, which is made possible through the modification of interaction, is the necessary and sufficient condition for second language acquisition. The interaction hypothesis attracted the attention of a huge number of scholars in the field of English language teaching (ELT). For instance, Ellis (1991) posited that Long's interaction hypothesis gives prominence to the role of interaction, while not denying nor downgrading the significance of comprehensible input in SLA. The significance of interaction was also underscored by Gass and Mackey (2007) who stated that through interaction, learners' selective attention is focused on problematic features. In other words, through interaction, learners may initially realize whether the way they convey their message differs from the way a native speaker puts it and, as a result, notice that they failed to convey what they wish to get across.

Based on a detailed review of the literature on interactive language teaching / learning, the scientific community appears deeply split on the issue of operationalizing interaction in language learning classrooms as either teacher-learner interaction (e.g., Adams, 2007) or learner-learner interaction (e.g., Gass & Alvarez Torres, 2005). Regardless of the type of interaction, any process through which learners can take advantage of scaffolding provided by other individuals in the classroom is known as an instance of interactive language learning, known also as either collaborative or cooperative language learning. Although a long hard look at the related literature testifies to the interchangeable use of the two terms *collaboration* and *cooperation* to refer to a learner-learner interaction while language learning, the former (collaboration) seems to be a better label for a teacher-learner interaction, owing to its precise definition.

### **Empirical Background to the Study**

In spite of the abundance of empirical data highlighting the significant role of input enhancement methods (e.g., Bisson et al., 2013; Bulan & Kasapoglu, 2021; Gass & Mackey, 2007) output processing methods (e.g., Gass & Selinker, 2008; Hashemi & Kassaian, 2011; Kwon, 2006; Soleimani & Mahmoudabadi, 2014), interactive classroom techniques (e.g., Dalođu & Duzan, 2010; Dobao, 2014; Hoa & Trang, 2020; Motaei et al., 2018; Rezaei Gashti, 2021; Shokouhi & Pishkar, 2015), and the input-output cycle (e.g., Benati, 2017; Kaivanpanah et al., 2020; Pei & Lin, 2020; Shirzad et al., 2017) in FL / L2 vocabulary learning and retention, no study, to the best of the authors' knowledge, has explored the cumulative impact of these factors on English vocabulary retention among trainee teachers. As a novel scientific endeavor, therefore, the current study explored the practicality of enhancing trainee teachers' vocabulary retention through involving them in literature-based interactive input-output tasks. To deeply delve into the domain under investigation, an

interactive task was operationalized as a task entailing either teacher-learner (cooperation) or teacher-learner and learner-learner interaction (collaboration-cooperation). Accordingly, the following research questions were formulated:

1. Does the involvement of Iranian EFL trainee teachers in literature-based collaborative input-output tasks significantly enhance their vocabulary retention?
2. Does the involvement of Iranian EFL trainee teachers in literature-based collaborative-cooperative input-output tasks significantly enhance their vocabulary retention?
3. Is there any significant difference between literature-based collaborative input-output and collaborative-cooperative input-output tasks in enhancing Iranian EFL trainee teachers' vocabulary retention?

## **Method**

### **Participants**

A convenience sample including 49 (28 female and 21 male) Iranian trainee teachers, with an age range from 19 to 37, constituted the participant sample of the study. They were all involved in an English teaching program in either a university (English teaching field) or an institution (teacher training course). The homogeneity of the participating teachers in terms of general English proficiency was ensured by administering a paper-based test of English as a foreign language (PBT TOEFL) prior to the main study. Based on the results, none of the TOEFL scores fell beyond one standard deviation greater or lower than the average one. Taking their performance on PBT TOEFL, the participants were then divided into three homogeneous groups. To this end, the first male and female participants with the highest scores were assigned to one group and the two next pairs with the highest scores were assigned to the other two groups. This process continued till the ones with the lowest scores were assigned to the three groups as well. The groups were then randomly named as Group 1, Group 2, and Group 3.

### **Design**

The current study was a quasi-experimental research with a pretest / posttest (both immediate and delayed posttest) comparison group design. Benefiting from such design, the study was intended to explore whether or not being involved in literature-based interactive input-output vocabulary tasks (the independent variable) have any effects on vocabulary retention (the dependent variable) of Iranian trainee teachers. Based on the between-group design of the study, three comparison groups were involved. The three groups were asked to work on the same instructional materials (literary texts) but under different interaction modes (individual, collaborative, and collaborative-cooperative) and receiving different types of input / output processing (non-reciprocal processing vs. reciprocal processing).

## **Instructional Materials**

The literary texts decided on as the chief instructional materials were extracted from the book *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* by Rowling (1997). This imaginary-theme novel includes 14 chapters revolving around various unusual events in the everyday life of a young wizard named Harry Potter. Aside from its fantasy genre – which provided ample room for exposure to more abstract words – what accounted for the selection of the novel was that it chronicles the events in daily life of a school-age hero (Harry Potter), thereby reflecting a context-appropriate authentic language use beneficial to the teacher participants mainly motivated to make an effective communication with school-age students.

## **Testing Instruments**

### ***PBT TOEFL***

To ensure the homogeneity of the participating individuals in terms of general English proficiency, a PBT TOEFL practice test was administered prior to the course. The test, extracted from an actual TOEFL corpus (i.e., *Longman Preparation Course for the TOEFL Test*), also served as a scale whereby the participants were divided into three homogeneous groups. Although the original version of the practice test encompassed four sections including listening, structure and written expression, reading comprehension, and writing, the writing section was excluded in the current study owing to some practical constraints.

### ***Course-Based Vocabulary Measures***

Relying upon the book, *A Resource Guide to use with Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, three equivalent course-based measures were developed to gauge the participants' lexical knowledge of the target content before, immediately after, and one month after receiving the study treatment. The resource guide served as the basis for the overall structure of the items; however, the target words / expressions were mainly replaced by more complicated content-derived words / phrase / expressions owing to the participants' proficiency level. The rationale behind using equivalent versions was to eliminate the risk of content familiarity (practice effect). Each of the three counterbalanced measures – entitled the pretest, posttest, and delayed posttest – comprised of 40 items. The comparability of the measures in terms of lexical difficulty was ensured consulting a word frequency index, namely Brown Corpus.

The reliability of the instruments was pilot tested through both internal consistency and inter-measure equivalence techniques. To this end, prior to the main study, the three researcher-devised measures were administered to a group of trainee teachers who enjoyed characteristics (e.g., age, gender, proficiency level, etc.) similar to those of the main participants. The statistical analysis of the pilot data, using Cronbach's Alpha ( $\alpha$ ) formula, showed that the three measures enjoyed acceptable degrees of internal consistency. Additionally, the estimated correlation coefficients between every possible pair of measures implied the equivalence of the measures. The content validity of the instruments was established through expert appraisal.

## **Data Collection Procedure**

To collect the data required to address the research questions, the three groups took part in a 15-session literature-based course. Before receiving the study treatment, however, all the participants were given the vocabulary pretest to be assessed in terms of initial knowledge of the target words. Having been pretested in terms of the target vocabulary, the participants in all the study groups received over 20 hours of content-relevant instruction. To cover the whole instructional content, each instructional session was allocated to one particular chapter. As a preliminary stage in training, the participants in the three groups were asked to read the target chapter prior to each session and prepare a summary of it. They were invited to use a dictionary to check the meaning of the new words and expressions they face throughout the text.

The instructor commenced each instructional session with randomly asking the participants to summarize the story. To involve the whole class in active learning, the instructor interrupted the participants and randomly chose another participant to resume the summary. The process continued until nearly everyone contributed to the summary of the target chapter. Despite the similarities between the three groups in benefiting from literary texts as the main input and putting special emphasis on summary as the core output, they differed in terms of the kinds of instruction and interaction whereby the input and output were processed.

In Group 1, the process of summarizing was followed by a conventional vocabulary instruction in which summary was presumed to be a motivator enabling learners to concentrate on the key words and phrases throughout an assigned text. Accordingly, the instructor proceeded with the instruction and asked a number of comprehension-check questions to reach a detailed account of how the story unfolds. Without any particular focus on the new vocabulary items, the questions were intended to measure the participants' ability to perceive and recollect what they read in the text. Throughout summarizing or answering the comprehension check questions, the instructor disregarded the incidentally-encountered new word / phrases. Nonetheless, when any questions arose about the problematic points in the text, the instructor intervened and explicitly taught the vocabulary to clarify the problem. In sum, in Group 1, every individual participant was in charge of his / her own vocabulary learning and no reciprocal relationship was found between the input (the literary texts) and the output (the chapter summaries). Accordingly, the instructor's corrective feedback on the target vocabulary was provided only when the need arose.

On the other hand, in Group 2, the process of summarizing the target chapter was followed by a collaborative input-output instruction which promoted an active interaction between the instructor and every individual participant while working on the summaries. Playing a dual role in progressing the instruction, the summaries acted as not only the content-oriented output but also a comprehensible input for further processing in terms of the target vocabulary. To this end, once the summary of the target chapter was fully rounded off, the instructor asked a number of vocabulary reinforcement and comprehension check questions to check not only the

participants' overall comprehension of the story but also the extent to which they had fully grasped the new words / phrases. To satisfy such a dual purpose, the participants were asked to answer the questions benefiting from the words / phrases / expressions / collocations used throughout the target chapter. Asking the questions continued until all the events and new words / expressions / phrases in the chapter were marked. In cases that any participant failed to answer the question, another one was asked and when the whole class failed to provide the word, the instructor provided a clue as to how they can spot the word. Having elicited a particular target word, the instructor embarked on expanding it, introducing synonyms, and collocations. The instructor took advantage of implicit corrective feedback (e.g., recast) to correct errors made by the participants.

The training phase in Group 3 bore a remarkable resemblance to that of the Group 2; however, the active interaction between the instructor and every individual learner (collaboration) was accompanied by a learner-learner interaction (cooperation). Accordingly, the whole instructional procedure subsequent to summary telling was carried out in a collaborative and cooperative fashion in Group 3. Such interaction mode entailed an active involvement of the instructor and the whole class. To this end, once almost everyone contributed to the summary of the target chapter, the instructor went over the chapter from the very beginning and drew the participants' attention to the new words, phrases, expressions, and collocations asking them to paraphrase some sentences and compile as many synonymous words and phrases as possible. Working in groups or pairs under the instructor's expert guidance, the participants in Group 3 then disintegrated the text into smaller parts and phrases. Accordingly, the texts were classified under some distinctive labels such as *fear*, *surprise*, *happiness*, *anger* and so on and so forth. Additionally, the participants benefited from the collaborative construction of a variety of frames representing each of the labels. The frames were mainly shaped using the chunks extracted from the story. The participants of the study were required to practice the frames in cooperation with their partner / team-mates so as to internalize and personalize the chunks. In addition to the instructor's corrective feedback, the participants in Group 3 benefited from peer-correction and recasts to correct their mistakes.

Immediately after the last training session, the posttest was administered to all the participants so as to measure any changes in their knowledge of the target vocabulary as a result of receiving the differential treatment of the study. In order to ascertain the longer-term effects of the treatment, the participants were also asked to take the delayed posttest one month after the last training session.

### **Data Analysis**

Statistical package for social sciences (SPSS, version 22) was employed to analyze the data quantitatively and the level of significance (alpha) was set at .05. The analytical procedure of the study entailed a descriptive analysis of the pretest, posttest, and delayed posttest scores in the three study groups. Subsequently, an RM ANCOVA was carried out to address the three research questions.

## Results

### Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 displays the central tendency (mean) and dispersion measures estimated based on the three study groups' performance on the pretest, posttest, and delayed posttest.

**Table 1**

*Descriptive Statistics of the Participants' Scores on the Vocabulary Measures*

| Group   | Variable                | N  | Min | Max | Mean  | SD   |
|---------|-------------------------|----|-----|-----|-------|------|
| Group 1 | Pretest Scores          | 16 | 8   | 19  | 13.13 | 2.58 |
|         | Posttest Scores         | 16 | 21  | 35  | 29.63 | 3.70 |
|         | Delayed Posttest Scores | 16 | 19  | 33  | 26.88 | 3.67 |
| Group 2 | Pretest Scores          | 16 | 8   | 15  | 11.44 | 2.39 |
|         | Posttest Scores         | 16 | 27  | 36  | 31.38 | 2.82 |
|         | Delayed Posttest Scores | 16 | 23  | 32  | 27.69 | 3.03 |
| Group 3 | Pretest Scores          | 17 | 10  | 17  | 12.24 | 1.98 |
|         | Posttest Scores         | 17 | 28  | 37  | 32.35 | 2.76 |
|         | Delayed Posttest Scores | 17 | 28  | 37  | 32.24 | 2.86 |

As depicted in Table 1, the performance of Group 1 on the pretest ( $M = 13.13$ ,  $SD = 2.58$ ) was, on average, better than those of the other two groups (Group 2:  $M = 11.44$ ,  $SD = 2.39$ ; Group 3:  $M = 12.24$ ,  $SD = 1.98$ ). Such a marked difference between the three groups in terms of initial knowledge of the target vocabulary implied the necessity of including the pretest scores, as the covariate variable, in the analysis. Regarding the posttest, the participants in Group 3 ( $M = 32.35$ ,  $SD = 2.76$ ) outperformed their counterparts in Group 2 ( $M = 31.38$ ,  $SD = 2.82$ ) and Group 1 ( $M = 29.63$ ,  $SD = 3.70$ ). Nonetheless, the amount of difference between Groups 1 and 3 was remarkably greater than that of Groups 2 and 3. Taking the three groups' performance on the delayed posttest, the participants in Group 3 outperformed ( $M = 32.24$ ,  $SD = 2.86$ ) their counterparts in Group 2 ( $M = 27.69$ ,  $SD = 3.03$ ) and Group 1 ( $M = 26.88$ ,  $SD = 3.67$ ).

A pairwise comparison of the participants' pretest and posttest scores in every study group revealed a substantial improvement; however, the greatest amount of increase belonged to Group 3. Furthermore, in comparison with the participants' performance on the posttest measure, all the three groups gained, on average, lower scores on the delayed posttest measure.

### Inferential Statistics

To address the research questions which explored the main as well as comparative impact of collaborative input-output and collaborative-cooperative input-output on the participants' vocabulary retention, an RM ANCOVA was conducted, regarding the achievements in the posttest and delayed posttest as two

measures of a variable called *elapsed time*. Before performing the main analysis, however, the preliminary assumptions underlying a RM ANCOVA (i.e., normality of residuals, homogeneity of variances, linearity, homogeneity of regression slopes, and equality of covariance matrices) were checked and the results were found to be satisfactory (see the Appendix). Table 2 displays the results drawn from tests of within-subject effects.

**Table 2**  
*Results Drawn from Tests of Within-Subject Effects*

| Source                | Type III Sum of Squares | Df | Mean Square | F      | Sig. | Partial Eta Squared |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|----|-------------|--------|------|---------------------|
| Time                  | 2.623                   | 1  | 2.623       | 7.229  | .010 | .138                |
| Time * Pretest Scores | .128                    | 1  | .128        | .353   | .555 | .008                |
| Time * Group          | 55.003                  | 2  | 27.501      | 75.804 | .000 | .771                |
| Error(Time)           | 16.326                  | 45 | .363        |        |      |                     |

As shown in Table 2, the elapsed time (as measured by the posttest and delayed posttest) had a significant influence on vocabulary achievements,  $F(1, 45) = 7.229, p < .05$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .138$ . In simpler terms, there was a significant difference in the vocabulary achievements of the participants in the posttest and delayed posttest measures. It was also found that the time elapsed between the posttest measure and the delayed one explained 13.8% of the variance in the participants' vocabulary achievements.

Additionally, the results in Table 2 indicated a non-significant interaction between the elapsed time factor and the pretest scores,  $F(1, 45) = .353, p = .555$ . In other words, the difference between the learners' performance on the posttest and delayed posttest was not dependent on their initial differences in terms of vocabulary achievements.

Based on the results in Table 2, there was also a statistically significant interaction between the elapsed time and the group factor on the vocabulary achievements,  $F(2, 45) = 75.804, p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .771$ . This significant interaction implied that the changes in the participants' vocabulary achievements from the immediate posttest to the delayed one was significantly different among the three study groups. This significant difference could account for 77.1% of the variance in the vocabulary achievements in the two measures.

In addition to the aforementioned significant within-subject differences, there was a significant difference between the three groups in terms of the post-intervention achievements of the participants in the two measures administered following the treatment,  $F(2, 45) = 19.875, p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .469$  (see Table 3). Accordingly, 46.9% of the variance in the post-intervention scores could be attributed to such significant difference among the three groups. Additionally, the

significant main effect of the pretest scores on the average post-intervention scores,  $F(1, 45) = 49.014, p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .521$ , affirmed the idea of including the participants' initial differences, as the covariate, in the analysis.

**Table 3**  
*Results Drawn from Tests of Between-Subject Effects*

| Source         | Type III Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F       | Sig. | Partial Eta Squared |
|----------------|-------------------------|----|-------------|---------|------|---------------------|
| Intercept      | 1041.705                | 1  | 1041.705    | 107.788 | .000 | .705                |
| Pretest Scores | 473.689                 | 1  | 473.689     | 49.014  | .000 | .521                |
| Group          | 384.160                 | 2  | 192.080     | 19.875  | .000 | .469                |
| Error          | 434.898                 | 45 | 9.664       |         |      |                     |

Table 4 displays the breakdown of the marginal means estimated based on the post-intervention scores for the different study groups after detaching the impact of pre-existing between-group differences (covariate effect).

**Table 4**  
*Marginal Means of the Vocabulary Post-Intervention Scores*

| Group   | Mean   | Std. Error | 95% Confidence Interval |             |
|---------|--------|------------|-------------------------|-------------|
|         |        |            | Lower Bound             | Upper Bound |
| Group 1 | 27.411 | .562       | 26.278                  | 28.544      |
| Group 2 | 30.339 | .562       | 29.208                  | 31.470      |
| Group 3 | 32.294 | .533       | 31.220                  | 33.368      |

The comparison of the adjusted means of the post-intervention scores, as displayed in Table 4, revealed that the participants in Group 3 outperformed their counterparts in Group 2 and Group 1.

Table 5 provided adequate support for believing that the significant between-subject difference in terms of the post-intervention vocabulary achievements was rooted in significant differences between every pair of groups.

**Table 5**  
*Pair-wise Comparison of the Marginal Post-Intervention Scores*

| (I) Group | (J) Group | Mean Difference (I-J) | Std. Error | Sig. | 95% Confidence Interval for Difference |             |
|-----------|-----------|-----------------------|------------|------|--|-------------|
|           |           |                       |            |      | Lower Bound                            | Upper Bound |
| Group 1   | Group 2   | --2.928               | .812       | .002 | -4.947                                 | -.909       |
|           | Group 3   | -4.883                | .776       | .000 | -6.812                                 | -2.954      |
| Group 2   | Group 1   | 2.928                 | .812       | .002 | .909                                   | 4.947       |
|           | Group 3   | -1.955                | .774       | .045 | -3.879                                 | -.031       |
| Group 3   | Group 1   | 4.883                 | .776       | .000 | 2.954                                  | 6.812       |
|           | Group 2   | 1.955                 | .774       | .045 | .031                                   | 3.879       |



As shown in Table 5, there was a significant difference between Group 1 and Group 2 in terms of their participants' performance on the two post-intervention measures after controlling the initial differences between them,  $p < .05$ . This result led to the rejection of the first null hypothesis of the study (i.e., literature-based collaborative input-output instruction does not significantly affect vocabulary retention). Additionally, given the significant difference between Group 3 and Group 1 in the post-intervention marginal mean scores ( $p < .05$ ), the second null hypothesis of the study (i.e., literature-based collaborative-cooperative input-output instruction does not significantly affect vocabulary retention) was rejected as well. The case was similar with respect to the difference between Group 2 and Group 3, taking their differences at the outset of the study into account,  $p < .05$ . Consequently, the third null hypothesis (i.e., literature-based collaborative input-output and collaborative-cooperative input-output instruction do not affect vocabulary retention differently) was rejected as well.

### **Discussion**

As its primary area of inquiry, the study explored the main impact of literature-based collaborative input-output and literature-based collaborative-cooperative input-output tasks on the trainee teachers' vocabulary retention. The results drawn from the descriptive and inferential analysis of the data indicated that both collaborative and collaborative-cooperative mode of a literature-based interactive input-output instruction could affect the participants' ability to commit newly-learned words / phrases to their long-term memories. The efficacy of classroom interaction, variously labeled as collaborative learning, in accelerating vocabulary retention has been widely confirmed by research (e.g., Daloğlu & Duzan, 2010; Motaei et al., 2018; Niu & Helms-Park, 2014; Shokouhi & Pishkar, 2015; Soleimani & Mahmoudabadi, 2014). To provide a logical explanation for the effectiveness of classroom interaction, as a distinctive feature of the differential treatment administered to Groups 2 and 3, a variety of speculations could be made. The most noteworthy explanations would be a) the active participation of the participants in the input- and output-based tasks, b) ideal opportunities for word processing so as to gain a deeper knowledge of the target words / phrases, c) the provision of teacher and peer scaffolding, and d) due consideration for contextual vocabulary learning.

The fact that the participants in the two interactive groups could retain the target words / phrases better than the individual group may provide further evidence for the effectiveness of scaffolding provided through either teacher-learner or learner-learner interaction. Having been assisted in working on a variety of interactive vocabulary-processing tasks, the interactive groups participants were more likely to gain a deeper understanding of the target vocabulary items in comparison with those in individual group (Group 1) who were left on their own to tease out the meaning of the unknown vocabulary. To endorse such a claim, one can refer to Hunt and Beglar's (1998) view that in the absence of appropriate assistance, learners are very prone to wrongly guess the meaning of the unknown words from the context. Such an unscaffolded path to learning, according to Hulstijn (1992), might yield the retention of fossilized incorrectly-inferred meaning. Accordingly, the significance of scaffolding caused by interactive output processing was deemed

to be twofold: first, it may have led the participants toward deep learning of the unknown words / phrases and second, it may have prevented them from digging out the wrongly-inferred meanings from the context.

Attributing the significant impact of literature-based interactive input-output tasks on vocabulary retention to the reciprocal relationship between input and output, the findings are compatible with the findings of a couple of previously-conducted studies (i.e., Rott et al., 2002; Shirzad et al., 2017) showing the contribution of an input-output cycle to better lexical acquisition and retention. To justify the significance of a proper emphasis on the reciprocal relationship between input and output, the researchers of these studies referred to the ample room provided for word processing. Relying upon such speculation, the use of chunking, grouping semantically-related words, and framing, not only served the purpose of processing input and turning as much input to intake but also help the participants reap the benefits of output functions such as noticing the gap, hypothesis testing, and consciousness-raising.

Taking advantage of the reciprocal input-output tasks, the participants of the two interactive groups benefitted from plenty of opportunity to work on the target vocabulary both prior to and throughout the class time. Unlike the individual non-reciprocal input-output tasks implemented in Group 1, which led the participants to minimally concentrate on the target vocabulary, the interactive reciprocal input-output treatment of the study demanded great concentration on new words / phrases throughout the instructional stages including receiving corrective feedback on the summaries, answering the comprehension questions, scanning the input for the answers to the comprehension questions, and receiving instruction on the deep meaning of the target vocabulary items (i.e., synonym, antonym, collocation, pronunciation, grammatical behavior). The greater exposure to as well as the longer time spent on the target vocabulary items might have opened up a golden opportunity for the participants of the two interactive groups to gain an in-depth knowledge of vocabulary. Better retention of new vocabulary items could be the probable outcome of such a thorough knowledge of the target words. This explanation owed its justification to the previous research studies (e.g., Daloğu & Duzan, 2010) which revealed that the amount and quality of attention to various aspects of words significantly affect the retention quality.

As its secondary aim, the study examined the comparative impact of the two interaction modes while working on reciprocal input-output tasks. The comparative inferential statistics revealed a significant difference in terms of vocabulary retention between the two groups involved in collaborative and collaborative-cooperative input-output tasks. Based on the results, the participants of the collaborative-cooperative group who benefited from both teacher-learner and learner-learner classroom interaction showed significantly higher achievements in the two post-intervention measures (the immediate and delayed posttest) compared to their counterparts in the collaborative group who were only involved in teacher-learner interaction. Corroborating the claim made by Gairns and Redman (1986) that a cooperative learning setting can yield longer retention spans, the finding provided empirical evidence for the significant association between cooperation and word

retention. A possible explanation for the finding could be the learners' constant involvement in the elaboration of new concepts while interacting with their partner / group mates. Such cooperative learning activities may have improved the amount and the quality of attention that the collaborative-cooperative groups participants paid to various aspects of the target words / phrases, thereby encouraging longer retention periods.

As a matter of fact, the pair / group input-output activities (i.e., grouping, chunking, and framing) the collaborative-cooperative experimental group were actively involved in were basically a number of either rehearsal (grouping, chunking, framing) or contextualizing (internalization of the frames) strategies which belong respectively to the macro categories of memory and activation in Gu and Johnson's (1996) classification of vocabulary learning strategies. According to the classification developers, these two categories (i.e., memory and activation) are directly in charge of vocabulary retention, whereas the two other categories (i.e., cognitive and metacognitive) handle the processes contributing to vocabulary learning. Going interactively (in pairs or groups and under the direct guidance of the instructor) through three successive stages including grouping the target words under different general labels, shaping a body of language based on a grammar frame dressed with different sorts of lexical chunks extracted from both the input (the assigned text) and output (the summaries), and promoting the use of words in different contexts (internalization), the participants exposed to collaborative-cooperative tasks were much more likely to have the chance for retaining the target vocabulary after an overall elapsed time of one month.

Additionally, taking advantage of memory- and activation-based techniques to focus their efforts on the critical analysis of the source text, the participants of the collaborative-cooperative group may have been provided with an ideal opportunity to undertake a systematic contextual review of the target vocabulary. This differential feature could account for the significantly higher levels of retention among those who benefited from the literature-based collaborative-cooperative input-output tasks. The endorsement of such claim lies in Pimsleur's (1967) graduated-interval recall hypothesis which states that learners' knowledge of newly-learned vocabulary will rapidly fade, in the absence of an effective reviewing process.

In sum, the efficacy of the literature-based interactive input-output tasks in enhancing vocabulary retention among the participating trainee teachers seems reasonable believing that every single component (i.e., comprehensible input, scaffolding, and interactive input- and output-based activities) may act as a link in the chain of interaction, as suggested by interaction hypothesis (Gass & Mackey, 2015). Owing to the apparent lack of empirical evidence on the efficacy of the multi-faceted tasks implemented in the current study, however, further research is needed to add credibility to the findings.

### **Conclusion**

The findings of the current study offered the view that trainee teachers' exposure to literary texts would act as a trigger point for the enrichment of their repertoire of productive vocabulary. To hit the target, which is the active retention of

this sort of vocabulary in real communication, however, there is a real need to an instructional mechanism whereby every piece of comprehended literary text (the intake) stands the chance of becoming the basis for language production (output) and being processed in terms of target vocabulary items (the new input). Nonetheless, such a mechanism seizes up in the absence of effective interaction which could provide scaffolding required to forge a reciprocal link between output and input. Although the incorporation of literature-based interactive reciprocal input-output tasks into the mainstream teacher training pedagogy seems to have the potential to bridge the gap in EFL teachers' receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge, its contribution to longer retention span may be maximized benefiting from a full pattern of classroom interaction involving both collaboration and cooperation.

Taking advantage of an optimized form of scaffolding while being involved in a variety of input- and output-based activities, trainee teachers may be offered a systematic approach to enlarge their repertoire of authentically-used productive (active) vocabulary. Building a lexicon that approximates those of native speakers, EFL teachers would wield their authority so as to propel their learners into an effective language learning. Having the first-hand experience of vocabulary building benefiting from literature-based collaborative-cooperative input-output instruction, the trainee teachers may be persuaded to adopt the approach for their learners, enjoying both intention and practical experience required to go through such an elaborate instructional method. To satisfy this purpose, syllabus designers are recommended to search English literature for literary novels, readers, and short stories that suit learners of different proficiency levels.

Owing to the fact that the study was performed on a limited-size convenience sample of Iranian trainee teachers, the replication of the study on a larger and / or more varied sample may cast more light on the findings. To generalize the effectiveness of the specific treatment of the study in enhancing EFL vocabulary retrieval, there is a need for further research on other groups of English users (EFL teachers and students) with different language proficiency levels, age range, and learning styles. Researchers motivated to expand upon the findings are recommended to explore the difficulties of implementing literature-based interactive input-output tasks in EFL teaching / learning contexts so as to ascertain the practical ways of overcoming the many obstacles to an effective implementation of these multi-dimensional tasks.

## **References**

- Adams, R. (2007). Do second language learners benefit from interacting with each other? In A. Mackey (Ed.), *Conversational interaction in second language acquisition* (pp. 29–51). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Baleghzadeh, S., & Ashoori, A. (2011). The impact of two instructional techniques on EFL learners' vocabulary knowledge: Flash cards versus word lists. *Mextesol Journal*, 35(2), 1–9.

- Bulan, N., & Kasapoglu, K. (2021). An investigation of the effect of TPRS on vocabulary acquisition among third graders. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 17(1), 645–662. <https://doi.org/10.17263/jlls.903530>
- Benati, A. (2017). The role of input and output tasks in grammar instruction: Theoretical, empirical and pedagogical considerations. *Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching*, 7(3), 377–396. <https://doi.org/10.14746/ssllt.2017.7.3.2>
- Bisson, M. J., van Heuven, W. J. B., Conklin, K., & Tunney, R. J. (2013). Incidental acquisition of foreign language vocabulary through brief multi-modal exposure. *PLOS ONE*, 8(4), 1–7. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0060912>
- Bobkina, J., & Romero, E. D. (2014). The use of literature and literary texts in the EFL classroom; between consensus and controversy. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics and English Literature*, 3(2), 248–260. <https://doi.org/10.7575/aiac.ijalel.v.3n.2p.248>
- Cameron, L. (2001). *Teaching languages to young learners*. Cambridge University Press.
- Carroll, S. E. (2001). *Input and evidence: The raw material of second language acquisition*. John Benjamins.
- Chen, M., & Chung, J. (2008). Personalized mobile English vocabulary learning system based on item-response theory and learning memory cycle. *Journal of Computer and Education*, 51(2), 624–645. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2007.06.011>
- Cook, V. (2013). *Second language learning and language teaching* (Rev. ed.). Routledge.
- Daloğlu, A. & Duzan, K. C. (2010). Cooperative learning and vocabulary retention. *ORTESOL Journal*, 28, 15–21.
- Dobao, A. M. F. (2014). Vocabulary learning in collaborative tasks: A comparison of pair and small group work. *Language Teaching Research*, 18(4), 497–520. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168813519730>
- Ellis, N. (2007). The associative-cognitive CREED. In B. VanPatten & J. Williams (Eds.), *Theories in second language acquisition: An introduction* (pp. 77–95). Erlbaum.
- Ellis, N. C., & Wulff, S. (2015). Second language acquisition. In E. Dąbrowska & D. Divjak (Eds.), *Handbook of cognitive linguistics* (pp. 409–431). DeGruyter Mouton.
- Ellis, R. (1991, April). *The interaction hypothesis: A critical evaluation*. [Paper presentation]. The Regional Language Center Seminar, Singapore.
- Ellis, R. (2012). *Language teaching research and language pedagogy*. John Wiley & Sons. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118271643>

- Gairns, R., & Redman, S. (1986). *Working with words: A guide to teaching and learning vocabulary*. CUP.
- Gass, S. M. (2003). Input and interaction. In C. Doughty & M. Long (Eds.), *The handbook of second language acquisition* (pp. 224–255). Blackwell.
- Gass, S. M., & Alvarez Torres, M. J. (2005). Attention when? An investigation of the ordering effect of input and interaction. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 27(1), 1–31. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0272263105050011>
- Gass, S. M., & Selinker, L. (2008). *Second language acquisition: An introductory course*. Taylor & Francis.
- Gass, S. M., & Mackey, A. (2007). Input, interaction, and output in second language acquisition. In B. VanPatten & J. Williams (Eds.), *Theories in second language acquisition: An introduction* (pp. 175–199). Erlbaum.
- Gass, S. M., & Mackey, A. (2015). Input, interaction and output in second language acquisition. In B. VanPatten & J. Williams (Eds.), *Theories in second language acquisition: An introduction* (pp.180–206). Routledge.
- Gu, Y., & Johnson, R. K. (1996). Vocabulary learning strategies and language learning outcomes. *Language Learning*, 46(4), 643–679. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-1770.1996.tb01355.x>
- Hashemi, S., & Kassaian, Z. (2011). Effects of learner interaction, receptive and productive learning tasks on vocabulary acquisition: An Iranian case. *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 15, 2165–2171. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2011.04.073>
- Hoang, T. M., & Trang, T. T. T. (2020). Effect of the interactive whiteboard on vocabulary achievement, vocabulary retention and learning attitudes. *Anatolian Journal of Education*, 5(2), 173–186. <https://doi.org/10.29333/aje.2020.5215a>
- Hulstijn, J. H. (1992). Retention of inferred and given word meanings: Experiments in incidental learning. In P. J. L. Arnaud, & H. Béjoint (Eds.), *Vocabulary and applied linguistics* (pp. 113–125). Macmillan.
- Hunt, A., & Beglar, D. (1998). Current research and practice in teaching vocabulary. *JALT*, 22(1), 827–841. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511667190.036>
- Kaivanpanah, Sh., Alavi, S. M., & Ravandpour, A. (2020). The effect of input-based and output-based tasks with different and identical involvement loads on Iranian EFL learners' incidental vocabulary learning. *Cogent Psychology*, 7(1), 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311908.2020.1731223>
- Kayaalt, M. (2018). Mnemonic technique: An effective vocabulary teaching method to plurilingual students. *Modern Journal of Language Teaching Methods (MJLTM)*, 8(5), 388–400. <https://doi.org/10.26655/mjltm.2018.5.5>

- Khabiri, M. & Pakzad, M. (2012). The effect of teaching critical reading strategies on EFL learners' vocabulary retention. *The Journal of Teaching Language Skills (JTLS)*, 4(1), 73-106. [https://doi.org/ 10.22099/jtls.2012.325](https://doi.org/10.22099/jtls.2012.325)
- Krashen, S. (1977). Some issues relating to the monitor model. In H. Brown, C. Yorio, & R. Crymes (Eds.). *Teaching and learning English as a second language: Trends in research and practice* (pp. 144–158). TESOL.
- Krashen, S. (1982). *Second language acquisition and second language learning*. Pergamon.
- Kwon, S. (2006). *Roles of output and task design on second language vocabulary acquisition*. [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. University of Florida, USA. Retrieved from [http://etd.fcla.edu/UF/UFE0014501/kwon\\_s.pdf](http://etd.fcla.edu/UF/UFE0014501/kwon_s.pdf)
- Lewis, M. (2000). *Teaching collocation: Further developments in the lexical approach*. Language Teaching Publications.
- Long, M. H. (1981). Input, interaction, and second language acquisition. In H. Winitz (Ed.) *Native language and foreign language acquisition* (p. 379). Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences.
- McCarthy, M. (1990). *Vocabulary*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Min, H. T. & Hsu, W. S. (2008). The impact of supplemental reading on vocabulary acquisition and retention with EFL learners in Taiwan. *Journal of National Taiwan Normal University*, 53(1), 83–115.
- Motaei, B., Ahangari, S., & Hadidi Tamjid, N. (2018). Impact of interaction and output modality on the vocabulary learning and retention of Iranian EFL learners. *International Journal of Foreign Language Teaching and Research*, 7(25), 65–85.
- Nation, I. S. P. (2001). *Learning vocabulary in another language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Nilforoushan, S. (2012). The effect of teaching vocabulary through semantic mapping on EFL learners' awareness of the affective dimensions of deep vocabulary knowledge. *English Language Teaching*, 5(10), 164-172. <https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v5n10p164>
- Niu, R., & Helms-Park, R. (2014). Interaction, modality, and word engagement as factors in lexical learning in a Chinese context. *Language Teaching Research*, 18, 345–372. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168813510383>
- Norland, D. & Pruetz-Said, T. (2006). *A kaleidoscope of models and strategies for teaching English to speakers of other languages*. Libraries Unlimited.
- Pei, A., & Lin, Y. (2020). A study on the input and output of vocabulary teaching based on noticing theory. *Studies in English Language Teaching*, 8(2), 123-135. <https://doi.org/10.22158/selt.v8n2p123>

- Pimsleur, P. (1967). A memory schedule. *Modern Language Journal*, 51(2), 73–75. <https://doi.org/10.2307/321812>
- Rezaei Gashti, Z. (2021). The impact of storytelling and cooperative learning on Iranian EFL learners' vocabulary achievement. *International Journal of Linguistics, Literature and Translation*, 4(5), 63–76. <https://doi.org/10.32996/ijllt.2021.4.5.5>
- Richards, J., & Schmidt, R. (2002). *Longman dictionary of language teaching and applied linguistics*. Pearson Education.
- Rosenblatt, L. (1978). *The reader, the text, the poem: The transactional theory of the literary work*. Southern Illinois University Press.
- Rott, S., Williams, J., & Cameron, R. (2002). The effect of multiple-choice L1 glosses and input-output cycles on lexical acquisition and retention. *Language Teaching Research*, 6(3), 183–222. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1362168802lr1080a>
- Rowling, J. K. (1997). *Harry Potter and the sorcerer's stone*. Bloomsbury.
- Sadeghi Beniss, A. R., & Ehsani Moghadam, T. (2016). Foreign language vocabulary retention: Investigating the role of T coding method in comparison with rote rehearsal learning. *International Journal of Humanities and Cultural Studies*, 3(1), 2328–2343. <https://civilica.com/doc/491895>
- Shirzad, M., Eslami Rasekh, A., & Dabaghi, A. (2017). The effects of input and output tasks on the learning and retention of EAP vocabulary. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 7(2), 145–152. <http://doi.org/10.17507/tpls.0702.09>
- Shokouhi, A., & Pishkar, K. (2015). Collaborative method and vocabulary retention of teenage EFL learners. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 5(11), 2395–2401. <https://doi.org/10.17507/tpls.0511.26>
- Soleimani, H. & Mahmoudabadi, Z. (2014). The impact of interactive output tasks on develop vocabulary knowledge of Iranian EFL learners. *Iranian Journal of Applied Linguistics (IJAL)*, 17 (2), 93–113.
- Swain, M. (1985). Communicative competence: Some roles of comprehensible input and comprehensible output in its development. In S. Gass & C. Madden (Eds.), *Input in second language acquisition* (pp. 235–256). Newbury House.
- VanPatten, B. (1996). *Input processing and grammar instruction: Theory and research*. Ablex.
- VanPatten, B. (2004). *Processing instruction: Theory, research, and commentary*. Lawrence Erlbaum.
- White, L (1987). Against comprehensible input: The input hypothesis and the development of L2 competence. *Applied linguistics*, 8, 95–110. <https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/8.2.95>
- Zhang, Y. (2011). Content-based instruction in grammar teaching of English majors. *Journal of Taiyuan Normal University*, 10(5), 155–157.



## Appendix

### Results Related to Assumption Testing

**Table A1**

*Results of Normality Testing for Unstandardized Residuals of the Posttest Scores*

| Variable                              | Kolmogorov-Smirnov <sup>a</sup> |    |      | Shapiro-Wilk |    |      |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------|----|------|--------------|----|------|
|                                       | Statistic                       | df | Sig. | Statistic    | Df | Sig. |
| Residuals for Posttest Scores         | .113                            | 49 | .152 | .982         | 49 | .639 |
| Residuals for Delayed Posttest Scores | .085                            | 49 | .200 | .984         | 49 | .656 |

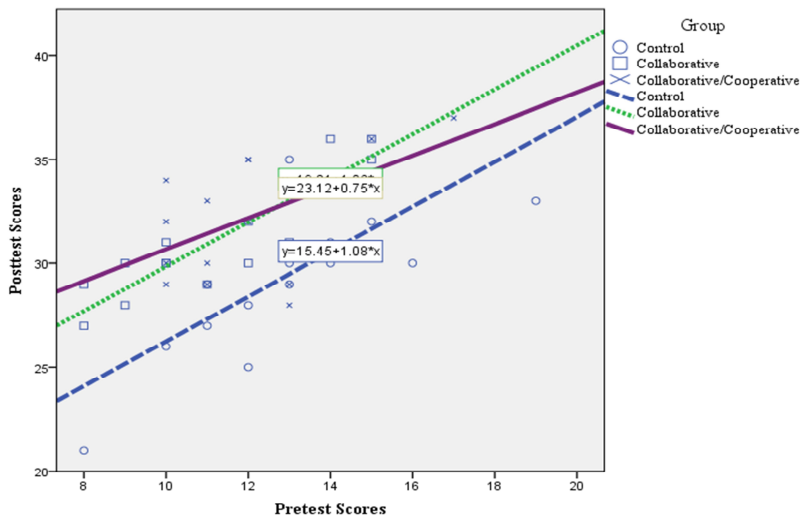
**Table A2**

*Results of Levene's Test on the Posttest and Delayed Posttest Scores*

| Variable                              | F     | df1 | df2 | Sig. |
|---------------------------------------|-------|-----|-----|------|
| Residuals for Posttest Scores         | 1.770 | 2   | 46  | .182 |
| Residuals for Delayed Posttest Scores | 2.162 | 2   | 46  | .127 |

**Figure A1**

*The Line Chart Representing the Linear Relationship Between the Pretest and Delayed Posttest Scores*



**Table A3**

*RM ANCOVA Results for the Significance of Interaction Between the Covariate and Independent Dependent Variables*

| Source                 | Type III Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F       | Sig. |
|------------------------|-------------------------|----|-------------|---------|------|
| Intercept              | 1149.881                | 1  | 1149.881    | 114.390 | .000 |
| Group                  | 26.171                  | 2  | 13.086      | 1.302   | .283 |
| Pretest Scores         | 414.711                 | 1  | 414.711     | 41.255  | .000 |
| Group * Pretest Scores | 7.492                   | 2  | 3.746       | .373    | .691 |
| Error                  | 432.249                 | 43 | 10.052      |         |      |

**Table A4**

*Test of Equality of Covariance Matrices on the Posttest and Delayed Posttest Scores*

| Variable                 | Box's <i>M</i> | <i>F</i> | <i>df1</i> | <i>df2</i> | <i>Sig.</i> |
|--------------------------|----------------|----------|------------|------------|-------------|
| Post-intervention Scores | 11.042         | 1.724    | 6          | 51542.228  | .111        |

### Authors' Biographies



**Sara Salehpour** is a PhD candidate at Islamic Azad University Tabriz branch. She has several years of experience in teaching English and tutoring Advanced English learners and English teachers in Advanced Vocabulary, Grammar, Speaking, and Writing. She has published research articles in national and international journals. Her research interests include Teaching Methodology and Language Learning through Literature.



**Biook Behnam** is an Associate Professor of Applied Linguistics at Azarbaijan Shahid Madani University. He has widely presented papers on national and international conferences in North America, Australia, Europe, China, India, and South East. He has acted, for around ten years, as the Editor-in-Chief of the *Journal of Applied Linguistics* published by Tabriz IAU, and is on the editorial board of some national and international academic journals.



**Zohreh Seifoori** is an Associate Professor of TEFL at Islamic Azad University, Tabriz Branch, and at Science and Research Branch, where she is a researcher, educator, and teacher trainer. She has published research articles in renowned national and international journals and her research interests include Teacher Education, Learner Autonomy, and Teaching Methodology.



## A Survey of EFL Teachers' Research Engagement

Mehdi Mehranirad<sup>1,\*</sup> and Foad Behzadpoor<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Corresponding author: Associate Professor of Applied Linguistics, English Department, Faculty of Letters and Humanities, University of Neyshabur, Neyshabur, Iran, ORCID:0000-0001-6825-2042  
Email: mehrani@neyshabur.ac.ir*

<sup>2</sup>*Assistant Professor of Applied Linguistics, English Department, Faculty of Literature & Humanities, Azarbaijan Shahid Madani University, Tabriz, Iran  
ORCID:0000-0001-7565-7785  
Email: foad.behzadpour@gmail.com*

### Abstract

The field of language teaching has recently witnessed a resurgent wave of interest in the value of educational research and its impact on teachers' practice. Consequently, various strands of inquiry have commenced to investigate the relationship between research and practice. Within these discussions, however, the opinions of teachers are mostly ignored or reflected only circumstantially. The purpose of this study was to take teachers' views about research on board by exploring the extent to which they use and conduct research as well as the barriers that may hinder their research engagement. To collect data, a survey questionnaire was designed and validated through soliciting experts' opinions and conducting factor analysis. The questionnaire was then administered among a large sample of Iranian English teachers. Participants' responses showed moderate levels of research engagement among English teachers. Results also indicated that four categories of barriers can best account for teachers' lack of research engagement: problems related to the nature and quality of research, restrictive educational policies, lack of systematic partnership, and problems associated with the use of research in educational settings. The findings suggest that the research-practice division is the result of a complex interaction of an array of factors that cannot be simply reduced to technical matters. Thus, reconfiguration of the gap requires multidimensional strands of development in research and practice communities as well as in educational policies.

*Keywords:* barriers, research engagement, research-practice gap, teachers' views, utilization of research

### ARTICLE INFO

Research Article

Received: Saturday, November 20, 2021

Accepted: Saturday, April 23, 2022

Published: Sunday, May 1, 2022

Available Online: Saturday, April 23, 2022

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.22049/jalda.2022.27469.1365>

Online ISSN: 2383-2460; Print ISSN: 2820-8986



© The Author(s)

## **Introduction**

Cross-sectional examinations of scientific resources in various academic disciplines show the presence of a gap between research and practice (Biesta, 2007). For instance, in various professional domains ranging from nursing, social working, and mentoring to language education, there seems to be a gap between academic knowledge generation and application. The issue is gloomier in some fields than in others. Research in engineering, for instance, enjoys more or less established channels to practical application. Similarly, studies in medicine are often delivered through authorized agents and institutionalized pathways to practitioners (Bauer & Fischer, 2007). When it comes to other applied fields of study, however, established exchange structures between researchers and practitioners are lacking (Pica, 2005).

In the field of language teaching, like many other professional disciplines, the role of researchers has traditionally been assumed a merely intellectual activity, and their main responsibility has been to produce arguments, generalities, and theories. The assumption has been that academic research can potentially offer practical advice to improve the quality of language education. On this basis, some scholars have argued that teachers' pedagogical activities must be inspired and supported by scientific research evidence (Mehrani, 2014). The prevalence of this idea has positioned researchers as generators of knowledge and teachers as consumers. Within the last few decades, however, various efforts have been made to challenge the research-practice split in English language teaching (ELT). For instance, several theoretical ideas such as teacher-researcher collaboration (Stewart, 2006), exploratory practice (Allwright, 2005), and reflective teaching (Schön, 1987; Akbari, 2007) have been proposed to promote a research mindset among teachers and to encourage them to conduct classroom scale research studies.

Although a primary goal of these initiatives was to approximate the communities of research and practice, retrospective investigations show that the gap is still ubiquitous and educators experience the research-practice divide in various ways. Teachers disparage researchers for conducting research on issues that are not their pedagogical concerns (Everton et al., 2002). Researchers, on the other hand, criticize teachers for their lack of willingness to use the best and updated knowledge to improve their practice (Hargreaves, 1980). "The temporal and physical distance between researchers and practitioners in educational meetings" also points to the hierarchical relationship between researchers and practitioners (Mehrani, 2014, p. 23). Thus, if teachers are to be encouraged to employ research findings in their pedagogical practice, then it is important that we learn more about the conditions under which they have to do so. In other words, we need to take on board teachers' own concerns directly and reanalyze the research-practice configuration (Everton et al., 2002).

Bearing this in mind, the main purpose of the present study is to reflect teachers' opinions about academic research by exploring the extent to which they engage with research as well as the barriers that may keep them away from research. An inquiry into practitioners' opinions can inform us of what is necessary and beneficial for promoting the status of research in educational contexts. Because such investigations not only provide us with theoretical insights for setting overall

research policies, but also enable stakeholders to effectively redesign professional development programs for language teachers.

### **Literature Review**

Some scholars believe that a fundamental cause of the gap between researchers and practitioners stems from the conflicting nature of two types of knowledge bases that they deal with. While teachers need a body of practical, perceptual and situational knowledge that can inform their decisions in various particular situations, academic research conventionally provides a theoretical framework which aims, most of all, at helping us understand general phenomena. Based on this distinction, some argue that for academic knowledge to be systematically used by teachers, research findings ought to be presented in a responsive way, such that teachers can adapt them to address their pedagogical needs (Everton et al., 2002). In recent years, the idea of translating academic theories into applicable teaching strategies has been persistently followed by policymakers and stakeholders in many educational contexts. For example, a recent initiative in the UK has commenced an “evidence-based teaching” policy, where teachers are encouraged to employ research findings in their teaching. In the Iranian context, a similar policy has been proposed (though not implemented) by The Institute for Educational Research. The core component of this policy is to reinforce the “utilization of research findings” in education through summarizing educational research and presenting it in a plain non-technical language.

The debate on the research-practice gap, however, is not restricted to the dichotomy of types of knowledge. For instance, some researchers have challenged the long-established feudalist model of relationship with “researchers at the top dispensing leisurely wisdom and the serfs laboring in the classroom, too exhausted to engage beyond daily survival” (Allison & Carey, 2007, p. 65). Allison and Carey also argue that the main cause of the non-reciprocal relationship between researchers and teachers must be sought in their power relations. Historically, positions of privilege and power have been occupied by researchers where they set evaluation standards and criteria for obtaining higher qualifications. Researchers also lay down lines of practice for teachers and require them to put in extra effort to engage in research studies (Allison & Carey, 2007). Gore and Giltin (2004), similarly contend that the discursive conditions, different reward structures and different material working conditions have shaped conflicting assumptions and opposing opportunities that seem destined to increase the distance rather than close the gap between academics and teachers. From this perspective, unless evaluation standards, professional development programs, and material conditions in both schools and universities are altered, it seems unlikely to witness any significant improvement in the division between language teachers and researchers (Gore & Giltin, 2004).

A further strand of contributions for approximating research to practice has explored teachers’ conceptions of research. For instance, Borg (2007; 2009) studied language teachers’ research engagement in thirteen countries and found out that teachers’ conception of research plays a significant role in their engagement with research. Borg argues that teachers’ conceptions are primarily anchored in a traditional view of academic research, where only very few models of research are considered legitimate (Borg, 2007). This “minimalist view of a research stance” (McDonough & McDonough, 1997, p. 7) has been reported in other contexts as the

dominant conception of research held by English language teachers (Faribi et al., 2019). For example, Gao et al. (2010) examined teachers' conceptions of research and found that Chinese teachers mainly believed that the essential features of research include experimental designs and statistical analyses. In the contexts of Turkey, Canada and Saudi Arabia similar findings were reported. EFL teachers' understanding of research in these countries is well-matched with the scientific research paradigm. Teachers in these contexts indicated that educational research should follow a standardized and structured framework and offer implications for practice (Borg & Alshumaimeri, 2012; Nassaji, 2012; Shafiee & Sotoudehnama, 2019). A recent survey of ELT practitioners' views of research in Iran revealed that from teachers' perspectives, high quality research is characterized by a priori research questions, a sizable number of participants, and rigorous analysis of data. Iranian teachers also seemed to prefer studies that address their pedagogical concerns and bear practical implications (e.g., Rahimi & Askari Bigdeli, 2016). Such a simplistic view of what research means to language teachers is among the major reasons why efforts for bridging the research-practice gap are unproductive because teachers' restricted understating of the notion of research makes a great deal of educational research obscure and unappealing to them (Mehrani, 2016; Usita, 2022).

Examination of teachers' views has also highlighted a further concern about academic research: lack of relevance to education. In line with other commentators, Ortega (2005) contends that the assessment of the quality of research must be based on its potential in offering solutions for social and educational problems. But retrospective investigations suggest that a great deal of research studies in ELT are about issues that are too trivial or too irrelevant to teachers' pedagogical activities (Nassaji, 2012; Saeb et al., 2021). Teachers' overemphasis on the practicality of research studies is justified to the extent that theoretical research studies do not yield pedagogically-pertinent results (Burkhardt & Schoenfeld, 2003).

Aside from the above general insights about research-practice division, the literature is replete with local investigations that meant to provide contextualized understandings of research engagement for informed local decision making. For example, studies by Gao and colleagues (2010) and Borg and Liu (2013) report that in China, different contextual challenges such as heavy workload and limited competence in English prevented language teachers from engaging with research. Local investigations in Australia, similarly identified teachers' lack of trust in research findings, their hectic schedule, and the challenging discourse of academic articles as deterring factors to research engagement (Gore & Giltin, 2004). Borg's studies in the UK suggest that language teachers may tend to view their institutions as environments conducive to research engagement (Borg, 2007).

Several attempts have been made to classify the barriers to research engagement. For instance, Pieters and de Vries (2007) make a distinction between fundamental and applied reasons. Fundamental causes include incompatible language and payment systems, the context-bound nature of teaching practice, and disagreements about the overall aim and objectives of education. Factors such as the unavailability of time and money are categorized as practical limitations. Allison and Carey contend that there are two sets of internal factors (e.g., insufficient knowledge of research) and external factors (e.g., teachers' tight schedule) which can constitute the gap (Allison & Carey, 2007). Others, like Funk et al. (1989)

classify the barriers into four groups: factors related to practitioners, settings, research, and the way research is presented.

As the above review shows, studies conducted on the barriers that impede teachers' engagement with research are characterized by diversities of opinions. This issue is further complicated because although the findings of the previous studies are often based on examinations of different local contexts, the conclusions are assumed to apply universally, regardless of the particularities of each educational context. Thus, careful investigations into various factors that might be unique to any educational context are required in order to verify the results of the previous studies. Furthermore, accounts to be made in relation to the factors that hinder teachers' research engagement must be based on empirical insights into the current level of engagement.

To extend our understandings of the extent to which English language teachers engage in research and the factors which they feel may impede them from doing so, the present study addressed the following two questions:

1. To what extent do Iranian EFL teachers read or do educational research?
2. What reasons do they cite for not doing or reading academic research findings?

Answers to these questions would enable us to make informed decisions on what is feasible and desirable about research-practice integration in the Iranian context.

## **Method**

### **Research Design**

To answer the above questions, a survey research design was employed in this study. This design is a popular type of research for a large-scale examination of individuals' opinions and is particularly suitable for the present research as it leads to the development of a new research instrument while also allowing the researchers to collect a sizable body of quantitative data efficiently and economically (Babbie, 1990). Since there are a large number of variables influencing teachers' engagement with research, survey research allows us to "carefully examine the relative importance of each" variable (Babbie, 1990, p. 42).

### **The Development of a Questionnaire**

To develop a data collection instrument, a general framework was first drawn by relying on the guidelines suggested by Dornyei (2003) and Brace (2004). The first part of the framework intended to capture the respondents' demographic information while the second part was devoted to teachers' level of reading and doing research. Teachers' justifications and reasons for keeping away from research were included in the last part. The survey was initially designed to be administered in English to both low proficient and high proficient EFL teachers. Upon reflections and consultations with experts in the field, however, it was decided to provide it in Persian in order to guarantee full understanding of its contents.

After formulating a list of relevant demographic items and devising four open-ended prompts for examining teachers' level of research engagement, the researcher jotted down all factors and categories that were considered to be potential barriers to teachers' research engagement. This was done based on an in depth

review of the literature and a consideration of the results of exploratory studies into Iranian teachers' research engagement (e.g., Mehrani & Behzadnia, 2013).

All potential barriers reported in the literature and those elicited from local investigations were first tallied. Next, the researchers eliminated recurring items and those that overlapped, reducing the list to 25 items. To write the questionnaire prompts, an item pool was provided. Questions were then formulated on the basis of a Likert rating scale by which participants were prompted to specify their opinions by choosing one of the five given options for each item. Following the procedure used by Akbari et al. (2010), in the next stage an attempt was made to find themes or commonalities among the developed factors. Seven experts, namely four university instructors, one PhD student of ELT, and two language teachers were then invited to critically review the items of the questionnaire. The experts' comments and recommendations resulted in alternations in the wordings of some items. The revised version of the instrument was then piloted by administering it to a total of 26 EFL teachers. The Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient of the instrument was calculated and yielded 0.82. Once the accuracy of the questions and the reliability of the questionnaire were ascertained, it was disseminated among participants, as described below.

### **Participants**

In an attempt to broaden the scope of the study, the researchers collected data from English teachers in different geographical regions of Iran. The sampling procedure was a mixture of random and cluster sampling. That is, the researcher approached a number of colleagues in various ELT contexts across Iran who could encourage potential participants to participate in the study. The colleagues' cooperation facilitated the process of data collection by both recruiting potential participants and suggesting which mode of questionnaire administration (e.g., printed copy vs. email attachment) would work most suitably for the respondents. Administering the questionnaire among a sample of 514 English teachers, the researchers managed to collect data from different provinces including Tehran, Khorasan, Zanjan, and Sanandaj. A total of 403 questionnaires were returned, of which 84 were removed because they seemed not to have been thoughtfully filled up. This resulted in a total of 319 carefully completed questionnaires to be analyzed.

In the analysis of the questionnaire data, teachers' demographic information was first reviewed. Although the majority of the participants had less than 10 years of teaching experience, the sample of teachers had a broad array of teaching experience, ranging from one through to 32 years. In terms of academic degrees, only 48 teachers had postgraduate qualifications. However, responses to the questionnaire revealed a rather balanced distribution of working places, with 128 teachers teaching in the private sector and 184 teaching for the public schooling system. Seven teachers did not provide information about their job site.

### **Construct Validity of the Questionnaire**

As was mentioned, the questionnaire developed in this study for examining barriers to research engagement was authenticated by seven experts. However, in an attempt to validate this hypothetical model, the researchers conducted a factor analysis on the instrument. In doing so, teachers' responses given to each single item of the questionnaire were subjected to a factor analysis procedure. The analysis was



conducted in a two-step sequential fashion. Prior to conducting the main analysis, a preliminary analysis was conducted to determine how many factors to extract in the main analysis. Therefore, in the first step, the analysis was conducted to provide a scree plot. The results revealed a break after the first four components. In other words, the scree plot indicated that *four* is the ideal number of legitimate factors to account for teachers’ research disengagement. This was in line with the theoretical framework developed by Funk et al. (1989).

In the next step, principal axis factor analysis with varimax rotation was run to evaluate the significance of each factor and the underlying structure for the 25 items of the questionnaire. Based on the results of the first step, four factors were requested. After rotation, four factors that were internally consistent were produced. The first factor accounted for 10.0% of the variance, the second factor for 9.2%, the third factor for 7.9%, and the fourth factor for 6.0%. **Error! Reference source not found.** shows the magnitude of loading for each item and the rotated factors. Magnitudes less than .27 have been omitted for simplicity and clarity.

**Table 1**  
*Factor Loading for the Rotated Factors of Barriers to Research Engagement*

| Item            | Factor loading |      |      |      | Commonality |
|-----------------|----------------|------|------|------|-------------|
|                 | 1              | 2    | 3    | 4    |             |
| • Item 1        | .676           |      |      |      | .49         |
| • Item 2        | .636           |      |      |      | .42         |
| • Item 3        | .539           |      |      |      | .39         |
| • Item 4        | .528           |      |      | .312 | .47         |
| • Item 5        | .492           |      |      |      | .34         |
| • Item 6        | .481           |      |      |      | .38         |
| • Item 7        | .419           | .302 |      |      | .43         |
| • Item 8        | .344           |      |      |      | .29         |
| • Item 9        |                | .685 |      |      | .56         |
| • Item 10       |                | .586 |      |      | .40         |
| • Item 11       |                | .576 |      |      | .47         |
| • Item 12       |                | .486 |      |      | .42         |
| • Item 13       |                | .440 |      |      | .40         |
| • Item 14       |                | .405 |      |      | .29         |
| • Item 15       |                | .352 |      |      | .38         |
| • Item 16       |                | .274 |      |      | .28         |
| • Item 17       |                |      | .674 |      | .46         |
| • Item 18       |                |      | .626 |      | .46         |
| • Item 19       |                |      | .591 |      | .45         |
| • Item 20       |                |      | .458 |      | .39         |
| • Item 21       |                | .312 | .402 |      | .31         |
| • Item 22       |                |      |      | .702 | .47         |
| • Item 23       |                |      |      | .653 | .51         |
| • Item 24       |                | .309 |      | .362 | .33         |
| • Item 25       |                |      |      | .297 | .39         |
| • Eigen values  | 2.50           | 2.30 | 1.99 | 1.50 |             |
| • % of variance | 10.01          | 9.21 | 7.97 | 6.00 |             |

Note: Loadings < .27 have been omitted.

The first factor, which indexes the characteristics of research studies, loads most strongly on the first eight items. As the above table reflects, the fourth and seventh items have their highest loadings on the first factor, but have cross-loadings on the fourth and second columns, respectively. The second factor, which traps variables that relate to institutional and educational policy, is comprised of the five items in the second column. The third factor, which indexes items relevant to collaborations between researchers and practitioners, includes five items with loadings displayed in the third column. As Table 1 shows, the item concerning financial and intellectual supports has a moderate cross-loading on the second column too. Finally, the fourth factor, which indexes logistical factor, includes three items in the fourth column. As is displayed in the table, the third item has moderate loadings on both the logistical factor and the institutional and educational policy factor. Therefore, based on the results of factor analysis, teachers' barriers can be classified into four main strands:

- The nature and quality of research,
- Institutional and educational policies,
- Collaborations between researchers and practitioners,
- Use of research in educational contexts.

## **Results**

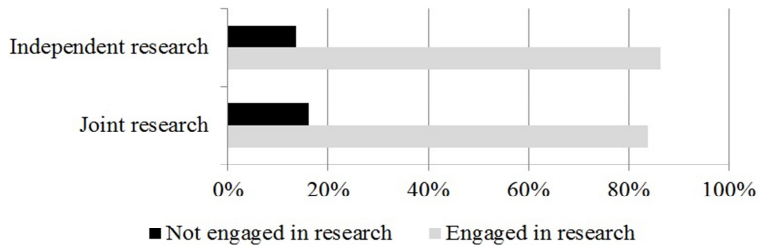
Aside from the first section of the questionnaire, which solicited the participants' demographic information, sections two and three respectively asked the participants to indicate their level of research engagement and the barriers to their research engagement. In what follows, the teachers' responses to these questions are presented.

### **Doing and Reading Research**

The participants were initially asked to specify whether they had done any independent educational research studies. Over 85% responded positively, but about 15% confirmed that they had never done an independent research. Teachers were also asked to indicate whether they had been involved in any joint research projects. As Figure 1 shows, 83% of the respondents reported that they had cooperated in research projects, but over 16% rejected prior involvement in research studies. Of the proportion of the participants who reported no professional research activities, there was little information to construe if they represented a particular group of teachers. However, teachers with higher academic qualifications appeared to have been more seriously engaged in doing research though the small sample involved made it difficult to reach a firm conclusion from this finding.

**Figure 1**

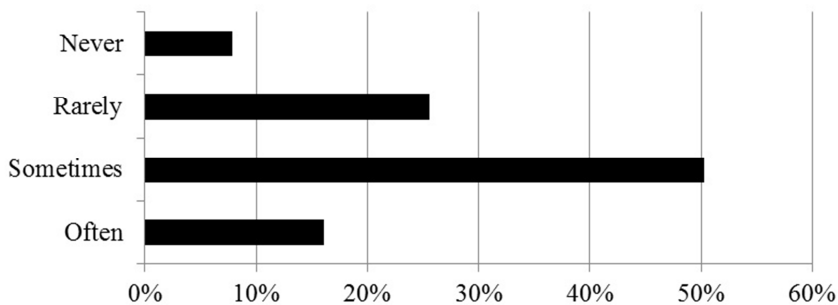
*Reported Percentage of Doing and Participating in Research Projects*



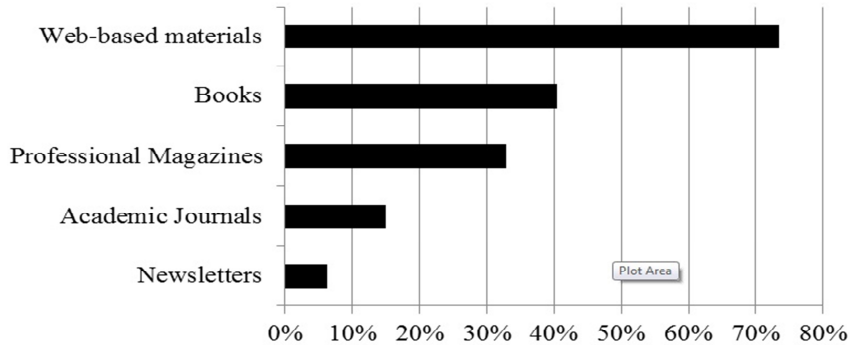
The next question asked respondents to indicate how often they read educational research. As Figure 2 shows, about 16% claimed that they read research often, 50% read research sometimes, 26% rarely and 8% Never. Using Spearman’s correlation, teachers’ reported levels of reading research were analyzed for potential associations with their teaching experience and academic qualifications. In terms of qualification, a significant association was found ( $N = 307$ ,  $\rho = 0.138$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). That is, teachers with higher academic degrees reported higher levels of reading research. In terms of teaching experience, a significant correlation was also found ( $N = 307$ ,  $\rho = 0.174$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Teachers with more than 10 years of experience surprisingly reported lower levels of reading research.

**Figure 2**

*Reported Percentage of Reading Research Studies*



The last question in the second part of the questionnaire prompted participants to specify the sources they use for reading research. Although teachers reported high levels of using research sources, as Figure 3 shows, they indicated that they do not frequently use academic journals which publish scientific studies in a long-established orthodox fashion. Rather, teachers’ research engagement is more through web-based materials and books in which research findings are often presented in a digested form.

**Figure 3***Relative Popularity of Research Sources*

### Barriers to Research Engagement

The next section of the questionnaire included a list of 25 items capturing factors that could potentially hinder or lower teachers' research engagement. Teachers were asked to rate the significance of each factor on a five-point Likert basis. The purpose of this section of the questionnaire was to gain insights into the importance of each barrier in teachers' lack of research engagement. Therefore, in order to analyze the relative importance of each barrier, the researchers calculated a weight score for each item of the questionnaire. This was done by allocating a score of +2 to every "strongly agree" response and a score of +1 to every "agree" response. Likewise, a score of -2 was assigned to every "strongly disagree" response, and a score of -1 was given to each "disagree" response. Teachers' "undecided" responses received no score, and, thus, each item received a score between -2 and +2. Finally, a mean score was computed for each item by adding up all the scores and dividing them by the number of respondents. Within this structure, the mean score for each item suggested the significance of the barrier.

Ratings given to each item by the participants revealed the relative significance of each barrier to teachers' research engagement. The most important barriers, as rated by teachers, were insufficient intellectual and financial incentives, lack of a comprehensive database and research directory, and teachers' lack of familiarity with specialized discourse of research. As Table 1 reflects, negative views toward research and innovation, teachers' conception of teaching and research, and unreliability of research findings were the least rated barriers, suggesting that they were not important in teachers' lack of research engagement. Mention should be made that although teachers' ratings to each single item can give us an idea about the particular importance of that item, for obtaining a comprehensive insight into the overall importance of and the interactions among various factors, teachers' ratings should be interpreted holistically. Bearing this in mind, the results are summarized in Table .

**Table 2**  
*Weight Scores for Barriers to Research Engagement*

| Questionnaire items   | No. of respondents | Weight scores | SD   |
|---|--------------------|---------------|------|
| حمایت مالی و فکری برای انجام تحقیق و بکارگیری یافته‌های پژوهشی صورت نمی‌گیرد.     | 312                | 1.13          | .77  |
| سازوکار مناسبی جهت اطلاع رسانی در رابطه با پژوهشهای آموزشی وجود ندارد.            | 311                | 1.09          | .79  |
| معلمان به اندازه کافی با روشهای تحقیقاتی و مطالب پژوهشی آشنایی ندارند.            | 316                | 1.06          | .80  |
| امکانات و تجهیزات آموزشی کافی جهت بکارگیری نتایج پژوهشهای آموزشی وجود ندارد.      | 316                | 1.00          | .91  |
| ارتباط نظام‌مند و سازنده‌ای بین پژوهشگران و معلمان زبان وجود ندارد.               | 316                | .96           | .76  |
| بکارگیری یافته‌های پژوهشی در تدریس مستلزم مهارت‌های ویژه‌ای است.                  | 307                | .85           | .97  |
| کتابها، آزمونها و مواد آموزشی دیگر بر اساس یافته‌های پژوهشی تدوین نشده است.       | 314                | .69           | 1.02 |
| بانک اطلاعاتی جامعی از نتایج پژوهشهای آموزشی در دسترس نیست.                       | 316                | .69           | 1.01 |
| دیدگاه معلمان نسبت به آموزش و پژوهش با دیدگاه محققان تفاوت دارد.                  | 316                | .68           | .90  |
| در ارزشیابی معلمان توجهی به انجام پژوهش و بکارگیری یافته‌های پژوهشی نمی‌شود.      | 314                | .64           | 1.00 |
| یافته‌های پژوهشی با ارزشهای حاکم بر نظام آموزشی تناسب ندارد.                      | 307                | .60           | 1.10 |
| اختیارات معلمان زبان در بکارگیری یافته‌های پژوهشی محدود است.                      | 314                | .52           | 1.16 |
| فکر می‌کنم در پژوهشهای صورت گرفته به نیازهای پژوهشی معلمان پرداخته نمی‌شود.       | 310                | .46           | .92  |
| فکر می‌کنم تعداد پژوهشهای مروری و فراتحلیلی محدود است.                            | 307                | .34           | .82  |
| تغییر روشها و تکنیکهای تدریس دشواریهایی برای معلمان زبان ایجاد می‌کند.            | 310                | .33           | 1.09 |
| مطالعه و فهم مطالب پژوهشی به دلیل نگارش آنها به زبان فنی و غیرقابل فهم دشوار است. | 310                | .22           | 1.06 |
| معلمان به اندازه کافی برای مطالعه و انجام کارهای پژوهشی وقت ندارند.               | 315                | .19           | 1.20 |
| انجام پژوهش و بکارگیری یافته‌های پژوهشی جزء مسائل حاشیهای تدریس زبان است.         | 310                | .15           | 1.27 |
| دسترسی به منابع پژوهشی دشوار است.   | 312                | .13           | 1.14 |
| نتایج پژوهشهای آموزشی در رشته آموزش زبان اغلب متفاوت و متناقض است.                | 310                | .13           | .93  |
| به نظر من یافته‌های پژوهشی به محیط کاری من قابل تعمیم نیست.                       | 313                | .09           | 1.12 |
| به نظر من پژوهشهای صورت گرفته در رشته آموزش زبان کاربردی نیست.                    | 314                | .07           | 1.10 |
| احساس میکنم نتایج پژوهشهای آموزشی قابل اتکا نیست.                                 | 312                | -.00          | .95  |
| مطالعه پژوهشها و بکارگیری نتایج آن جزء وظایف معلمان زبان به شمار نمی‌رود.         | 312                | -.15          | 1.24 |
| در محیط کاری من دیدگاه غالب نسبت به نوآوری و بکارگیری روشهای نوین منفی است.       | 316                | -.20          | 1.23 |

Note: In this table where the number of participants does not add up to 319, this is due to missing data.

## Discussion

Examining the views and educational commitments of Iranian language teachers as a starting point, the purpose of the present study was twofold: to examine teachers' level of research engagement and to explore the barriers that may impede their engagement. This inquiry provides an account of the status quo and informs the future production and dissemination of research. Studies of this type can contribute to the development and implementation of policies which aim at bridging the gap between educational research and practice. In what follows, the results obtained from the examination of teachers' views are discussed in two consecutive sections: their level of research engagement and the reasons they cited for lack of engagement. Attempts are made to augment the discussion by theoretical research findings reported in the literature.

## Level of Engagement

The results concerning involvement in research revealed moderate to high levels of research engagement. In particular, more than 80% of the participants reported that they had been involved in the process of conducting research studies. In addition, 65% of the sample reported that they consulted research papers either often or sometimes. However, as Borg (2009) discusses, these statistics should be interpreted with caution because the terms “often” and “sometimes” are perceived variously by different individuals. For example, the term “sometimes” might be interpreted as “a euphemism for *rarely*” (Borg & Liu, 2013, p. 291). In addition, a more elaborate analysis is needed into what teachers exactly meant by doing and reading research. It is likely that some teachers might have considered “using standardized language tests in their classrooms” or “contributing to a research study by filling out a questionnaire” as doing research. Thus, an awareness of teachers’ understanding of what actual research entails would be conducive in the analysis of teachers’ level of research engagement.

Teachers’ high level of engagement can, in all probability, reflect their positive attitudes toward research as an effective instrument for their professional development. Although there are multiple strands of development available to prospective teachers (e.g., workshops, practicums, classroom observations, etc.), this does not continue to hold true after graduation from their teacher education programs. As a matter of fact, for the majority of practicing teachers, research engagement is the only available path toward regularly promoting their pedagogical knowledge and expertise. This is in line with previous empirical findings which indicate that teachers resort to research as an instrument for solving their pedagogical problems and improving their practical teaching (e.g., Gao et al., 2010).

Moreover, teachers’ reported level of engagement might not necessarily indicate their “*current*” research engagement, but as Mehrani (2015) contends, it can merely point to various academic regulations and course requirements. One can envision that many teachers might have been required to do or read academic research as a component of their university programs; but this does not essentially evince that they have continued to do so since licensed to work as a teacher. This speculation is already made in the literature (e.g., Borg, 2007; 2009) and is particularly supported by the findings which show teachers with higher qualifications and less teaching experience have had more research engagement.

The results also revealed that academic research journals are not among popular resources that teachers may use to update their professional knowledge. As an alternative, they prefer web-based sources such as weblogs, forums, and research repository platforms that are more easily accessible. This finding suggests that perhaps the accessibility of academic research does not guarantee teachers’ engagement with research (Mehrani, 2015). Teachers’ tendency toward web-based research sources might also point to the fact that research findings in such resources are often reported in a simple and teacher-friendly language. This lends support to what Bauer and Fischer (2006) refer to as *intellectual accessibility* of research which

points to the importance of presenting research findings in an encapsulated and simplified way to teachers.

It seems, therefore, that a crucial step in increasing teachers' research engagement is a broad dissemination of research findings that are relevant and ready to use, in a form that is understandable to teachers. Given that the current major publication platforms are academic journals and scientific conferences, it seems practice-oriented workshops and non-academic conferences can open new avenues for research dissemination and enhance communication between researchers and practitioners, provided that such meetings are planned in and by educational – not academic – centers.

### **Barriers to Engagement**

The findings of this investigation uncovered some of the complexities involved in teachers' research engagement in the Iranian context. Despite some differences between the results found here and those reported in the literature, it seems that the findings are consistent and can be considered reliable. As a matter of fact, the study conducted by Funk et al. (1989) identified four sets of obstacles that further the distance between practitioners and academicians. The statistical factor analysis in this study similarly reiterated that the potential barriers can best be discussed in four broad categories. In the following, attempts are made to discuss these categories of barriers under the titles that correspond to the results of the factor analysis.

### ***The Nature and Quality of Research***

The findings showed that one of the problems with ELT research is that it often fails to address the unique properties of various teaching contexts. That is, many teachers cast doubt on the potential of current research in addressing and solving their pedagogical problems. In fact, teachers' emphasis on the idiosyncratic features of their teaching contexts poses a great challenge to the practicality of ELT research. This concern has been frequently raised in the literature and reflects what Clarke (1994) calls dysfunctionality of research in ELT.

Simply, if educational research is concerned with theoretical arguments, it cannot provide unambiguous evidence for "what works" in practice. Moreover, sometimes studies focus on marginal questions that are too insignificant and, consequently, the results of such studies do not have any practical values. Even when a study yields unambiguous results, explorative use of findings is discouraged by researchers for various reasons. For instance, teachers are warned for the liberal use of the findings because: "the study was limited in scope," "the subjects included only elementary learners," "the procedure was highly controlled," "non-random sampling was employed," etc. Such warnings (often stated by researchers as "study limitations") make it extremely difficult for teachers to obtain practical advice from academic articles.

Another relevant problem identified by teachers is the complex and technical language of research papers. In particular, the mathematical jargons employed in the methodology and the statistical complexities used in the analysis of research results

make research hard for teachers to fully understand. This concern is justified to the extent that so much research in ELT is replete with fairly complicated analytical procedures. This, in turn, leaves numerous research studies superfluously complicated and too difficult for teachers to understand. As Mehrani and Khodi (2014) vehemently argue, even the most determined researchers (let alone teachers) sometimes have hard times understanding complicated statistical analyses such as factor analysis, path analysis, regression, analysis of variance, etc. One may challenge ELT research community on suspicion that researchers, through using a practice-exclusive language, widen the gap between researchers and practitioners. Could they really not present research in a more simplified, understandable language?

### ***The Use of Research in Educational Contexts***

The next set of factors that were perceived by teachers as leaving a negative impact on their research engagement centered on the unavailability of logistics for research and insufficient facilities for using research. Previous studies (e.g., Hemsley-Brown & Sharp, 2003; Macaro, 2003) have recurrently referred to unavailability of research as a main cause of teachers' disengagement with research. One way to address this problem is to simply "get things across" which in the words of Bauer and Fischer mean to present your research findings where practitioners can easily find them (2007). Within this formulation, then, comprehensive summaries of research studies should be compiled and made available to practitioners.

The next barrier is a lack of technological facilities such as TV, media players, and computers in the classroom context. The participants of this study ranked this issue as one of the major barriers in the utilization of research findings. It follows then, that the decisions to be made about the implementation of innovative strategies of teaching and the application of research findings must be informed by a consideration of the required logistical facilities.

Previous studies emphasized that teachers' hectic schedule can prevent them from engaging in research. The ratings given by teachers in this study, however, suggested that this assertion might not hold true in the Iranian context. Unlike other studies (e.g., Borg, 2007; 2009), the present survey did not prove a lack of time as a significant factor in teachers' research disengagement.

### ***Institutional and Educational Policies***

Teachers' ratings to items related to educational policies raise concerns about their job conditions and the financial and intellectual supports they receive to read or conduct research. Specifically, the data showed that many teachers believe that educational textbooks and materials are not designed and developed based on research findings, and, thus, cannot be taught based on the pedagogical recommendations of recent research. These findings suggest that since textbooks and educational materials and teaching approaches are not revised and updated, teachers may not feel required to promote their professional knowledge and tune up their teaching styles accordingly.



Furthermore, the results disclosed some teachers' perception of research to the effect that, in the Iranian educational system, doing or reading research is often considered as an off-the-point issue, one that does not receive any striking attention. In line with this perception, the data pointed to teachers' consensus that their efforts in applying research findings into classroom context are not appreciated nor even taken into consideration. This echoes the need for a reformulation of our current teacher evaluation system. For instance, a new system can be envisioned, where teachers not only are institutionally encouraged to keep up with current thinking in educational issues, but also are intellectually and financially supported to conduct research projects.

The majority of the participants also resented the educational system for a lack of liberation for innovative and creative educational activities. Teachers' ratings particularly addressed the restrictive rules and regulations that are imposed by policymakers. Although using research findings typically entails doing pioneering and innovative undertakings, restrictive educational policies such as fixed schedules or predetermined lesson plans often appear preventive of such endeavors. Therefore, if the research-practice gap is to be challenged, teachers need to be trusted and given pedagogical autonomy for practicing their own theories.

#### ***Collaboration Between Researchers and Teachers***

The last category of barriers that perpetuate the research-practice gap has to do with the scarcity of communication between the communities of teachers and researchers. In line with the demand for a harmonious orchestration between the two sides of the gap, the results of this study suggest that establishing a mutual relationship between the two domains is both necessary and constructive. Although the analysis of the results does not exactly delineate how such a relationship can be constructed with respect to the actual measures that need to be taken at each end, it does highlight that the absence of interactions between researchers and practitioners is a significant barrier to the utilization of research findings in practice.

Specifically, the results indicated that there is not any systematic "research notification system" such that Iranian teachers may have no idea of what is going on in university centers. A lack of communication and contact makes research appear as a remote and far-reaching domain which cannot be approached without having a highly specialized body of knowledge. In fact, many teachers in this study clearly declared that they assume they do not have the pre-requisite knowledge for reading and conducting academic research papers. Moreover, the data shows participants believe that utilization of research findings requires a set of specific skills that many practicing teachers lack.

These barriers could arguably be attributed to the inadequacies of our teacher education programs, where prospective teachers are rarely trained to read, analyze, and use academic research (Mehrani, 2014). In fact, our current pre-service and in-service teacher education programs are most often organized within time limitations of educational semesters, and, therefore, instructors of research courses are not able to provide prospective teachers with realistic and meaningful research experience.

However, to bridge the research-practice gap, we argue that prospective teachers must not just be simply trained within course limitations but be educated for a prolonged profession. This requires establishing multiple paths through which academicians develop more cooperative models of interactions with practitioners. For instance, they ought to be more considerate of what their research outcome can really offer to teachers. Researchers should also work out alternative frameworks of disseminating their research so as to communicate clearly and succinctly with teachers (Gore & Giltin, 2004).

### **Conclusion**

A main concern behind embarking on the present study was to reflect a substantial number of teachers' views on research engagement. This is a remarkable contribution of this study as the ideas culminated in the findings inclusively echo teachers' voice. In terms of methodology, the study designed, developed, and rigorously validated a new instrument which can be used in future studies. In addition, the study also offered empirical findings about teachers' level of research engagement as well as the barriers that impede their engagement.

As a broad implication, this study gives credence to the criticisms against such simplistic conceptualizations as "exploratory practice," "teacher researcher movement," and "evidence-based teaching." This study showed that the research-practice division is indeed the result of a complex interaction of an array of factors that cannot be simply reduced to technical matters. In fact, the study suggests that such simplistic views are doomed unproductive in reducing the gulf between research and practice, and reconfiguration of the gap requires multidimensional strands of development both in research and practice communities as well as in educational policies.

As a further implication, the present study points to the requirement for establishing mutual interactions between researchers and practitioners for identifying research needs, conducting research and utilizing findings. Through reciprocal channels of communication, practitioners can offer a more eloquent description of their research needs, contribute to the process of doing research, and provide feedback on the impact of research. Such initiatives, of course, require hard work within schools and academic centers to bring these two communities into alignment and to build up mutual interactions between them.

To finalize with a positive tone, the findings suggest that despite existing restrictions, Iranian EFL teachers seem willing to keep their engagement with research to improve their pedagogical practice. Therefore, future studies can investigate potential pathways through which teachers' drive can be reinforced. In addition, future researchers can investigate teachers' reasons for research engagement and alternative paths to professional development such as action research and reflective teaching. Such inquiries can provide benchmarks for comparative analyses.

### **Acknowledgments**

We would like to thank the participants of this study for their contributions.

### References

- Akbari, R. (2007). Reflections on reflection: A critical appraisal of reflective practices in L2 teacher education. *System*, 35(2), 192-207. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2006.12.008>
- Akbari, R., Behzadpoor, F. & Dadvand, B. (2010). Development of English language teaching reflection inventory. *System*, 38(2), 211-227. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2010.03.003>
- Allison, D., & Carey, J. (2007). What do university language teachers say about language teaching research? *TESL Canada Journal* , 24 (2), 61-81. <https://doi.org/10.18806/tesl.v24i2.139>
- Allwright, D. (2005). Developing principles for practitioner research: The case of exploratory practice. *The Modern Language Journal* , 89 (3), 353-366. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.2005.00310.x>
- Babbie, E. (1990). *Survey research methods* (2nd ed.). Wadsworth Publishing Company.
- Bauer, K. & Fischer, F. (2007). The educational research-practice interface revisited: Ascripting perspective. *Educational Research and Evaluation*, 13, 221-236. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13803610701626150>
- Biesta, G. (2007). Bridging the gap between educational research and educational practice: The need for critical distance. *Educational Research and Evaluation*, 13 (3), 295-301. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13803610701640227>
- Burkhardt, H., & Schoenfeld, A. H. (2003). Improving educational research: Toward a more useful, more influential, and better-funded enterprise. *Educational Researcher*, 32 (9), 3-14. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X032009003>
- Borg, S. (2007). Research engagement in English language teaching. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 23, 731-747. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2006.03.012>
- Borg, S. (2009). English language teachers' conceptions of research. *Applied Linguistics*, 30 (3), 358-388. <https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/amp007>
- Borg, S., & Alshumaimeri, Y. (2012). University teacher educators' research engagement: Perspectives from Saudi Arabia. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 28, 347-356. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2011.10.011>
- Borg, S., & Liu, Y. (2013). Chinese college English teachers' research engagement. *TESOL Quarterly*, 47(2), 270-299. <https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.56>
- Brace, I. (2004). *Questionnaire design: How to plan, structure and write survey material for effective market research*. Kogan Page.
- Clarke, M. (1994). The dysfunctions of the theory/practice discourse. *TESOL Quarterly*, 28 (1), 9-26. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3587196>

- Dornyei, Z. (2003). *Questionnaires in second language research: Construction, administration, and processing*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.
- Everton, T., Galton, M. & Pell, T. (2002). Educational research and the teacher. *Research Papers in Education*, 17 (4), 373-401.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/0267152022000031388>
- Faribi, M., Derakhshan, A. & Robati, M. (2019). Iranian English language teachers' conceptions towards research. *Iranian Journal of Educational Sociology*. 2 (2): 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.29252/ijes.2.2.1>
- Funk, S. G., Tornquist, E. M., & Champagne, M. T. (1989). Application and evaluation of the dissemination model. *Western Journal of Nursing Research*, 11, 486-491. <https://doi.org/10.1177/019394598901100411>
- Gao, X., Barkhuizen, G., & Chow, A. (2010). 'Nowadays, teachers are relatively obedient': Understanding primary school English teachers' conceptions of and drives for research in China. *Language Teaching Research* , 15 (1), 61-81. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168810383344>
- Gore, J. M., & Gitlin, A. D. (2004). [RE]Visioning the academic-teacher divide: Power and knowledge in the educational community. *Teachers and Teaching* , 10 (1), 35-58. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13540600320000170918>
- Hargreaves, D. (1980). The occupation culture of teachers. In P. Woods (Ed.), *Teacher strategies: Explorations in the sociology of the school*. (pp. 125-149). Croom Helm Publishers).
- Hemsley-Brown, J. & Sharp, C. (2003). The use of research to improve professional practice: A systematic review of the literature. *Oxford Review of Education* 29, 449-470. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0305498032000153025>
- Macaro, E. (2003). *Teaching and learning a second language: A guide to recent research and its applications*. Continuum.
- McDonough, J., & McDonough, S. (1997). *Research methods for English language teachers*. Hodder Arnold.
- Mehrani, M. B. (2014). Bridging the gap between research and practice: Voice of mediators. *Journal of Pan-Pacific Association of Applied Linguistics*, 18(2), 21-39.
- Mehrani, M. B. (2015). English teachers' research engagement: Level of engagement and motivation. *Iranian Journal of Language Teaching Research*, 3(1), 83-97.
- Mehrani, M. B. (2016). Iranian EFL teachers' conceptions of research: An explanatory mixed methods approach. *Research in Applied Linguistics*, 7(1), 95-117. <https://doi.org/10.22055/rals.2016.11779>

- Mehrani, M. & Khodi, A. (2014). An appraisal of the Iranian academic research on English language teaching. *International Journal of Language Learning and Applied Linguistics World*, 6 (3) 89-97.
- Mehrani, M. & Behzadnia, A. (2013). English teachers' research engagement: Current barriers and future strategies. *International Journal of Foreign Language Teaching and Research*. 2 (4), 17- 32.
- Nassaji, H. (2012). The relationship between SLA research and language pedagogy: Teachers' perspectives. *Language Teaching Research*, 13(2), 337-365. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168812436903>
- Ortega, L. (2005). For what and whom is our research? The ethical as transformative lens in instructed SLA. *The Modern Language Journal*, 89, 428-443. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.2005.00315.x>
- Pica, T. (2005). Second language acquisition research and applied linguistics. In E. Hinkel (Ed.), *Handbook of research in second language teaching and learning* (pp. 263–80). Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Pieters, J. & de Vries, B. (2007). Preface to the special issue. *Educational Research and Evaluation* , 13 (3), 199-202. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13803610701626093>
- Rahimi, A. & Askari Bigdeli, R. (2016). Challenges of action research: Insights from language institutes. *Journal of Research in Applied Linguistics*, 7 (2), 3-15.
- Saeb, F., S. A., Nejadansari, D., & Moinzadeh, A. (2021). The impact of action research on teacher professional development: Perspectives from Iranian EFL teachers. *Teaching English Language*, 15(2), 265-297. <https://doi.org/10.22132/TEL.2021.143114>
- Schön, D. A. (1987). *Educating the reflective practitioner: Toward a new design for teaching and learning in the professions*. Jossey-Bass.
- Shafiee, Z. & Sotoudehnama, E. (2019). Contextual and educational dimensions of EFL teacher engagement in second language acquisition research. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 44 (9), 1-24. <https://doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2019v44.n9.1>
- Stewart, T. (2006). Teacher-researcher collaboration or teachers' research? *TESOL Quarterly*, 40, 421-430. <https://doi.org/10.2307/40264529>
- Usita, M. (2022). Research engagement: A participatory approach of learning for public school teachers . *International Journal of Educational Research & Amp; Social Sciences*, 3(1), 342–350. <https://doi.org/10.51601/ijersc.v3i1>

## **Authors' Biographies**

---



**Dr. Mehdi Mehranirad** is an associate professor of applied linguistics in the English Department at the University of Neyshabur. His research activities include three main strands of inquiries: bilingualism, psycholinguistics, and research-practice integration in applied linguistics.



**Dr. Foad Behzadpoor** received his MA and PhD in English language teaching from Tarbiat Modares University. He is currently working as an assistant professor of TEFL in English Department at Azarbaijan Shahid Madani University. His research interests include language teacher education, reflective teaching academic writing and SLA.

---



## **“We examine the relationship ...”: Grammatical Subject in Research Article Abstracts: Disciplinary and Functional Analysis**

Seyed Foad Ebrahimi<sup>1\*</sup> and Maryam Farnia<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Corresponding author: Assistant Professor, English Department, Shadegan  
Branch, Islamic Azad University, Shadegan, Iran,  
ORCID:0000-0001-7450-7187  
Email: Seyedfoade@gmail.com*

<sup>2</sup>*Assistant Professor of Applied Linguistics, Department of English  
Language and Literature, Payame Noor University, Iran  
ORCID: 0000-0001-7046-6533 Email: mfarnia@pnu.ac.ir*

### **Abstract**

Research article abstract acts as an important device to manage information and to let the reader decide whether it is merit to continue reading the research article. In this paper, we intend to investigate the frequencies and discourse functions of types of grammatical subject (unmarked theme) used in research article abstracts from four disciplines. To this end, 300 research article abstracts were randomly selected (75 from each discipline) from leading prestigious journals in the four disciplines namely Applied Linguistics, Economics, Agriculture, and Applied Physics, and were analyzed based on Gosden's (1993) classifications that include 16 types of grammatical subject. The results indicated that only six types of grammatical subject were used in the corpus and the frequencies of these types varied across the four disciplines. Besides, the results reported high similarities concerning the discourse functions served using the grammatical subject types. Thus, it could be concluded that the selection and discourse functions of the grammatical subject types are imposed by conventions of writing research article abstracts. The results could add to the existing knowledge of writing research article abstract in the analyzed disciplines by increasing awareness concerning selections of grammatical subject types.

*Keywords:* cross disciplinary, functional analysis, grammatical subject, research article abstract

### ARTICLE INFO

Research Article

Received: Friday, May 21, 2021

Accepted: Sunday, April 15, 2022

Published: Sunday, May 1, 2022

Available Online: Sunday, April 15, 2022

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.22049/jalda.2022.27278.1321>

Online ISSN: 2821-0204; Print ISSN: 2820-8986



© The Author(s)

## **Introduction**

Members of the disciplinary community communicate new knowledge to other members through different genres among which is the genre of a research article (RA) abstract. Therefore, the RA abstract is considered as a significant research domain since it performs important roles in the disciplinary scientific community. It serves a variety of writings and readings purposes and functions. It aids writers squeezing important information and outcomes of an RA into a compressed unit and managing flow of information to be transferred in the scientific community (Martin & Rose, 2003). Besides, a RA abstract could play a momentous role in influencing gate keepers of a journal or organizers of a conference to publish or accept a RA. Writing a RA abstract with the above characteristics is quite challenging for writers (especially novice non-native writers). Thus, analyzing linguistic features such as Halliday's (1994) notion of theme in RA abstracts written by successful writers from different disciplines could equip writers with a clear image of how to have an appropriate selection of theme to realize the text development and flow of information best.

Halliday (1994) defines theme as the “element in a particular structural configuration taken as whole, organizes the clause as a message; that is the configuration theme and rheme” (p. 38). According to this definition, “a clause is made of two parts; a theme followed by a rheme. Themes are the starting point for the message; it is the ground from which the clause takes off, and helps the reader to know what the clause will be about and what is going to tell the reader” (p. 38).

Halliday (1994) classified theme as two kinds: marked and unmarked. Unmarked themes are realized as grammatical subjects and marked themes include all the linguistic elements, which come before the grammatical subject.

Theme is an important linguistic resource to reveal textual information and could equip us with a more thoughtful understanding of how discourse is developed (Ebrahimi, 2016; Lores, 2004; Martinez, 2003; North, 2005). Its importance also sources from the versatile significance role of the theme in clarifying “what the writer is writing about and how questions about epistemology, construction, or agency enter into the writer's thinking” (MacDonald, 1992, p. 539). The theme is also the best spot in the sentence, which could illustrate the association of semantics and syntax and it indicates the method of text development (Jalilifar, 2010; Khedri & Jalilifar, 2011; Wang, 2007). Thus, theme distribution is a prominent strategy of text development.

Having the importance of theme in mind, the selection of theme becomes a challenge for writers especially novice non-native writers (Lores, 2004) The selection of theme becomes more challenging when the text is not long and limited



in word count such as the genre of RA abstracts. This challenge is due to the fact that Halliday's notion of theme is descended from Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) theory that fronts the claim that "language is a social phenomenon, and in dealing with language it works at the level of the text as a unit of meaning" (Forey, 2004, p. 449). Theme has two features, grammatical and functional. By the grammatical feature it is meant the position of theme at the point of departure of the clause and by the functional feature it refers to the function of what the clause is about.

This paper contributes to the debate by examining the distribution of unmarked theme types across four subject disciplines namely: Applied Linguistics (henceforth, AL), Economics (henceforth, Eco), Agriculture (henceforth Agri), and Applied Physics (henceforth AP). We presume that the selection of linguistic features is influenced by their disciplinary context (Afros & Schryer, 2009; Hyland, 2009; North, 2005) , and hence the authors' realizations and use of discourse functions of unmarked theme types (henceforth Grammatical Subject (GS)) in RA abstracts can differ with disciplinary variations. What motivated us to focus on GS is founded on MacDonald's (1992) argumentation that GS choices are sensitive to disciplinarity. She expounds that "the grammatical subject slot is ... the most important spot for determining what a writer is writing about and how questions about epistemology, construction or agency enter into the writer's thinking" (1992, p. 539). This claim has also been emphasized by others (e.g., North, 2003; Vande Kopple, 1994, to name a few). They believe that GS highlights the writers' beliefs and values and brings to light the shared knowledge between writers and readers from the same domain.

To meet aim of this study, researchers intend to answer the following questions:

1. How frequent are the types of GS in the RA abstracts from the four disciplines namely AL, Eco, Agri, and AP?

2. What are the discourse functions performed by using the types of GS in the RA abstracts from the four disciplines namely AL, Eco, Agri, and AP?

### **Literature Review**

Systemic functional grammar (henceforth, SFG), the most well-known component of a broad social semiotic approach to language called Systemic Functional Linguistics (henceforth, SFL), is a grammar model originally articulated by Halliday in 1960s. SFG is mainly concerned with the available choices to speakers or writers of a language made by their grammatical systems. These choices are assumed to be meaningful and relate speakers' or writers' intentions to the concrete forms of a language.

Matthiessen and Halliday (1997) argue that SFL considers the clause as made by a combination of three metafunctions: a) interpersonal metafunction that deals with speaker and listener interaction and how grammatical choices help enacting the social role generally and speech role particularly through dialogic interactions such as establishing, changing, and maintaining interpersonal relations; b) ideational metafunction that deals with ideation which is the grammatical choice for structuring our experience of the world around and inside us; and c) textual metafunction that deals with text development and this is done through presenting the ideational and interpersonal meanings as shared information between speaker and listener in text unfolding in context. Theme is one of the major textual systems is the resource for providing a local context for a clause through selecting a local point of departure in the flow of information. According to Halliday's (1994) classification of theme, unmarked themes are realized as grammatical subjects.

Several researchers have focused on the use of GS in different genres of academic writing among which are research article sections and abstracts (Ebrahimi, 2017; Ebrahimi & Chan, 2014; Gosden, 1993; Loes, 2004). Ebrahimi and Chan (2014) studied the functional use of GS in RA abstracts from two disciplines of Economic and Applied Linguistics. They analyzed 60 RA abstracts (30 from each discipline) using Gosden's (1993) classifications of GS's types and discourse functions. They found that disciplinary differences were quite clear concerning the discourse functions enacted through the use of GSs. They concluded that academic writings such as RA abstracts are shaped based on the rules and conventions of disciplinary writings.

Ebrahimi (2017) investigated 40 research article introductions from four disciplines for the realization and discourse functions of GS. He selected his corpus from high-prestigious journals. He analyzed the corpus based on the classifications suggested by Ebrahimi (2014) that included eight types of GS. His findings suggested that the selection of GS types was guided by the nature of disciplines. The findings suggested the necessity of the cross-disciplinary study of GS. In relation to discourse functions, it was reported that findings stress impose of rhetorical functions of introduction sections on the realizations of discourse functions.

Gosden (1993) investigated discourse functions of the GS in a corpus of 36 research articles written by native writers from the three disciplines of Physics, Chemistry, and Biological sciences. To analyse the data, Gosden used Davies' (1988, 1996) categorization of discourse functions of the grammatical subject. Davies (1988, 1996) categorized the discourse function of the GS into four domains and each domain into some sub-domains which are as follows: a) the participant domain, b) the discourse domain, c) the hypothesized and objectivized domain, and d) the real-world domain. The result indicated that two-third of sentence-initial

elements were grammatical subjects. This means that writers in all three disciplines selected the grammatical subject as a point of departure. Moreover, the study reported the dominance of the real world domain, which occupied three-quarters of all the grammatical subjects. According to Gosden (1993), the greater use of the real-world domain was a result of the self-evident nature of the scientific RA. He concluded that grammatical subject is visualized differently in research article rhetorical sections. He also concluded that the differences between the sections were strongly shown through the thematic structure.

Lores (2004) studied the realizations of thematic structure in RA abstracts. To this end, 36 RA abstracts were selected from four Applied Linguistic journals. The analysis was carried out using Gosden (1992) and Davies (1988, 1996) models of thematic structures. Results showed that thematic distributions and choices were different due to differences in the structures of RA abstracts.

The above-reviewed studies could help us to conclude that there is still a gap in the literature concerning detailed understanding concerning the use and discourse functions of GS types in RA abstracts. This gap may be noticed more when writers from disciplines other than ELT want to write RA abstracts. Thus, this study aims to fill the gap through careful analysis of data from the four disciplines to report on the GS types and functions.

## **Method**

### **Corpus Compilation**

To compile the corpus for this study, the following steps were taken. First, following Swales (1990), academic community is a discourse community which includes some disciplinary communities. This means that disciplinary communities are more specific discourse communities. According to Becher (1989, 1994), disciplinary community is as an academic tribe with its special set of intellectual values and its own “patch of cognitive territory” (p. 153). Becher (1989) classifies academic disciplines into four disciplinary areas of natural sciences (i.e., hard pure), humanities and social sciences (i.e., soft pure), science-based professions (i.e., hard applied), and social professions (i.e., soft applied). Next, to meet the classifications of disciplines suggested by Becher (1989), four disciplines of AL (as a representative of soft applied), Eco (as a representative soft pure), Agri (as a representative of hard pure), and AP (as a representative of hard applied) were randomly selected from which 300 RA abstracts from four subject disciplines (75 RA abstracts from each discipline) were analyzed. These abstracts were extracted from the RAs published from the 2010 to 2014, and all followed Swales’ (1990) IMRD (i.e., Introduction, Method, Result, and Discussion) structure. Details of the corpus are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1**  
*Details of Corpus*

| Discipline          | Journal  | No. of Abstract | Word Count | Years of Publication |
|---------------------|--|-----------------|------------|----------------------|
| Applied Linguistics | Applied Linguistics                              | 75              | 15021      | 2011-2014            |
| Economics           | Oxford Economic Papers                           | 75              | 12510      | 2011-2014            |
| Agriculture         | The Journal of Agricultural Science              | 75              | 23632      | 2011-2014            |
| Applied Physics     | The European Physical Journal of Applied Physics | 75              | 11463      | 2011-2014            |

### Taxonomy for Analysis

To analyze the data for the GS, this study relied on Gosden's (1993) taxonomy. The classification includes four domains of Participant, Discourse, Hypothesized, and Objectivized and Real World. This taxonomy presents a continuum of focus on the GS from real world to participant. In one extreme of the continuum, writer is participated visibly in the research process and in the other end, the focus is overtly on research-based real world entities and activities.

The four unmarked theme domains and the discourse functions of the unmarked themes are described and illustrated as follow:

A. Participant Domain is recognized through the use of discourse participant (e.g., *we*), participant viewpoint (e.g., *our experiments, our analysis*), and interactive participant (e.g., *Smith (1987)*).

B. Discourse Domain refers to discourse event / process (e.g., *the conclusion*), macro discourse entity (e.g., *the study, this article*), micro discourse entity (e.g., *results, the method*), interactive discourse entity (e.g., *previous studies*), and empty discourse theme (e.g., *it is concluded*).

C. Hypothesised and Objectivised Domain refers to hypothesised viewpoint (e.g., *the possibility*), objectivised viewpoint (e.g., *one reason*), hypothesised entity (e.g., *the design*), and empty hypothetical and objectivised theme (e.g., *there is evidence*).

D. Real world Domain focuses on mental process (e.g., *deduction*), real world entity (e.g., *study participants*), real world event and process (e.g., *conceptualising WTC as a dynamic system*), and empty real world theme (e.g., *it was found*).

## Procedures

To meet the aim of the study, the following steps are taken. First, 300 RA abstracts (75 from each discipline) were randomly selected and saved into a word format. Second, after collecting the data, the researchers identified the GS of each t-unit. To this end, the researchers read the 300 RA abstracts carefully and identified all the used GSs. The unit of analysis was the T-unit defined as a clause complex that contains one main independent clause together with all the hypotactic clauses that are dependent on it (Fries, 2002).

To minimize the level of subjective judgment, the coded data sample was reviewed by three Ph.D. students in Applied Linguistics for a consistency check. To this end, the three raters checked a sample of 60 RA abstracts from the corpus. If any, the differences in GS identifications were subject to negotiation and discussion to reach an agreement. Finally, results are presented and discussed.

## Results

The RA abstracts were analyzed for the GS types and discourse functions. The results are presented and discussed in the following sub-sections. The GS types found in the RA abstracts are *Real World Event*, *Real World Entity*, *Discourse Participant*, *Macro Discourse Entity*, *Micro Discourse Entity*, and *Empty Theme*. Table 2 presents the overall distribution of the GS types across the four corpora. The results show that the various types of GS are present almost in all corpora with an exception of discourse participants type was absent in agricultural. The results are discussed in detail in the following sections.

**Table 2**  
*Frequency and Percentage of the GS Types*

| GS types               | AL  |     | Eco |     | Agri |     | AP  |     |
|------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|-----|-----|-----|
|                        | F   | %   | F   | %   | F    | %   | F   | %   |
| Real World Entity      | 142 | 33  | 130 | 33  | 459  | 68  | 199 | 47  |
| Real World Event       | 32  | 7   | 28  | 7   | 105  | 25  | 86  | 13  |
| Discourse Participant  | 47  | 11  | 127 | 32  | -    | -   | 28  | 6   |
| Micro discourse Entity | 97  | 23  | 38  | 10  | 74   | 11  | 51  | 12  |
| Empty Real World theme | 21  | 5   | 40  | 10  | 39   | 5   | 25  | 6   |
| Macro Discourse Entity | 89  | 21  | 34  | 8   | 19   | 3   | 18  | 4   |
| Total                  | 428 | 100 | 397 | 100 | 677  | 100 | 426 | 100 |

Note: AL: Applied Linguistics Eco: Economic Agri: Agriculture AP: Applied Physics

Table 2 presents the frequency distribution of real world entity GS in the four groups of writers. As shown in the table, Agri writers used real world entity GS more frequently compared to other subject disciplines, while AL and Eco writers denoted the least attention towards the use of this GS. These results could suggest that Agri writers are more into writing topic-based RA abstracts. As a result, such RA abstracts are more elaborative on the objects on which the study is carried out.

The real world entity GS type is used to serve three discourse functions namely: a) stating the significance of the study, b) referring to objects and stating related steps or procedures in the methodology, and c) referring to objects and stating the related results. An analysis of the corpus for the occurrence of this discourse function is shown in Table 3.

**Table 3**  
*Discourse Functions of the Real World Entity*

| Discourse Function  | AL | Eco | Agri | AP |
|---|----|-----|------|----|
| Stating significance of study   | ✓  | ✓   | ✓    | ✓  |
| Referring to objects and stating related step or procedure in methodology | ✓  | ✓   | ✓    | ✓  |
| Referring to objects and stating the related results.                     | ✓  | ✓   | ✓    | ✓  |

As shown in Table 3, the first function of GS type, stating the significance of the study, was present in all four sets of RA abstracts. Examples 1 and 2 present instances from the corpora.

Example 1: ***Grass growth in temperate regions*** is highly seasonal and difficult to predict. (Agri)

Example 2: ***Fast linear transformer driver (FLTD)*** has some advantages in repetitive operation compared with traditional pulsed power generators. (AP)

The second discourse function of this GS type states objects that is linked to the procedure in the methodology. An examination of the corpora revealed that this discourse function is present in all groups of RA abstracts. Examples from the corpus are presented in 3 and 4.

Example 3: ***Bayesian, classical and non-parametric approaches*** were used to evaluate the performance of GM crops v. their conventional counterparts. (Agri)

Example 4: ***A model*** is presented on the basis of thermionic emission and tunneling to explain the unusually high leakage current observed in these diodes. (AP)

The third discourse function of the real world entity GS type, referring to objects and stating the related results, was also present in the abstract of all four corpora. Examples extracted from the corpus are presented in 5 and 6.

Example 5: **Knowledge of orthography, part of speech, and meaning** showed different patterns of development with increasing encounters. (AL)

Example 6: At low fields, **drift velocity** increases linearly, but deviates from the linearity toward high electric fields. (AP)

The results in Table 2 indicate a disciplinary difference concerning the use of the real world event GS. This GS was frequently used in AP research articles abstract while there were few occurrences in AL and Eco abstracts.

For the discourse functions of the real world event, the result reported two discourse functions for this GS in the RA abstracts analyzed (see Table 4).

**Table 4**  
*Discourse functions of the Real World Event*

| Discourse Functions   | AL | Eco | Agri | AP |
|---|----|-----|------|----|
| identifying, explaining, or defining a process used or adapted in data collection, analysis and measurement | ✓  | ✓   | ✓    | ✓  |
| presenting the event from which the results are generated   | ✓  | ✓   | ✓    | ✓  |

The corpus was analyzed for the use of the first discourse function, which is to identify, explain, and define a process used or adapted in data collection, analysis, and measurement. The results showed that this function was present in all four corpora. Extracts from the corpus are presented in examples 7 and 8.

Example 7: **The effects of these investments** are also compared to the effects of investments to developed economies (DCs). (Eco)

Example 8: **High-speed current-voltage measurements and Hall measurements over the temperature range 27–300 K** were used to study hot-electron dynamics. (AP)

The second discourse function was presenting the event from which the results are generated. This discourse function that is similar to other discourse functions was found to be present in all four disciplines. Extracts from the corpus are presented in examples 9 and 10.

Example 9: Therefore, **selection for increased growth or LS** may have a negative genetic effect on the other traits. (Agri)

Example 10: Indeed, **these evolutions** show an abrupt increase that is observed when the charge packet aspect occurred in the sample under high dc applied voltage. (AP)

The results in Table 2 indicate that there are significant disciplinary differences between the four disciplines concerning the use of the discourse participant GS. As shown in Table 2, discourse participant is absent in Agri while it is frequently used in Eco.

The data were also analyzed for the discourse functions that are served by the use of the discourse participant GS. The discourse functions of discourse participants GS in RA abstracts and their occurrence in the corpora are presented in Table 5.

**Table 5**  
*Discourse Functions of the Discourse Participant*

| Discourse Function                               | AL | Eco | Agri | AP |
|--|----|-----|------|----|
| Authorizing aim of study                         | ✓  | ✓   | -    | ✓  |
| Authorizing a step or a procedure of methodology | ✓  | ✓   | -    | ✓  |
| Authorizing findings of a study                  | ✓  | ✓   | -    | ✓  |

As shown in Table 5, the first discourse function is to state the aim of study. The results showed that this discourse function was present in RA abstracts in the three disciplines (Examples 11-12).

Example 11: *We* examine the relationship between R&D, product innovation, and exporting for a sample of new technology based firms (NTBFs) in the UK. (Eco)

Example 12: In this work *we* report on the characteristics of (Ni / Au) / AlGa<sub>n</sub> / Ga<sub>n</sub> / SiC Schottky barrier diode (SBD). (AP)

The second discourse function of discourse participants is to state the authority of writers concerning the method of a study. The analyses revealed the presence of this function in all three corpora (Examples 13-14). The use of this discourse function can help writers to catch the readers and editors' attention towards the significance and contributions of a study.

Example 13: *We* apply Extreme Bound Analysis (EBA) on a panel of up to 120 countries covering the period 1960–2001. (Eco)

Example 14: To obtain the electron temperature as a function of the applied electric field and power loss as a function of the electron temperature, *we* used the so-called mobility comparison method with power balance equations. (AP)

The last discourse function of discourse participants is to present the authority of writer towards the findings of the study. This discourse function was also present in three corpora (Example 15-16).



Example 15: *We* found that, of the items that were difficult though composed of familiar words, ~40 per cent involved metaphor. (AL)

Example 16: *We* find interesting dynamics in the sector. (Eco)

The results in Table 6 indicate that AL writers refer more to the micro discourse entity GS in the thematic position compared to the other three groups of writers. This could indicate that in AL RA abstracts, writers thematize the micro discourse entity GS type to guide writers through the rhetorical sections of RA abstracts and to leave the responsibility of ideas, claims, arguments, and information presented to the study itself and set them free from taking the responsibility.

An examination of the corpus indicates that the micro discourse entity can be used to serve four functions which are as follows: direct mention of the aim of the study, direct mention of the methodology, direct mention of the findings obtained, and direct mention of the review of the literature. The presence of these four functions in the corpus is presented in Table 6:

**Table 6**  
*Discourse Functions of the Micro Discourse Entity*

| Discourse Function                  | AL | Eco | Agri | AP |
|-------------------------------------|----|-----|------|----|
| Direct mention of aim of a study    | ✓  | ✓   | ✓    | ✓  |
| Direct mention of methodology       | ✓  | ✓   | ✓    | ✓  |
| Direct mention of findings obtained | ✓  | ✓   | ✓    | ✓  |
| Direct mention of literature review | ✓  | ✓   | -    | -  |

The first discourse function is the direct mention of objectives or aims of the study (Examples 17-18). These examples could indicate the importance of explicit mention of the aim of the study. It seems that writers want to help readers to decide to read the RAs or not by clearly stating the aim of the study. Such a function could also help to realize the rhetorical functions of introduction section of RA following IMRD structure.

Example 17: *The goal of this paper* is to assess the impact of the euro on the relationship between firm size and exports. (Eco)

Example 18: *The aims of this work* were to measure the entrance and exit dose for patient treated for head and neck tumors. (AP)

The next function was to highlight some important aspects of methodology. This discourse function was common in all four disciplines (Examples 19-20). This could suggest that writers intend to highlight contributions of their studies in the

methodology section. Some aspects of methodology could highlight the importance of experiment and could help readers to have a clear image of how the experiment was carried out in the study.

Example 19: **The data used** are rich and allow us to account for potential ability bias. (Eco)

Example 20: **This method** is also faster than numerical integrations of Biot and Savart law. (AP)

Another important function served using the micro discourse entity GS type was highlighting results obtained. This function was also common in the four sets of RA abstracts analyzed (Examples 21-22). This discourse function is not surprising, as the writers prefer to leave the responsibility of findings to the study and free themselves.

Example 21: **Results** show that societal trust positively and significantly influences group loan contribution rates, that group lending appears to create as well as harness social capital, and that peer monitoring can have perverse as well as beneficial effects. (Eco)

Example 22: **These results** may provide some insights into switching magnetization electrically for spintronics and presenting independent tunneling states in a single junction for multi-value storage memory applications. (AP)

The last discourse function in the list is the reference to the existing literature. This discourse function was reported to be not ignored in Agri and AP RA abstracts analyzed (Examples 23-24). Such use of GS could help to link the study to the existing literature and highlight that the current study is in line with the existing literature.

Example 23: **Previous research in this area** is limited in that it: (i) has focused on items from Coxhead's Academic Word List (2000), which is skewed towards certain disciplines, and focuses only on reading needs; (ii) has not investigated variation across levels of study; and (iii) creates a possibly false dichotomy between generic and discipline-specific vocabulary. (AL)

Example 24: **Previous studies** that examine the simultaneous setting of income taxation and education policy have overwhelmingly concluded that optimal education policy should be regressive. (Eco)

The results presented in Table 2 indicate that the empty real world theme has received little attention from the writers of RA abstracts from four disciplines. The results also mentioned that in comparison with other disciplines, Eco writers dedicated greater attention to the use of this GS type.

The empty real world theme was used to serve the function of postponing the results and discussion.

**Table 7**

*Discourse Functions of the Empty Real World Theme*

| Discourse Function                | AL | Eco | Agri | AP |
|-----------------------------------|----|-----|------|----|
| Postponing results and discussion | ✓  | ✓   | ✓    | ✓  |

This function was common in all four groups of RA abstracts (Examples 25-26). Table 7 presents the discourse function enacted through the use of empty real world theme.

Example 25: *There* are marked differences in behaviour between the planning and implementation stages, as well as between the fiscal policy of EU countries and other OECD countries. (Eco)

Example 26: *It* is found that CdS films grown at lower solution temperature (60 °C) give a higher charge carrier recombination rate at CdS / P3OT interface and larger short-circuit current density and energy conversion efficiency values in the corresponding solar cells, in comparison with the 80 °C deposited ones. (AP)

The results presented in Table 2 indicate the disciplinary differences concerning the use of the macro discourse entity GS. As it is evident in Table 2, AL writers have dedicated more attention to the use of this GS type compared with other subject disciplines. The use of this GS type was somehow similar in two disciplines of Agri and AP RA abstracts.

The discourse function that was commonly served by the use of the macro discourse entity in the four sets of RA abstracts was to refer to the aim of the study (Examples 27-28).

**Table 8**

*Discourse Functions of the Macro Discourse Entity*

| Discourse Function                                  | AL | Eco | Agri | AP |
|---|----|-----|------|----|
| To state aim of study                               | ✓  | ✓   | ✓    | ✓  |
| To present the contributions to existing literature | -  | -   | ✓    | -  |
| To state the results obtained                       | ✓  | -   | -    | -  |

This discourse function might suggest that the clear reference to the aim of the study by the writers using this GS type could suggest that the contributions and significance of the study is completely stated in the aim of the study.

Example 27: ***This article*** examines how Spanish-speaking Latina (im)migrants position themselves relative to US language policies. (AL)

Example 28: ***This study*** examines how current field crop cultivars, adapted to northern long-day conditions and short growing seasons, have responded to the elevated temperatures, especially with regard to determination of yield potential and quality. (Agri)

In Agri and AL RA abstracts respectively, this GS types was used to serve the discourse functions of a) direct reference to the literature (Example 29) and b) direct reference to the results obtained (Example 30). These two functions could suggest that writers sometimes intend to help readers to see where the contributions and significance of their studies are. In these two discourse functions, writers see the contributions and significance of their studies are to be presented in relation to the existing literature or according to the results obtained.

Example 29: ***Previous research*** has demonstrated changes in crop growth, dry matter (DM) partitioning and lint yield of cotton after the application of plant growth regulators. (Agri)

Example 30: ***The study*** clearly shows that the interaction of different complexity measures change over time. (AL)

### Discussion

The results presented in the earlier section are discussed from the most frequent to the least frequent GS types. The most frequent GS type was the real world entity that could result in writing less personal RA abstracts. Results, as to the frequencies of the real world entity are in line with Ebrahimi (2017) and Ebrahimi et al. (2014). The similarity could suggest that even in writing different academic genres, such GS is considered as an important anchor point in text development.

The results showed that the first discourse function of real world entity GS type, stating the significance of the study, was present in all four sets of RA abstract. That means the writers used this feature in the RA abstract to show the readers the importance of their study as well as to make them to read the accompanying RA. Moreover, the second discourse function of real world entity which states objects that are linked to the procedure of the methodology was found to be presented in the RA abstracts of all four corpora. The writers used this discourse function to ease the comprehension of the objects that is related to a step and to increase the validity of the study. Understanding such relation could help the readers in better comprehension of the results generated base on the methodology. Furthermore, the third discourse function of real world entity GS type, referring to objects and stating

the related results, was presented in the RA abstracts of the four corpora. The use of this discourse function in the RA abstract could create cause and effect relationship between the objects and the results, which, as a result, make the abstract easier to comprehend and increase the validity of the study.

The results concerning the frequency of the real world event GS: the results indicate a disciplinary difference concerning the use of this GS. The greatest use was in AP RA abstracts and the least occurrence in AL and Eco RA abstracts. Based on this finding, it can be argued that the use of this GS is guided by the nature of the discipline. The difference could attribute to the focus of AP writers on the processes that occurred in the study. They feel more need of including these processes possibly to provide the reader with a clearer view of their research. In addition, the greatest disposition could be attributed to the experiment-based nature of the research in the AP discipline. In this discipline, writers feel a greater need to refer to the processes involved to set out the experiment. Such a reference could be contributed to a better interpretation of the experiment.

The discourse functions performed through using the real world event GS were identifying, explaining, or defining a process used or adapted in data collection, analysis, and measurement. As the real world discourse function was common in all four disciplines, it could help to argue that the writers intend to show the contribution of their studies in the method section of the RA abstract as well as other rhetorical sections. In other words, the authors used this discourse function to increase the chance of publication and motivate the readers to go through the RA. In addition, it could help the writers to set a relationship between the method section and the result section of the RA abstract, which in turn could increase the validity of the study as the results are rationalized.

Results reported disciplinary differences concerning the frequency rate of using the discourse participants GS. The frequent use of this GS type in the Eco discipline indicates that Eco writers prefer to express their stance in the abstract and to take responsibility for their claims in their studies. In another word, the use of discourse participants in the corpus indicates the writers' authority and confidence in their evaluation as well as the commitment to their claims. On the other hand, the low frequency of this GS type in AP discipline might express the writers' less motivation to take responsibility for the findings. The low frequency of discourse participants can put the writers safe concerning the possible falsification of their arguments. The results reported here are in contrast to the findings of Ebrahimi et al. (2014) study, in which little attention was given to the use of discourse participant GS. This could indicate that the use of discourse participants is discipline-specific.

The presence of the first function of discourse participant, stating the aim of the study, shows the authority and position of the writers in relation to the aim of the

study, in all disciplines; this indicates that all writers had attempted to convince the editors and then the readers about the authenticity of the study. In addition, based on Hyland's (2009) model of RA abstract writing, stating the aim of the study is an obligatory step in writing RA abstract. Thus, this finding could help to argue that writers preferred to show their authority by authorizing the aim of the study. The presence of the second discourse function, stating the authority of writers concerning the method of the study, indicates that writers tried to catch the readers and editors' attention towards the significance and the contributions of the study. The writers in all four corpora preferred to authorize the contributions and the significance of their study in the method section.

The results indicated that AL writers refer more to the micro discourse entity GS type in the thematic position compared to other three corpora. This could indicate that in AL RA abstracts, writers thematize the micro discourse entity GS type to guide readers through the rhetorical sections of RA abstracts and to leave the responsibility of ideas, claims, arguments, and information presented to the study itself and set them free from taking the responsibility concerning arguments and claims. This is not in line with the study of Ebrahimi et al. (2014). In their study, they have reported greater use of this theme in the results and discussion section of research article analyzed from different disciplines. This could help to conclude that the use of such theme is highly related to the analyzed genre. The highly frequent use of this theme in Ebrahimi et al. (2014) study can be explained by the fact that writers are more willing to free them from taking the responsibility of findings, claims, and arguments in the result and discussion sections. The use of micro discourse entity can raise the validity of the study, which can be found among writers of AI and Agri. The frequency of this feature in the abstract section is higher than Ebrahimi's (2017) findings of introduction section. This could suggest that in RA introductions, writers feel less need to refer to micro discourse entity GS in the thematic position due to the nature of RA introduction section.

The results indicated that the empty real world theme has received little attention from the writers of RA abstracts in the four disciplines. The use of this GS may help writers postpone the information to the last section of the sentence. This structure is applicable mostly when the subject is long and it helps in devoting the responsibility to the study itself and it is in contrast with the discourse participant where writers take the responsibility by themselves. The little attention towards the use of this GS seems to be rooted in the fact that RA abstracts are limited in word count; thus, there is little space for such structure. The little use of this GS could help in keeping the RA abstract to be more subjective and personal. The results reported in this study are in line with Ebrahimi (2017) suggesting that the use of such GS type is rare in academic texts.

The empty real world theme was used to serve the function of postponing the results and discussion. This function was common in all four groups of RA abstracts. Such an application can tentatively suggest that the writers in all subject disciplines prefer to be less visible while reporting the research outcomes and claims. This could be discussed based on the information principle, which says that the writers present longer elements that carry a high load of information towards the end of the sentence. It seems that the writers use this theme along with reporting verbs to remain neutral concerning the research outcomes and claims.

The overall findings presented disciplinary differences concerning the use of the macro discourse entity GS. The findings showed that AL writers have dedicated more attention to the use of this GS type compared with other disciplines. The use of this GS type was somehow similar in the two disciplines of Agri and AP RA abstracts. The results reported here are in line with Ebrahimi and Chan's (2014) study in that both studies have investigated samples from the genre of RA abstracts. Moreover, the findings are in contrast with Ebrahimi et al. (2014) study in which the results and the discussion sections of RA were analyzed.

In general, it seems that in academic genres such as RA abstract from different disciplines only some types of GS are commonly used. The favored GS types are used to enact different discourse functions required by conventional features of genre or disciplines.

The results of the study can pedagogically benefit novice researchers, especially non-native speakers and post-graduate students, in their academic writing by learning the conventions of their own disciplines. This has become more important due to postgraduate students and researchers' pressure to publish and the possibility of getting rejected simply not by following the discipline convention (Peacock, 2011). Since getting published can lead to “an enhanced reputation, prestige, peer acceptance, and research grants” (Kanoksilapatham, 2007, p. 173), this has become a challenge for those novice or non-native researchers who are unable to develop their text scientifically adequately. Therefore, as Hyland (2007) states, “Genre-based writing instruction offers students an explicit understanding of how target texts are structured and why they are written in the ways they are” (p. 151).

### **Conclusion**

This research aimed to study the realizations and the discourse functions of GS types in RA abstracts from four disciplines namely AL, Eco, Agri, and AP. The results were presented and discussed, thus we can conclude that in the four disciplines, writers preferred to use six GS types in the subject position. The results also pointed to some disciplinary differences with the frequencies of the GS types. As it is evident in Tables 3 to 8, these GS types were used to enact some discourse functions imposed by the rhetorical conventions of RA abstracts.

Despite its findings, the study also suffers from some limitations: first, this study analyzed only 75 RA abstracts from each discipline which could be considered

as one of the limitations of this study. Further studies could be replicated with higher sample size. Moreover, in this study, only four subject disciplines were analyzed. To move one step ahead and to validate findings of this study, a focus on more disciplines is necessary. In addition, other studies whose focus is on sections other than abstract can provide more insights into the variation of use in marked and unmarked GS types.

### Acknowledgements

This research is supported financially through project ID 10038 by Islamic Azad University, Shadegan Branch.

### References

- Afros, E., & Schryer, C. F. (2009). Promotional (meta)discourse in research articles in language and literacy studies. *English for Specific Purposes*, 28, 58-6. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.esp.2008.09.001>
- Becher, T. (1989). *Academic tribes and territories: Intellectual enquiry and the cultures of disciplines*. Open University Press.
- Becher, T. (1994). The significance of disciplinary differences. *Studies in Higher education*, 19 (2), 151-161. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079412331382007>
- Davies, F. (1988). Designing a writing syllabus in English for academic purposes. In P. C. Robinson (Ed.), *Academic writing: Process and product* (ELT Documents 129, pp. 130-142). Modern English Publications.
- Davies, F. (1996). Marked theme as a heuristic for analyzing text-type, text and genre. In J. Pigue & D. J. Viera (Eds.), *Applied linguistics: Theory and practice in ESP* (pp. 45 – 79). Valencia University Press.
- Ebrahimi, S. F. (2014). *Thematicity in English academic research articles across disciplines in hard and soft sciences* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. Universiti Putra Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
- Ebrahimi, S. F. (2016). Theme types and patterns in research article abstracts: A cross disciplinary study. *International Journal of English Language & Translation Studies*, 4 (3), 104-115. Retrieved from [www.eltjournal.org](http://www.eltjournal.org)
- Ebrahimi, S. F. (2017). “the overall aim of this work is ....”: Functional analysis of grammatical subject in research article introductions across four disciplines. *Discourse and Interaction*, 10 (1), 5-30. doi: 10.5817/DI2017-1-5
- Ebrahimi, S. F., & Chan, S. H. (2014). Research article abstracts in applied linguistics and economics: Functional analysis of the grammatical subject. *Australian Journal of Linguistics*, 35 (4), 381-397. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07268602.2015.1070660>



- Ebrahimi, S. F., Chan, S. H., & Ain, A. N. (2014). Discourse functions of grammatical subject in results and discussion sections of research article across four disciplines. *Journal of Writing Research*, 6 (2), 125-140. <https://doi=10.1.1.674.6511>
- Forey, G. (2004). Workplace texts: Do they mean the same for teachers and business people? *English for Specific Purposes*, 23, 447-469. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.esp.2004.01.003>
- Fries, P. H. (2002). The flow of information in a written text. In P. Fries, M. Cummings, D. Lockwood, & W. Spruiell (Eds.), *Relations and functions within and around language* (pp. 117–155). Continuum.
- Gosden, H. (1992). Discourse functions of marked theme in scientific research articles. *Journal of English for Specific Purposes*, 11, 207-224. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0889-4906\(05\)80010-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0889-4906(05)80010-9)
- Gosden, H. (1993). Discourse functions of subject in scientific research articles. *Applied Linguistics*, 14 (1), 56-75. <https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/14.1.56>
- Halliday, M. A. k. (1994). *An introduction to functional grammar* (Vol. 2nd). Edward Arnold .
- Hyland, K. (2007). Genre pedagogy: Language, literacy and L2 writing instruction. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 16, 148–164. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jslw.2007.07.005>
- Hyland, K. (2009). Writing in the disciplines: Research evidence for specificity. *Taiwan International ESP Journal*, 1 (1), 5-22. <http://dx.doi.org/10.6706%2fTIESPJ.2009.1.1.1>
- Jalilifar, A. R. (2010). The status of theme in applied linguistics articles. *The Asian ESP Journal*, 6 (2), 7-39. <https://www.asian-esp-journal.com/october-2010/>
- Kanoksilapatham, B. (2007). Writing scientific research articles in Thai and English: Similarities and Differences. *Silpakorn University International Journal*, 7, 172-203.
- Khedri, M., & Jalilifar, A. R. (2011). Thematic development in English and translated academic texts. In A. R. J. E. Abdollahzadah (Ed.), *Academic research genre in Asian context* (pp. 335-364). Shahid Chamran University Press.
- Lores, R. (2004). On RA abstracts: From rhetorical structure to thematic organization. *Journal of English for Specific Purposes*, 23, 280-302. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.esp.2003.06.001>
- MacDonald, S. P. (1992). A method for analyzing sentence-level differences in disciplinary knowledge making. *Written Communication*, 9 (4), 533-569. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0741088392009004004>

- Martin, J. R., & Rose, D. (2003). *Working with discourse: Meaning beyond the clause*. Continuum .
- Martinez, I. A. (2003). Aspects of theme in the method and discussion sections of biology journal articles in English. *Journal of English for Academic Purpose*, 2, 103-123. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1475-1585\(03\)00003-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1475-1585(03)00003-1)
- Matthiessen, C. M. I. M., & Halliday, M. (1997). *Systemic functional grammar: Current approaches to syntax*. Benjamins & Whurr.
- North, S. (2003). *Emergent disciplinary in an interdisciplinary course: Theme use in undergraduate essays in the history of science*. Unpublished Doctoral dissertation, Open University.
- North, S. (2005). Disciplinary variation in the use of theme in undergraduate essays. *Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 26 (3), 1-18. <https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/ami023>
- Peacock, M. (2011). The structure of the method section in research articles across eight disciplines. *The Asian ESP Journal*, 7 (2), 99-124. [https://scholars.cityu.edu.hk/en/publications/publication\(5a833362-bb37-4f08-8927-536da662a0bb\).html](https://scholars.cityu.edu.hk/en/publications/publication(5a833362-bb37-4f08-8927-536da662a0bb).html)
- Swales, J. M. (1990). *Genre analysis: English in academic and research settings*. Cambridge University Press.
- Vande Kopple, W. J. (1994). Some characteristics and functions of grammatical subject in scientific discourse. *Written Communication*, 11 (4) 534-564. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0741088394011004004>
- Wang, L. (2007). Theme and rheme in the thematic organization of text: Implication for teaching academic writing. *Asian EFL Journal*, 9 (1), 1-11 .

### Authors' Biography

---



**Seyyed Foad Ebrahimi** has a Ph.D. in Applied Linguistics from University Putra Malaysia (UPM), Malaysia. He is a faculty member at the Department of English, Shadegan Branch, Islamic Azad University, Shadegan, Iran. His main areas of research are Text Analysis and Discourse Studies. He has presented and published papers in international conferences and journals.



**Maryam Farnia** is an Assistant Professor of Applied Linguistics at the Department of English Language and Literature, Payame Noor University, Iran, where she teaches graduate and undergraduate courses. She has published papers in several national and international journals such as *Asian ESP Journal*, *Journal of Intercultural Communication*, and *Iberica*. Her areas of research include *Sociolinguistics*, *ESP*, and *Speech Act*

---



## **A Corpus-Based Cross-Disciplinary Analysis of “Objectivity” Manifestations in Academic Texts**

Mohammad Saber Khaghaninejad<sup>1,\*</sup>, Maryam Azarian<sup>2</sup>, and Fatemeh Javanmardi<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Corresponding author: Associate Professor of TEFL, Department of Foreign Languages and Linguistics, Shiraz University, Shiraz, Iran,*

*ORCID: 0000-0002-6438-351X*

*Email: mskhaghani@shirazu.ac.ir; Saber.khaghani@yahoo.com*

<sup>2</sup>*PhD Candidates of TEFL, Department of Foreign Languages and Linguistics, Shiraz University, Iran*

*Email: mazarian68@yahoo.com; javanmardi.fatemeh@yahoo.com*

### **Abstract**

This study aimed at investigating the manifestations of objectivity in American academic texts across different disciplines and various time spans. To achieve this, the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) was surveyed in terms of the frequency of occurrence of the four identified linguistic features (i.e., passive voice, impersonality, hedging, and attitude markers) as the indicators of objectivity (e.g., Alvin, 2014; Bal-Gezegin & Baş, 2020) to find the cross-disciplinary differences during the last twenty years. The results indicated that passive voice was employed differently across the academic disciplines of COCA and the notion of impersonality was more realized in hard sciences in comparison to soft ones. Moreover, the findings revealed a decline in the occurrence of passive voice through time in all the academic disciplines. In addition, hedging and attitude markers were more manifested in hard sciences probably due to the writers' inclination to be judged objectively. Finally, objectivity was shown to have a steady increase in American academic texts implying that, though the authors of academic texts revealed less inclination to employ passive voice to avoid difficulty and ambiguity, they have employed less personal authorial references to stick to the notion of objectivity and impartiality during the recent years.

*Keywords:* academic texts, objectivity manifestations, corpus-based analysis, cross-disciplinary investigation, corpus of contemporary American English (COCA)

### ARTICLE INFO

Research Article

Received: Thursday, July 29, 2021

Accepted: Friday, April 22, 2022

Published: Sunday, May 1, 2022

Available Online: Friday, April 22, 2022

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.22049/jalda.2022.27325.1333>

Online ISSN: 2821-0204; Print ISSN: 2820-8986



©The Author(s)

## Introduction

Writing specialized texts has been considered as a challenging issue needing specific experts in each specialized domain (Cunha & Montané, 2019) since conveyance of knowledge in academic texts is of great importance that should be fulfilled via the employment of the appropriate register different from the everyday language which is mainly considered as personal, biased, and emotive. In other words, academic writing demands a formal discourse that should not be influenced by emotive language (Pagliawan, 2017). Hence, moving from the personal language to the objective language used by scholars has been considered as one of the important issues in writing academically (McArthur, 1992; Šimanskienė, 2005). In effect, for maintaining objectivity in scientific research studies, academic writers should make use of unbiased and impersonal language with a minimum amount of their personal preferences to detach themselves from their findings (Hyland, 2002).

Accordingly, the notion of “objectivity”, which has been perceived as being impartial or not prejudiced, making use of reason and logic in concluding (Baise, 2020), has been regarded as one of the most common and distinctive features of academic writing (Pagliawan, 2017; Samigullina, 2018; Šimanskienė, 2005) as well as the most valued principles of educational research (Eisner, 1992). As a matter of fact, depending on the context, various senses of objectivity have been represented differently and recognized as conceptually distinct (Eisner, 1992; Koskinen, 2020). Therefore, the nature of objectivity as a concept having no single sense to be captured clearly has been declared to be “a value that academics strive for but never fully achieve, something that comes in degrees” (Nunn, Brandt & Deveci, 2018, p. 75).

Through a comprehensive review of the literature four main linguistic indicators of *passive voice* and *impersonality*, *hedging* and *attitude markers* were considered as the instruments of objectivity manifestations in academic texts. *Passive voice* was focused on by Alvin (2014), Atkinson (1996), Chang, Luo and Hsu (2012), and Ding (2002) as the indicator of objectivity while *impersonality* was regarded as the pointer to objectivity by Dumin (2010), Hyland (2002), and Rundbald (2007) and *hedging* and *attitude markers* were held as the cursers of impartiality in academic texts by Bal-Gezegin and Baş (2020), Demir (2018), Duruk, (2017), Harmon (1992), Hyland (2002), Rodman (1994), and Seoane (2013). However, academic writings cannot be treated “as a single, monolithic discourse” (Šimanskienė, 2005, p. 8). This study benefitting from a wider viewpoint, and believing in the relativity of “objectivity” in various disciplines (Nunn, Brandt & Deveci, 2018), has tried integrating all these linguistic features to scrutinize the notion of objectivity across nine disciplines of education, history, geography / social sciences, law / political sciences, humanities, philosophy / religion, science / technology, medicine and business, in American academic texts, as the most dominant academic texts (Baise, 2020), focusing on its manifestation over the recent 20 years. Consequently, the following research questions were formed:

- How is the concept of objectivity manifested in American academic texts of different disciplines?

- How is the notion of objectivity realized in American academic texts through the last 20 years?

## Literature Review

### Linguistic Indicators of Objectivity

Recently, the meticulous analysis of the academic discourse has been a heated theme of research (e. g., Alvin, 2014; Baise, 2020; Demir, 2018; Egbert & Baker, 2021; Elheky, 2018; Khaghaninejad et al., 2021) in which “objectivity” is recognized as a determining feature of academic discourse, differentiates it from other prejudiced, manipulated, and subjective discourses. However, different linguistic indicators are introduced as the instances of the academic texts’ objectivity (e.g., Alvin, 2014; Baratta, 2009; Cigankova, 2016; Ding, 2002; Williams, 2005;), many studies (e.g., Abuelwafa, 2021; Cunha & Montane, 2019; Subagio et al., 2019; Zhang & Schwarz, 2020) tried to accumulate the dispersed findings and provide a framework for analyzing the texts’ objectivity. These studies referred to *passive structures*, *impersonality*, *hedging*, and *attitude markers* as the most salient indicators of objective academic discourse unanimously.

Consequently, the most frequent manifestations of these four linguistics features (including 22 indicators all together) are chosen for evaluating the objectivity manifestation in American academic discourse – the most dominant academic discourse of the world (Demir, 2018). In the following, the conducted studies on these linguistic indicators are reviewed and, additionally, a brief description of American discourse is provided.

*Passive voice* has been employed by academic writers to foster the impersonal and objective tone of academic texts (Baratta, 2009). Researchers advocated the use of *passive voice* in scientific texts which have yielded different reasons in this regard. Ding (2002) considered *passive voice* as the most prevalent characteristic of the scientific texts and referred to “falsifiability of science and cooperation among scientists” (p. 137). He came to the point that the use of *passive voice* in academic texts makes the authors more “thing-centered” than human-oriented, which helps them highlight their professionalism rather than their personal viewpoints, and makes their “common knowledge base” available to all (p. 150). Likewise, Shaw (2003) studied the *passive voice* of academic discourses in astrophysics journals and referred to the fact that “the passive seems to be used when the authors are simply following a established or standard procedure, as in using accepted equations” (p. 135). Williams (2005) also advocated the use of *passive voice* in scientific writing since from his point of view it is a standard and useful way of transferring ideas in scientific texts.

Rundbald (2007) also referred to the fact that *impersonality* could empower writers to “signal credibility, reliability, objectivity, and ultimately authority to their readers and the research community” (p. 251). Pagliawan (2017) also declared that academic texts require formal language including an impersonal presentation of

ideas using words such as “the researcher, the writer, or the author” instead of using personal pronouns referring directly to the writers themselves. The concept of *hedging* or cautious language was first introduced and defined by Lakoff (1973) as “words whose job is to make things fuzzier or less fuzzy” (p. 471). Indeed, through expressing tentativeness and possibility, *hedging* was considered as the key feature in academic writing (Crompton, 1997; Hyland, 2002) showing the weakening of writers’ claims and suggesting “that a statement is based on plausible reasoning rather than certain knowledge” (Hyland, 2002, p. 353). Moreover, writers not only need to provide a balance between the collected data and the interpretation of the results as accurately and objectively as possible but also are required to take their own stance and “this can be achieved through the effective use of hedging which provides expressiveness and credibility” (Gherdan, 2019, p. 123). Furthermore, the writers’ use of *hedging*, which shows their own stance and academic modesty towards the texts (Baratta, 2009), functions as a face-saving act strengthening their argument (Chang, Luo & Hsu, 2012). However, hedges should be employed moderately and cautiously since their overuse would lead to the incredibility of writers’ statements and counter-productive consequences (Demir, 2018) due to their polysemous nature (Alonso et al., 2012).

*Attitude markers* which are defined as markers that “express writers’ affective values – their attitudes towards the propositional content and/or readers rather than a commitment to the truth-value” (Cigankova, 2016, p. 58), were identified as the writers’ affective stance to propositions (Bal-Gezegin & Baş, 2020; Hyland, 2005) leading to the subjectivity of the texts (Hyland, 2005). Based on Dueñas’ (2010) declaration, “the inclusion of attitudinal markers can contribute to displaying a personal stance, indicating the writer’s judgments, views, and opinions, which need to be expressed in accordance with the value system of the particular community they address” (p. 51). In effect, by employing *attitude markers*, the writers of academic research articles show their control over the interpretation of the proposed ideas in the texts (Blagojević, 2009), and “express their perspective or evaluation of the propositional content subjectively” (Dুরুk, 2017, p. 3).

### **Academic Discourse**

A noticeable number of studies have investigated the academic discourse. For example, some researchers (e.g., Atkinson, 1996; Harmon, 1992; Rodman, 1994) have provided empirical evidence regarding the widespread use of *passive voice* in scientific texts by conducting corpus-based studies on a number of academic articles. Likewise, by analyzing 90 medical papers, Amdur, Kirwan and Morris (2010) reported large percentages for the employment of *passive voice* in the intended articles, the main reason of which was revealed to support “objectivity” and neutrality. Similarly, Millar et al. (2013) explored the use of *passive voice* in 297 research papers by analyzing the mean frequency of passives per sentence and indicated that about half of the sentences were written in passives. In another study, Alvin (2014) investigated the proportion and prevalent forms of the employed passives in these articles and the contexts in which they mainly occurred. The results

indicated that about 30% of the clauses included passives, which were mainly found in the form of basic and bare passives. The study, hence, highlighted the fact that passive sentences were largely employed in scientific texts specifically in their methodology sections.

In the same vein, there have been several empirical studies exploring the concept of *impersonality* in academic contexts from different perspectives. For example, by focusing on a cross-cultural approach, Molino (2010) explored comparatively the corpora of 60 single-authored English and Italian articles to analyze the interpersonal aspect of academic writing which was supposed to be manifested via the employment of personal and impersonal authorial references. The results indicated that various occurrences of personal and impersonal authorial references across the two discourse communities could be related to different subjective or objective interpersonal strategies employed in the intended communities as well as different discourse functions which were focused on. In another study, Vergaro (2011) investigated the rhetorical stance in the academic writing of Italian students of English by considering the employment of first-person pronouns (both singular and plural) and came to the point that in terms of the broader social, cultural and educational factors existing behind the intended writing practices of the study, pluralization was the prevalent strategy used by the writers to deemphasize the agentic role of the subjects, which implied a sense of detachment and *impersonality* as an important characteristic of Italian academic writing. Ghafar Samar and Amini (2015) also conducted a study to compare the employment of personal and impersonal metadiscourse by Persian and English-speaking writers. Through analyzing 80 abstracts chosen from endocrinology and metabolism journals, they found that impersonal metadiscourse was used more by Persian-speaking writers since they preferred to show their presence more indirectly while personal metadiscourse was employed more by English-speaking writers since they preferred to indicate their position more vividly.

With respect to the employment of *hedging* in academic texts, the results of different empirical cross-disciplinary studies from various standpoints denoted to the writers' detachment from propositions (Vassileva, 2001), expressed their subjective stance while supporting their claims in soft sciences in comparison with hard sciences (Chang, Luo & Hsu, 2012), and suggested that the nature of the knowledge in each discipline affected their use (e.g., Elheky, 2018; Sameri & Tavangar, 2013). Thus, due to the interpretive nature of soft sciences, the rate of using hedges was higher (Hyland, 2005) since "researchers in soft sciences may not be able to show the same confidence as researchers of hard sciences" (Vázquez & Giner, 2008, p. 179). In contrast, a few studies reported that the factor of discipline did not have any influence on the use of hedges in academic texts (e.g., He & Wang, 2012; Lafuente-Millán, 2008; Sanjaya, 2013). Furthermore, through corpus analysis, diverse studies were conducted on L2 learners' difficulty in understanding and using hedges correctly (e.g., Hyland, 2002; Kim & Lim, 2015), ESL books' differences in terms of the quality and quantity of using hedges (e.g., Sanjaya, 2013), and native and

non-native writers' differences across different disciplines in using hedges (e.g., Demir, 2018; Sameri & Tavangar, 2013; Vassileva, 2001).

*Attitude markers* have been widely studied based on corpus-driven approaches across different disciplines (e.g., Hyland & Tse, 2005; Khedri, Ebrahimi & Chan, 2013) and from various cross-linguistic (e.g., Afshar Mameghani & Ebrahimi, 2017; Boshraadi et al., 2014) as well as cross-cultural (e.g., Dueñas, 2010) perspectives indicating the scholars' viewpoints and stances in clarifying and enhancing the evaluation of the texts (Sorayyaei Azar & Hashim, 2019). Moreover, *attitude markers* are important devices for writers' interpretation and argument and the nature of disciplines affects their use (Hyland & Tse, 2005). As such, "the soft sciences express 'far more explicitly personal stance' compared to the hard sciences" (Bednarek, 2008, p. 210), are more interpretive, and rely more on the writers' arguments and attitudes (Hyland, 2005). Accordingly, different studies on academic research articles across different disciplines reported that soft disciplines used more *attitude markers* in comparison with hard disciplines (e.g., Dueñas, 2010; Hyland, 2002; 2005). However, "the inclusion of attitude markers in academic writing is discipline-driven and also genre-driven" (Dueñas, 2010, p. 51).

Although the four aforementioned linguistic features in academic texts have been investigated separately in different theoretical and corpus-based empirical studies from various perspectives, little research has been conducted to explore the intermingling of such features across different disciplines and time spans in one single study examining the trend in their employment in academic texts. Hence, it tried to present a more comprehensive picture of objectivity in American academic texts by scrutinizing the manifestation of these linguistic features across different disciplines and through a 20-year time span.

### **Method**

This research is a corpus-based study employing the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) to obtain the necessary data for focusing on the frequency of occurrence of the objectivity indicators such as *passive voice*, *impersonality*, *hedging*, and *attitude markers* in American academic texts across nine academic disciplines of COCA, namely, education, history, geography / social sciences, law / political sciences, humanities, philosophy / religion, science / technology, medicine, and business through the recent 20 years. The rationale for using COCA was that it is the largest as well as the most widely-used genre-based corpus of American English containing more than one billion words in various cross-disciplinary texts, which provides the researchers with both more reliable information and the frequencies of linguistic items from 1990 to 2019 (Demir, 2018). It is worth mentioning that the academic genre of COCA (comprising a corpus of about 200 million words) offers the discourse of nearly all academic disciplines. This makes this corpus very suitable for the studies which scrutinize the representation or realization of different notions in special genres and sub-genres.



COCA is one of the most popular, balanced corpora with eight genres and about 75 sub-genres sorted in five-year time spans. For evaluating the manifestation of a concept in huge corpora, the occurrence of some linguistic indicators (usually the most frequent ones) should be regarded as the realization of that concept (Baise, 2020). Hence, the frequency of 22 linguistic indicators (6 indicators for *passive voice*, 6 indicators for *impersonality*, 5 features as the indicators of *hedging markers*, and 5 terms as the indicators of *attitude markers*) which were the most frequent features for each aspect of objectivity (statistical significance is also approved online in english-corpora.org), were determined and analyzed.

### Data Collection Procedure

In order to investigate the manifestation of objectivity and based on what is done to evaluate huge corpora in literature (e.g., Bal-Gezegin & Baş, 2020; Harwood, 2005; Molino, 2010; Pagliawan, 2017; Vergaro, 2011; Khodadady, Alavi & Khaghaninezhad, 2012), the researchers analyzed the manifestation of 22 linguistic indicators (i.e., “is + pp”, “are + pp”, “was + pp”, “were + pp”, “has been + pp” and “have been + pp” for passive structures, “I”, “we”, “my”, “our”, “the writer” and “the researcher” for personal and impersonal authorial references, “may”, “might”, “probably”, “possibly”, and “perhaps” as *hedges*, and “essentially”, “remarkably”, “surprisingly”, “importantly”, and “interestingly” as *attitude markers*) representing the four identified aspects of objectivity in American academic discourse. These 22 linguistic features were statistically found to be the appropriate indicators for the *passive voice*, *impersonality*, *hedging*, and *attitude markers* as the four aspects of objectivity (COCA demonstrates the statistical significance of occurrence via MI score for the target words’ queries).

To make the investigation of large corpora feasible, focusing on the linguistic indicators connected to the aimed notions is widely practiced recently in many studies (e.g., Cunha & Montane, 2019; Baise, 2020; Elheky, 2018). The occurrence of these meaningfully related indicators to the aimed concepts then would be analyzed and the possible conclusions would be drawn. Accordingly, the occurrence of 22 linguistic indicators (attested by COCA to be statistically meaningful representatives for objectivity manifestations) was scrutinized across different academic disciplines and through different time spans. Finally, being informed by Becher’s (1989) taxonomy of disciplines, researchers interpreted the results based on soft and hard disciplines.

## Result and Discussion

### Results

In order to specify the manifestation of “objectivity” in American academic texts, the researchers focused on the realization of *passive voice*, *impersonality*, *hedging* and *attitude markers* across the nine disciplines. In the following, the frequencies of the identified indicators are depicted.

**Table 1**  
*Frequencies of Passive Verbs Across Different Academic Disciplines*

|                                | Is<br>+ pp | Are<br>+ pp | Was<br>+ pp | Were<br>+ pp | Has Been<br>+ pp | Have Been<br>+ pp | Total  |
|--------------------------------|------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|------------------|-------------------|--------|
| Education                      | 21663      | 30508       | 33592       | 43479        | 6864             | 6727              | 142833 |
| History                        | 17601      | 12953       | 28701       | 23258        | 6284             | 6675              | 95472  |
| Geography / Social<br>Sciences | 26805      | 38206       | 70175       | 58348        | 8882             | 5146              | 207562 |
| Law / Political Sciences       | 17802      | 26432       | 19718       | 10232        | 6491             | 5324              | 85999  |
| Humanities                     | 18213      | 33738       | 24419       | 14344        | 4778             | 6178              | 101670 |
| Philosophy / Religion          | 16212      | 10819       | 13903       | 11664        | 2406             | 2849              | 57853  |
| Science / Technology           | 36611      | 46023       | 44875       | 37399        | 9819             | 9781              | 184508 |
| Medicine                       | 21913      | 15317       | 45456       | 48092        | 6603             | 6524              | 143905 |
| Business                       | 2245       | 1839        | 1211        | 1147         | 448              | 166               | 7056   |

As discernible in Table 1, geography / social sciences ( $n = 207562$ ) include the greatest number of passive verbs. Next, science / technology ( $n = 184508$ ) and medicine ( $n = 143905$ ) display more frequent employment of passive verbs as compared to other disciplines. However, business ( $n = 7056$ ) and philosophy / religion ( $n = 57853$ ) indicate the lowest frequency of occurrence of passive verbs in comparison with other disciplines. Regarding the *impersonality*, Table 2 indicates the frequencies of the most typically employed personal and impersonal authorial references across the intended disciplines.

**Table 2**  
*Frequencies of Personal / Impersonal Authorial References Across Different Academic Disciplines*

|                                | I     | We    | My    | Our   | Total of<br>Personal<br>Authorial<br>References | The<br>Writer | The<br>Researcher | Total of<br>Impersonal<br>Authorial<br>References |
|--------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|---|---------------|-------------------|---|
| Education                      | 29383 | 34142 | 9823  | 17038 | 90386   | 220           | 1061              | 1281  |
| History                        | 18570 | 18708 | 6390  | 10864 | 54532   | 187           | 79                | 266   |
| Geography /<br>Social Sciences | 32795 | 37091 | 11794 | 15667 | 97347   | 83            | 675               | 758   |
| Law / Political<br>Sciences    | 17663 | 24325 | 4112  | 10502 | 56602   | 17            | 18                | 35  |
| Humanities                     | 49644 | 34011 | 16073 | 15879 | 115607  | 825           | 72                | 897   |
| Philosophy /<br>Religion       | 22913 | 27970 | 8257  | 15754 | 74894   | 72            | 120               | 192   |
| Science /<br>Technology        | 11925 | 44146 | 5524  | 16993 | 78588   | 21            | 124               | 145   |
| Medicine                       | 3655  | 26345 | 1789  | 11978 | 43767   | 4             | 131               | 135   |
| Business                       | 913   | 2993  | 281   | 1193  | 5380  | 1             | 45                | 46  |

As shown in Table 2, personal authorial references (i.e., “I”, “we”, “my” and “our”) have the highest frequency of occurrence in humanities ( $n = 115607$ ). After humanities, geography / social sciences ( $n = 97347$ ) and education ( $n = 90386$ ) are the disciplines which represent the greater employment of personal authorial references as compared to other included academic disciplines. It is also revealed that personal authorial references have the lowest frequency of occurrence in medicine ( $n = 43767$ ) and business ( $n = 5380$ ). However, considering the intended impersonal authorial references (i.e., “the writer” and “the researcher”), education ( $n = 1281$ ) reveals the most frequent employment of these references as compared to other disciplines. Table 3 illustrates the frequency of occurrence of the most commonly employed words representing *hedges* across the studied disciplines.

**Table 3**  
*Frequencies of Hedging Markers Across Academic Disciplines*

|                             | May   | Might | Probably | Possibly | Perhaps | Total |
|-----------------------------|-------|-------|----------|----------|---------|-------|
| Education                   | 27531 | 8047  | 1116     | 533      | 2473    | 39700 |
| History                     | 11017 | 6491  | 1897     | 632      | 3402    | 23439 |
| Geography / Social Sciences | 33092 | 9596  | 2408     | 988      | 4473    | 50557 |
| Law / Political Sciences    | 18960 | 7067  | 1617     | 497      | 2896    | 31037 |
| Humanities                  | 17229 | 10076 | 2424     | 806      | 5561    | 36096 |
| Philosophy / Religion       | 10457 | 5105  | 792      | 410      | 2507    | 19271 |
| Science / Technology        | 23255 | 6556  | 2463     | 873      | 2742    | 35889 |
| Medicine                    | 19666 | 4523  | 1128     | 611      | 782     | 26710 |
| Business                    | 1615  | 332   | 64       | 42       | 106     | 2159  |

Table 3 indicates that among the intended academic disciplines, geography / social science ( $n = 50557$ ) incorporates the highest number of *hedging* markers. Next, education (39700) and humanities ( $n = 36096$ ) reveal a greater frequency of occurrence of *hedges* in comparison with other disciplines. However, it is shown that business ( $n = 2159$ ) and religion ( $n = 19271$ ) employ the words representing *hedging* less than other disciplinary fields. Table 4 indicates the frequencies of the most typically employed *attitude markers* across the intended fields.

**Table 4**  
*Frequencies of Attitude Markers Across Academic Disciplines*

|                             | Essentially | Remarkably | Surprisingly | Importantly | Interestingly | Total |
|-----------------------------|-------------|------------|--------------|-------------|---------------|-------|
| Education                   | 461         | 105        | 325          | 13501       | 1419          | 15811 |
| History                     | 783         | 224        | 402          | 8591        | 798           | 10798 |
| Geography / Social Sciences | 832         | 266        | 609          | 15473       | 1639          | 18819 |
| Law / Political Sciences    | 937         | 189        | 312          | 7007        | 743           | 9188  |
| Humanities                  | 877         | 278        | 404          | 8571        | 1634          | 11764 |
| Philosophy / Religion       | 621         | 99         | 193          | 4137        | 641           | 5691  |
| Science / Technology        | 924         | 287        | 440          | 10194       | 1532          | 13377 |
| Medicine                    | 276         | 74         | 152          | 6155        | 443           | 7100  |
| Business                    | 64          | 10         | 31           | 812         | 101           | 1018  |

As Table 4 illustrates, *attitude markers* have the greatest frequency of occurrence in geography / social sciences ( $n = 18819$ ) among the nine intended disciplines. The second field which reveals the great employment of *attitude markers* is education ( $n = 15811$ ). However, it is displayed that business ( $n = 1018$ ), medicine ( $n = 7100$ ), and law / political sciences ( $n = 9188$ ) employ *attitude markers* less than other academic fields.

After calculating the general frequencies of the intended linguistic indicators of objectivity across different genres, a chi-square test has been employed to evaluate the significance of the observed differences in this regard. The results are shown to be significant,  $\chi^2(8) = 1418.000$ ,  $n = 8$ ,  $p < .05$ , suggesting that the difference regarding the employment of the linguistic indicators of objectivity across various genres was statistically significant. In other words, diverse academic sub-genres have been found to be meaningfully different in terms of the objective expression.

**Table 5**  
*Comparing the Frequency of Objectivity Manifestations Across Different Academic Disciplines*

|                              | Value                 | df | Asymp. Sig (two-tailed) |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|----|-------------------------|
| Pearson Chi-Square           | 1418.000 <sup>a</sup> | 8  | .001                    |
| Likelihood Ratio             | 987.000               | 8  | .213                    |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 76.000                | 8  | .007                    |
| N of Valid Cases             | 8                     |    |                         |

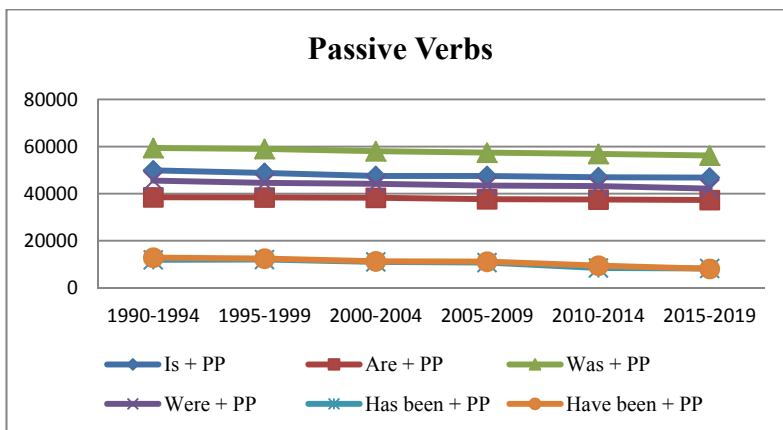
In order to identify the trend of objectivity realization in American academic texts across different time spans, the researchers analyzed the related corpora generated from all the existing cross-disciplinary American academic texts. Accordingly, the obtained results regarding each of the intended linguistic features are presented in separate Tables followed by the related Figures to show the results visually. Table 6 followed by Figure 1 shows the frequencies of occurrence of the most commonly used passive verbs in American academic texts which were generated from various disciplines through 20 years.

**Table 6**  
*Frequencies of Passive Verbs Across Different Time Spans*

|           | Is + pp | Are + pp | Was + PP | Were + PP | Has been + PP | Have been + PP | Total  |
|-----------|---------|----------|----------|-----------|---------------|----------------|--------|
| 1990-1994 | 49862   | 38456    | 59403    | 45504     | 11906         | 12855          | 217986 |
| 1995-1999 | 48755   | 38403    | 59013    | 44615     | 12023         | 12416          | 215225 |
| 2000-2004 | 47520   | 38284    | 58056    | 44242     | 11076         | 11305          | 210483 |
| 2005-2009 | 47483   | 37641    | 57408    | 43476     | 10708         | 11123          | 207839 |
| 2010-2014 | 46924   | 37512    | 56932    | 43201     | 8409          | 9406           | 202384 |
| 2015-2019 | 46815   | 37288    | 56254    | 42115     | 8212          | 8117           | 198801 |

**Figure 1**

*Frequencies of Passive Verbs Occurrence Across Different Time Spans*



As is shown, the frequencies of the occurrence of passive verbs in all academic disciplines are lower during 2015-2019 ( $n = 198801$ ) than 1990-1994 ( $n = 217986$ ). Indeed, such a decrease is more observable with regard to two of the included passive structures, namely, “has been + pp” and “have been + pp” during the years 2010 to 2019. In addition, the most frequently used structure of *passive voice* is “was + pp” ( $n = 59403$ ) during the years 1990 to 1994 and the least frequently used structure of *passive voice* is “have been + pp” ( $n = 8117$ ) during the years 2015 to 2019. Table 7 followed by the related Figure 2 indicates the frequencies of the occurrence of personal and impersonal features regarding all cross-disciplinary American academic texts through 20 years.

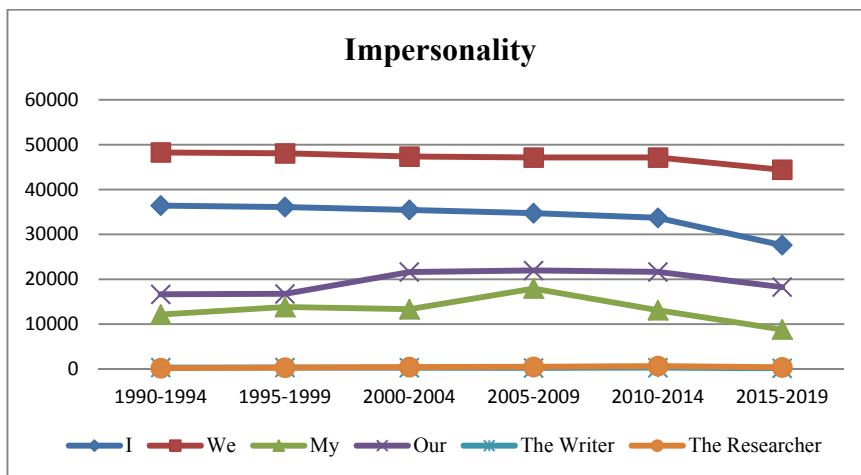
**Table 7**

*Frequencies of Personal and Impersonal Authorial References Across Different Time Spans*

|           | I     | We    | My    | Our   | Total of Personal Authorial References | The Writer | The Researcher | Total of Impersonal Authorial References |
|-----------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--|------------|----------------|--|
| 1990-1994 | 36403 | 48225 | 12143 | 16627 | 113398                                 | 314        | 173            | 487                                      |
| 1995-1999 | 36084 | 48056 | 13809 | 16732 | 114681                                 | 323        | 305            | 628                                      |
| 2000-2004 | 35440 | 47336 | 13316 | 21606 | 117698                                 | 285        | 421            | 706                                      |
| 2005-2009 | 34723 | 47132 | 17944 | 21954 | 121753                                 | 233        | 469            | 702                                      |
| 2010-2014 | 33684 | 47131 | 13107 | 21622 | 115544                                 | 304        | 630            | 934                                      |
| 2015-2019 | 27607 | 44405 | 8812  | 18264 | 99088                                  | 141        | 365            | 506                                      |

**Figure 2**

*Frequencies of Personal and Impersonal Authorial References Across Different Periods*



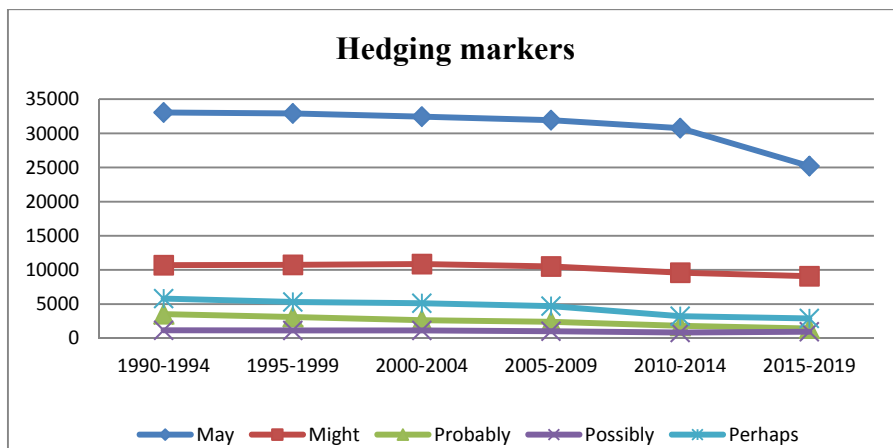
As shown in Table 7 and Figure 2, the total number of occurrences of personal features ( $n = 682162$ ) is more than impersonal features ( $n = 3963$ ) during different time spans. Regarding personal authorial references, it is indicated that the rate of the usage of all personal features decreases from 2010 to 2019. In addition, no considerable differences are shown regarding the usage of impersonal features (i.e., “the writer” and “the researcher”) in American academic texts during different spans. Table 8 and Figure 3 illustrate the frequencies of the occurrence of *hedges* in all cross-disciplinary American academic texts through 20 years.

**Table 8**

*Frequencies of Words Representing Hedging in Academic Texts Across Different Time Spans*

|           | May   | Might | Probably | Possibly | Perhaps | Total |
|-----------|-------|-------|----------|----------|---------|-------|
| 1990-1994 | 33045 | 10713 | 3534     | 1178     | 5817    | 54287 |
| 1995-1999 | 32907 | 10743 | 3109     | 1156     | 5323    | 53238 |
| 2000-2004 | 32441 | 10865 | 2633     | 1135     | 5136    | 52210 |
| 2005-2009 | 31932 | 10514 | 2421     | 1023     | 4705    | 50595 |
| 2010-2014 | 30754 | 9606  | 1816     | 832      | 3231    | 46239 |
| 2015-2019 | 25207 | 9089  | 1417     | 954      | 2911    | 39578 |

**Figure 3**  
*Frequencies of Words Representing Hedging in Academic Texts Across Different Periods*

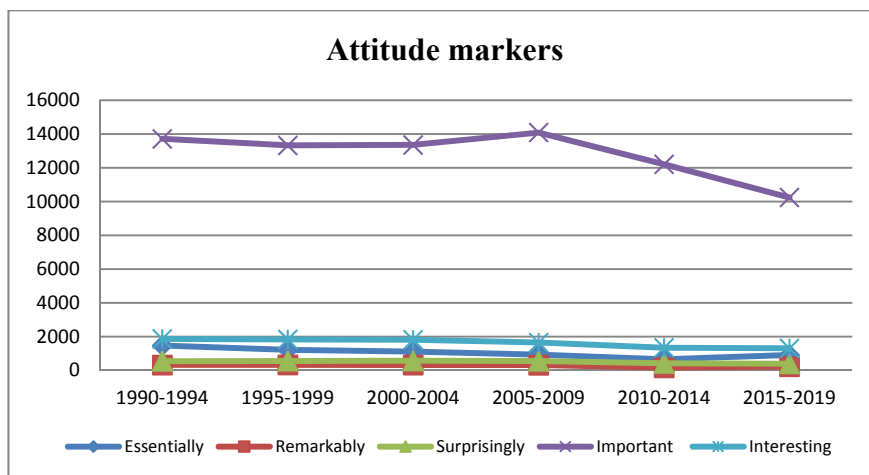


As indicated in Table 8 and Figure 3, the total number of occurrences of *hedging* as one of the linguistic features found in the entire corpus of American academic texts is higher during 1990-1994 ( $n = 54287$ ) than 2015-2019 ( $n = 39578$ ). In addition, no considerable changes are observed regarding the usage of *hedges* in all cross-disciplinary American academic texts across different eras. That is, the rate of the usage of different types of hedges remains approximately the same from 1990 to 2009 and then slightly decreases from 2010 to 2019 except for the modal verb “may”. Table 9 followed by Figure 4 indicates the frequencies of the occurrence of *attitude markers* in all American academic texts of various disciplines through the recent 20 years.

**Table 9**  
*Frequencies of Attitude Markers in Academic Texts Across Different Time Spans*

|           | Essentially | Remarkably | Surprisingly | Importantly | Interestingly | Total |
|-----------|-------------|------------|--------------|-------------|---------------|-------|
| 1990-1994 | 1464        | 316        | 540          | 13718       | 1857          | 17895 |
| 1995-1999 | 1215        | 324        | 549          | 13325       | 1832          | 17245 |
| 2000-2004 | 1109        | 314        | 565          | 13356       | 1810          | 17154 |
| 2005-2009 | 932         | 308        | 547          | 14089       | 1646          | 17522 |
| 2010-2014 | 656         | 158        | 419          | 12209       | 1336          | 14778 |
| 2015-2019 | 908         | 222        | 389          | 10243       | 1304          | 13066 |

**Figure 4**  
 Frequencies of Attitude Markers in Academic Texts Across Different Time Spans



As displayed in Table 9 and Figure 4, the total number of occurrences of *attitude markers* found across American academic texts is higher during 1990-1994 ( $n = 17895$ ) than their occurrences during 2015-2019 ( $n = 13066$ ). Moreover, no substantial variations are found in terms of the frequency of the occurrence of *attitude markers* in all cross-disciplinary American academic texts across different spans. That is, the rate of the occurrence of various types of *attitude markers* remains mostly the same from 1990 to 2009 and then slightly decreases from 2010 to 2019 except for the adverb “essentially” which shows a considerable decrease during 2010 to 2019.

After determining the frequencies of the linguistic indicators of objectivity across different time periods, a chi-square has been used to evaluate the statistical significance of the observed difference in this regard. The differences were found to be significant ( $\chi^2(5) = 1122.000$ ,  $n = 5$ ,  $p < .05$ ), suggesting that across time the occurrence of objectivity manifestations has been meaningfully dissimilar. In other words, different degrees of objectivity are traceable in the discourse of various disciplines during the last 30 years.

**Table 10**  
 Comparing the Frequency of Objectivity Manifestations Across Different Time Periods

|                              | Value                 | df | Asymp. Sig (two-tailed) |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|----|-------------------------|
| Pearson Chi-Square           | 1122.000 <sup>a</sup> | 5  | .004                    |
| Likelihood Ratio             | 786.000               | 5  | .415                    |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 56.000                | 5  | .098                    |
| N of Valid Cases             | 5                     |    |                         |



## Discussion

The findings revealed that *passive structures* were employed differently across different academic disciplines. For example, Breivega et al. (2002), Fløttum (2014) documented the important impact of disciplinary fields on the voice construction of the scientific texts. The considerable occurrence of *passive verbs* in science / technology and medicine, might suggest the importance of what Ding (2002, p. 137) referred to as “falsifiability of science and cooperation among scientists.” Nevertheless, the lowest occurrence of *passive verbs* in philosophy / religion and business might imply the concentration of these fields on the clear-cut transferring of the information to the readers (Ding, 2002) as well as their avoidance of ambiguity, difficulty, and non-representationality, which could be generated by the excessive employment of *passive voice* in academic texts.

A possible explanation for the recent decline in the occurrence of *passive voice* in academic discourse is that recently the writers of academic texts have tried to stick to transparency and directness and move away from ambiguity and obscurity, which could support the findings of earlier studies (Humphrey & Holmes, 2008; Subagio, Prayogo & Iragiliati, 2019) in that they have also shown the decline in the employment of passive verbs in scientific texts. However, the obtained results contradict those of Ding’s (2002) study which referred to the fact that the use of *passive voice* in the 20<sup>th</sup> century increased in comparison with the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, suggesting the inclination of the scientific authors to represent the world “in terms of objects, things and reason” and not human beings (Alvin, 2014, p. 1). Contrary to the obtained findings of this section, Dumin (2010), who explored the change in the use of passive verbs in research articles of *American Journal of Botany* over 100 years, came to the conclusion that academic researchers moved away from a personal struggle toward a community-based aspect of science through the employment of *passive voice*.

The occurrence of personal / impersonal authorial references across the disciplines indicated that soft sciences (i.e., humanities and social sciences) employed personal authorial references more than hard sciences (i.e., medicine and business), which included further notions of *impersonality* and detachment. This recommends that soft sciences have more inclination to reveal the authorial stance of the writers as compared to hard sciences, whose notable employment of impersonal authorial references suggested that they preferred to stick to elements of neutrality and impartiality. This is exactly in line with Hyland (2004), who believed that in social sciences and humanities, there is no problem to directly refer to personal opinions and judgments.

Regarding the differences between cross-disciplinary usage of *hedges*, the results indicated the higher occurrence of *hedging markers* in soft sciences (i.e., geography / social science, education, and humanities) compared with the hard sciences in line with what Vázquez and Giner (2008) found. Accordingly, the notion of “objectivity” in academic texts of different disciplines is manifested in hard sciences more due to the writers’ less frequently usage of *hedges* in comparison to soft sciences; hard sciences academic writers attempted to be more objective in their

writing to increase the credibility of their proposed ideas and the obtained results. Moreover, it was revealed that all academic writers, depending on the nature of their disciplines, made use of various types of *hedges* not only to weaken their commitment to the proposed ideas in academic texts, but also to show their stance while supporting their claims. These findings are supported by Chang, Luo, and Hsu (2012) who reported the more usage of *hedges* in soft sciences reflecting the authors' subjectivity, in comparison with hard sciences writers who show their objective stance in supporting their argument. While other cross-disciplinary studies also reported the same results (e.g., Elheky, 2018; Sameri & Tavangar, 2013), some studies suggested that the factor of discipline did not have any influence on the use of *hedges* in academic texts (e.g., He & Wang, 2012; Lafuente-Millán, 2008; Sanjaya, 2013). The findings regarding the higher rate of various types of *attitude markers* in soft sciences compared with hard sciences, may refer to the authors' detachment from the proposed claims in the discourse of hard sciences consistent with Hyland (2002; 2004; 2005) and Hyland and Tse (2005).

The identified decline in the employment of personal authorial references from 2010 to 2019, however, might be related to the academic writers' predisposition to stick to "empirical and objective" aspect of academic writing (Hyland, 2005, p. 187) and to "signal credibility, reliability, objectivity, and ultimately authority to their readers and the research community" (Rundbald, 2007, p. 251) in recent years. This is also supported by Elheky (2018) who considered *hedging* as a crucial rhetorical device in academic writing to maintain objectivity and increase the credibility of writing. Such a conclusion is supported by Kim and Lim (2015) who believed that by means of *hedges*, writers modulate their claims providing the readers with an opportunity to take a stance and possibly reject their proposals. The notion of objectivity has been manifested more in academic texts due to the less frequently usage of *attitude markers* in all the analyzed cross-disciplinary texts during the explored time spans. Such a result is supported by Hyland and Tse (2005) who referred to the fewer occurrences of *attitude markers* in the recent academic texts in comparison with the academic texts belonging to the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### **Conclusion**

This inquiry tried to shed light on the realization of the notion of "objectivity" by focusing on specific linguistic indicators to reveal the probable cross-disciplinary differences and the occurred changes in American academic texts, the dominant academic discourse according to Demir (2018) during different time spans through the analysis of COCA. The findings revealed that *passive voice* was manifested differently across different disciplines, and a kind of decline was shown in its use in American academic texts suggesting the inclination of academic writers toward transparency and directness. It was also revealed that personal authorial references were more frequently employed in soft sciences as compared to hard sciences and that fewer number of such indicators could be found in American academic texts during recent years compared with previous decades. In addition, the less employment of *hedging* and *attitude markers* by hard sciences writers led to the greater realization of the notion of objectivity in such sciences in comparison to soft

sciences. Furthermore, the fewer occurrences of *hedges* and *attitude markers* in American academic texts during recent years indicated that writers have recently intended to be more objective in their writing improving the credibility of their works in comparison to the writers' greater use of such features during previous decades developing the subjectivity of their writing.

Finally, it is concluded that the notion of "objectivity" does not have a fixed realization across different academic disciplines, since depending on their nature, this manifestation varies. Furthermore, researchers came to the point that though the writers of American academic texts have shown a kind of predisposition to avoid ambiguity and obscurity by making use of active verbs more than passive verbs, the less employment of *personal authorial references*, *hedging* and *attitude markers* in their works suggests that they have shown the inclination to stick to the elements of impartiality and "objectivity" during recent years adding to the standardization of their works.

### **Funding**

This research did not receive any grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

### **References**

- Abuelwafa, M. (2021). Legitimation and manipulation in political speeches: A corpus based study. *Procedia Computer Science*, 189, 11-18. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.procs.2021.05.066>
- Afshar Mameghani, A. R., & Ebrahimi, S. F. (2017). Realization of attitude and engagement markers in students' presentations. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics & English Literature*, 6(2), 73-77. <https://doi.org/10.7575/10.7575/AIAC.IJALEL>
- Alonso, R. A., Alonso, M. A., & Mariñas, L.T. (2012). Hedging: An exploratory study of pragmatic transfer in nonnative English readers' rhetorical preferences. *Ibérica, núm, 23*, 47-63. Doi: 106573/1426.1092.IBRECA
- Alvin, L. P. (2014). The passive voice in scientific writing. The current norms in science journals. *Journal of Science Communication*, 13(1), 1-16. <https://doi.org/10.22323/2.130102>
- Amdur, R. J., Kirwan, J., & Morris, C. G. (2010). Use of the passive voice in medical journal articles. *American Medical Writers Association Journal*, 25(3), 98-110. <https://doi.org/10.1032/73080324.2010.172345>
- Atkinson, D. (1996). The philosophical transactions of the royal society of London, 1675-1975: A socio-historical discourse analysis. *Language in Society*, 25, 333-371. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4168717>

- Baise, A. (2020). The objective–subjective dichotomy and its use in describing probability. *Interdisciplinary Science Reviews*, 45(2), 174-185. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03080188.2019.1705559>
- Bal-Gezegin, B., & Baş, M. (2020). Metadiscourse in academic writing: A comparison of research articles and book reviews. *Eurasian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 6(1), 45-62. <https://doi.org/10.32601/ejal.710204>
- Baratta, A. M. (2009). Revealing stance through passive voice. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 41(4), 1406-1421. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2008.09.010>
- Becher, T. (1989). *Academic tribes and territories: Intellectual enquiry and the cultures of disciplines*. The Society for Research into Higher Education and Open University Press. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0889-4906\(90\)90017-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/0889-4906(90)90017-7)
- Bednarek, M. (2008). *Emotion talk across corpora*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Blagojević, S. (2009). Expressing attitudes in academic research articles written by English and Serbian authors. *Facta Universitatis: Linguistics and Literature*, 7(1), 63-73. <https://doi.org/10.1065/811-111-81116341>
- Breivega, K. R., Dahl, T., & Fløttum, K. (2002). Traces of self and others in research articles: Comparative pilot study of English, French and Norwegian research articles in medicine, economics and linguistics. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 12(2), 218-239. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1473-4192.00032>
- Boshrabadi, A. M., Biria, R., & Zavari, Z. (2014). A cross cultural analysis of textual and interpersonal metadiscourse markers: The case of economic articles in English and Persian newspapers. *Advances in Language and Literary Studies*, 5(2), 59-66. <https://doi.org/10.7575/asiac.all.v.5n59>
- Chang, M. H., Luo, Y. W., & Hsu, Y. K. (2012). Subjectivity and objectivity in Chinese academic discourse: How attribution hedges indicate authorial stance. *Concentric: Studies in Linguistics*, 38(2), 293-329. <https://doi.org/10.1019/559-02312>
- Cigankova, N. (2016). Grammatical expression of impersonality in LSP texts and translations. *Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 231, 99-106. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bsbspro.2016.09.77>
- Crompton, P. (1997). Hedging in academic writing: Some theoretical problems. *English for Specific Purposes*, 16(4), 271-287. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0889-4906\(97\)00007-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0889-4906(97)00007-0)
- Cunha, I. d., & Montané, M. A. (2019). A corpus-based analysis of textual genres in the administration domain. *Discourse Studies*, 21(3), 3-33. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461445619887538>
- Demir, C. (2018). Hedging and academic writing: An analysis of lexical hedges. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 14(4), 74-92. <https://doi.org/10.1065/14982-5670>

- Ding, D. D. (2002). The passive voice and social values in science. *Technical Writing and Communication*, 32(2), 137-152. <https://doi.org/10.2190/EFMR-BJF3-CE41-84KK>
- Dueñas, P. M. (2010). Attitude markers in business management research articles: A cross-cultural corpus-driven approach. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 20(1), 50-72. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1473-4192.2009.00228>
- Dumin, L. M. (2010). *Changes in the use of the passive voice over time: A historical look at the American Journal of Botany and the changes in the use of the passive voice from 1914-2008*. Doctoral dissertation, Oklahoma State University, Oklahoma.
- Duruk, E. (2017). Analysis of metadiscourse markers in academic written discourse produced by Turkish researchers. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 13(1), 1-9. <https://doi.org/10.1065/15156-6664>
- Egbert, J., & Baker, P. (2021). *Using corpus methods to triangulate linguistic analysis*. Routledge.
- Eisner, E. (1992). Objectivity in educational research. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 22(1), 9-  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/03626784.1992.11075389>
- Elheky, M. A. (2018). Hedging in scientific and social texts: A comparative analysis of business and social texts. *Scholar Journal of Applied Sciences and Research*, 1(8), 10-19. <https://doi.org/10.17576/gema-2019-1901-03>
- Fløttum, K. (2014). Linguistic mediation of climate change discourse. *La revue du GRAS*, 65, 7-20. <https://doi.org/10.4000/asp.4182>
- Ghafar Samar, R., & Amini, S. (2015). A comparative study of personal and impersonal meta-discourse in academic writing. *Journal of Studies in Learning and Teaching English*, 4(2), 53-66.
- Gherdan, M. E. (2019). Hedging in academic discourse. *Romanian Journal of English Studies*, 16, 123-127. <https://doi.org/10.1515/rjes-2019-0015>
- Harmon, J. E. (1992). An analysis of fifty citation superstars from the scientific literature. *Journal of Technical Writing and Communication*, 22, 17-37. <https://doi.org/10.2190/ELYK-PFL1-GLFA-ALAD>
- Harwood, N. (2005). A corpus-based study of self-promotional *I* and *we* in academic writing across four disciplines. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 37(3), 1207-1231. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2005.01.012>
- He, Y. and Wang, H. (2012). A corpus-based study of epistemic modality markers in Chinese research articles. *Lecture Notes in Computer Science*, 77(17), 199-208. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-642-36337-5-21>
- Humphrey, J. D. & Holmes, J. W. (2008). Style and ethics of communication in science and engineering. *Synthesis lectures on engineering*, 3(1), 1-14. <https://doi.org/10.2200/S00128ED1V01Y200809ENG009>

- Hyland, K. (2002). Authority and invisibility: Authorial identity in academic writing. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 34, 1091-1112. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0378-2166\(02\)00035-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0378-2166(02)00035-8)
- Hyland, K. (2004). *Disciplinary discourses*. University of Michigan Press ELT.
- Hyland, K. (2005). Stance and engagement: A model of interaction in academic discourse. *Discourse Studies*, 7(2), 173-191. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461445605050365>
- Hyland, K., & Tse, P. (2005). Hooking the reader: A corpus study of evaluative that in abstracts. *English for Specific Purposes*, 24, 123-139. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.esp.2004.02.002>
- Khaghaninejad M. S., Jafari, S. M., Eslami, M., & Yadollahi, S. (2021). An investigation into the application of "concluding transition signals" in academic texts: A corpus-based analysis. *Cogent Arts and Humanities*, 8 (1), 1-15. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311983.2020.1868223>
- Khodadady, E., Alavi, M. & Khaghaninezhad, M. S. (2012). Schema-based instruction: A novel approach of teaching English to Iranian University students. *Ferdowsi Review*, 5 (1), 3-21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10.5296/ijl.v4i1.1213>
- Khedri, M., Ebrahimi, S. J., & Chan, S. H. (2013). Interactional metadiscourse markers in academic research article result and discussion sections. *3L: The Southeast Asian Journal of English Language Studies*, 19(1), 65-74. <https://doi.org/10.1067/sajels/7648-34ui-324561>
- Kim, L. Ch., & Lim, J. M. (2015). Hedging in academic writing: A pedagogically-motivated qualitative study. *Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 197, 600-607. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.07.200>
- Koskinen, I. (2020). Defending a risk account of scientific objectivity. *British Journal of Philosophical Science*, 71(4), 1187-1207. <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjps/axy053>
- Lafuente-Millán, E. (2008). The construction and promotion of new knowledge in text. In R. Lorés-Sanz, P. Mur-Dueñas and E. Lafuente-Millán (Eds.), *Constructing interpersonalit: Multiple perspectives on written academic genres* (pp. 61-80). Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Lakoff, G. (1973). Hedges: A study in meaning criteria and the logic of fuzzy concepts. *Journal of Philosophical Logic*, 2, 458-508. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/30226076>
- McArthur, T. (1992). *The Oxford companion to the English language*. Oxford University Press.
- Millar, N., Budgell, B., & Fuller, K. (2013). 'Use the active voice whenever possible': The impact of style guidelines in medical journals. *Applied Linguistics* 34(4), 393-414. <https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/ams059>

- Molino, A. (2010). Personal and impersonal authorial references: A contrastive study of English and Italian Linguistics research articles. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 9, 86-101. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeap.2010.02.007>
- Nunn, R., Brandt, C., & Deveci, T. (2018). Transparency, subjectivity and objectivity in academic texts. *English Scholarship Beyond Borders*, 4(1), 71-102. <https://doi.org/10.0987/esbb.2018.98723-3456>
- Pagliawan, D. L. (2017). Feature style for academic and scholarly writing. *Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, 6(2), 35-41. <https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.15511.73120>
- Rodman, L. (1994). The active voice in scientific articles: Frequency and discourse functions. *Journal of Technical Writing and Communication*, 24(2), 309-331. <https://doi.org/10.2190/D9BR-CAP2-LW5N-LCRP>
- Rundbald, G. (2007). Impersonal, general, and social: The use of metonymy versus passive voice in medical discourse. *Written Communication*, 24(3), 250-277. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0741088307302946>
- Sameri, M., & Tavangar, M. (2013). Epistemic modality in academic discourse: A cross-linguistic and cross-disciplinary study. *Iranian EFL Journal*, 9(4), 127-147. <https://doi.org/10.30495/JAL.2020.674922>
- Samigullina, A. D. (2018). Teaching first year students features of academic writing (complexity, formality, objectivity, responsibility). *Russian Linguistic Bulletin*, 2(14), 38-41. <https://doi.org/10.18454/RULB.2018.14.2.2>
- Sanjaya, I. N. S. (2013). *Hedging and boosting in English and Indonesian research articles*. Doctoral Dissertation, The Pennsylvania State University, Pennsylvania, United States.
- Seoane, E. (2013). On the conventionalization and loss of pragmatic function of the passive in Late Modern English scientific discourse. *Journal of Historical Pragmatics*, 14(1), 70-99. <https://doi.org/10.1075/jhp.14.1.03seo>
- Shaw, P. (2003). Evaluation and promotion across languages. *English for Academic Purposes*, 2, 343-357. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1475-1585\(03\)00050-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1475-1585(03)00050-X)
- Šimanskienė, G. (2005). *Developing the profile of assessment criteria in academic writing*. MA Thesis, Vilnius Pedagogical University, Vilnius.
- Sorayyaei Azar, A., & Hashim, A. (2019). The impact of attitude markers on enhancing evaluation in the review article genre. *Journal of Language Studies*, 19(1), 153-173. <http://ejournal.ukm.my/gema/issue/view/1171>
- Subagio, U., Prayogo, J. A., & Iragiliati, E. (2019). Investigation of passive voice occurrence in scientific writing. *International Journal of Language Teaching and Education*, 3(1), 61-66. <https://doi.org/10.22437/ijolte.v3i1.7434>
- Vassileva, I. (2001). Commitment and detachment in English and Bulgarian academic writing. *English for Specific Purposes*, 20, 83-102. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0889-4906\(99\)00029-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0889-4906(99)00029-0)

- Vázquez, I., & Giner, D. (2008). Beyond mood and modality: Epistemic modality markers as hedges in research articles. A cross-disciplinary study. *Revista Alicantina de Estudios Ingleses*, 21, 171-190. <https://doi.org/10.14198/raei.2008.21.10>
- Vergaro, C. (2011). Shades of impersonality: Rhetorical positioning in the academic writing of Italian students of English. *Linguistics and Education*, 22, 118-132. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.linged.2010.11.001>
- Williams, J. M. (2005). *Style: Ten lessons in clarity and grace* (8<sup>th</sup> ed.). Pearson Longman.
- Zhang, C., & Schwarz, N. (2020). Truth from familiar turns of phrase: Word and number collocations in the corpus of language influence acceptance of novel claims. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 90, 1-6. <https://doi.org/10.1076/JESP.2020.11.001.549034-54>

### Authors' Biographies

---



**Mohammad Saber Khaghaninejad** after receiving his PhD in TEFL from Ferdowsi University of Mashhad (FUM) joined the Department of Foreign Languages and Linguistics at Shiraz University in 2011. Since then, he has published more than 55 articles and 8 books in the national and international publications. For the time being, as an Associate Professor, he is offering the courses of Psycholinguistics and Sociolinguistics at MA and PhD programs. He is also a member of *JTLS's* (*Journal of Teaching Language Skills*) editorial board



**Maryam Azariyan** has received her BA in English Literature and MA in TEFL from Shiraz University and, for the time being, is a PhD candidate of TEFL at Shiraz University. She has published some articles in the national and international journals. As an instructor she has been offering general and technical courses at Shiraz University, Zand Institute of Higher Education (in Shiraz) and Shiraz Applied Science University for a decade now. Her areas of interest are Sociolinguistics and Discourse Analysis.



**Fatemeh Javanmardi** has received her BA in English Literature and MA in TEFL from Shiraz University and, for the time being, is a PhD candidate of TEFL at Shiraz University. She has published some articles in the national and international journals. Since 2014, she has been offering general and technical courses at Apadana Institute of Higher Education in Shiraz. Her areas of interest are Teaching Methodology and Sociolinguistics.





## **A Thematic Analysis of Anthems of Ghana's Public Universities: A Case of Six**

**Cosmas Rai Amenorvi<sup>1\*</sup> and Richard Baffour Okyere<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>*Corresponding author: Lecturer, Department of Languages and General Studies,  
University of Energy and Natural Resources, Sunyani, Ghana,  
ORCID: 0000-0003-1756-5043  
Email: [cosmas.amenorvi@uenr.edu.gh](mailto:cosmas.amenorvi@uenr.edu.gh) / [cozyrai@gmail.com](mailto:cozyrai@gmail.com)*

<sup>2</sup>*Lecturer, Department of Languages and General Studies, University of Energy and  
Natural Resources, Sunyani, Ghana, ORCID: 0000-0003-3250-6973  
Email: [richard.okyere@uenr.edu.gh](mailto:richard.okyere@uenr.edu.gh)*

### **Abstract**

This study investigates the major themes that permeate the anthems of the three oldest and the three youngest public universities in Ghana and how the themes are conveyed linguistically and literarily. The University of Ghana, University of Cape Coast, and University of Education, Winneba are purposively sampled as representatives of the oldest public universities in Ghana. Representatives of the youngest universities sampled are University of Energy and Natural Resources, University of Health and Allied Sciences, and University of Mines. Findings reveal self-importance, knowledge, and religion as the major themes in the anthems of all six universities. These themes are projected linguistically by conscious content lexical items, namely, nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. Literarily, these themes are cast in such literary devices as metaphor, hyperbole, pleonasm, and personification. There is a major difference between the presentation of the theme of self-importance between the two groups of universities in that generally, the oldest universities are more definite and categorical in projecting their self-importance while the youngest universities are rather indirect and less categorical in their presentation of the theme of self-importance. This may be as a result of conscious respect for the oldest universities.

*Keywords:* anthems, figurative language, linguistics, literature, thematic analysis, themes, university anthems

### **ARTICLE INFO**

Research Article

Received: Saturday, November, 27, 2021

Accepted: Wednesday, April 27, 2022

Published: Sunday, May 1, 2022

Available Online: Wednesday, April 27, 2022

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.22049/jalda.2022.27539.1375>

Online ISSN: 2821-0204; Print ISSN: 2820-8986



©The Author(s)

## **Introduction**

Anthems are deep-seated expressions of a people's collective mind of a nation, an institution or organization. The words of anthems are, therefore, carefully chosen in order that the people behind the anthems are fully represented. Anthems, therefore, convey special themes about what and for whom they are composed. People are so attached to the anthems of their nations that they are moved to actions or emotions when these anthems are recited or sung. During sporting activities like the Olympic Games and FIFA World Cups, anthems of participating nations are sung and the response from both the sportsmen and sportswomen and spectators show the power that anthems have on a people. Like all discourses or literary pieces of work, anthems espouse themes. These themes are usually projected on conveyed on the shoulders of conscious diction and the literary use of language. Some scholars use the terms 'theme' and 'subject matter' synonymously and interchangeably; others clearly distinguish between the two terms as referring to two different concepts. Cuddon (2012, p. 913), for example, shows this difference by defining theme as follows:

Properly speaking, the theme of a work is not its subject but rather its central idea, which may be stated directly or indirectly. For example, the theme of Othello is jealousy.

It is observed from Cuddon (2012) that a theme is not the same as a subject matter but rather a subject matter's central idea. It follows that asking questions such as what, how, and why of a subject matter can lead one to its central idea – its theme. Cuddon (2012) also touches on how a theme is stated either directly or indirectly. The former way suggests that it would be easy to tell the themes as they could be explicitly stated without any sophistication. This explicitness must hang on the choice of lexical items as this is the major or perhaps the only way that discourses such as anthems are brought into being. On the other hand, themes can be stated indirectly or implicitly, which would require a close reading to be able to pinpoint them. These types of themes are likely hidden under figurative or literary language. By the employment of literary artistry, composers of literary pieces such as anthems may deliberately or inadvertently burry themes under connotative language that would require a careful analysis to unearth these themes.

They are a number of studies on anthems of nations such as Amenorvi and Grumah (2019), Cusack, (2005), De Souza (2006), Geisler (2005), and Sondermann (2013); all these showing that anthems are more than a song for a people. The thrust of the studies on anthems also reveal that they are loaded with meaning and should not be taken or understood denotatively. Organisations and institutions also have anthems. Among institutions that have anthems are universities. All universities in Ghana, for example, have their specific anthems or adopted songs of special interest to them. Just as national anthems carry messages on the shoulders of themes and are a mark of identity for a people, so do the anthems of universities in general. Universities in Ghana usually use orientation programmes to teach freshmen and freshwomen the university anthems. Some of these anthems, their lyrics and how they are sung can even be downloaded from the Internet.

Just like the national anthem of Ghana, university anthems are very popular and are held in high esteem by students and workers of each university. For example, during interuniversity games, the singing of the respective university anthems is followed by a lot of pomp and pageantry. Present and past students as well as workers of the universities also add to the euphoria and pride that accompany the singing of a university anthem. The same pride of being Ghanaian demonstrated during the singing of Ghana's national anthem can be seen as people show their passion as belonging to this or that university when a university's anthem is sung. What is responsible of this passionate attachment of people to the anthems of their universities? The answer definitely lies in the messages that these anthems carry as they perfectly connect with the people. These messages are buried in themes that the present study seeks unearthen. The present study, therefore, seeks to analyse the themes espoused in the anthems of Ghana's six public universities, comparing the three oldest to the three youngest universities. Besides, the study seeks to reveal how these themes are projected linguistically by the choice of lexical items, and literarily by the employment of literary devices and other aesthetic ways. The study is sectioned under the following sub-headings: research questions, literature review, methodology, findings and discussions, conclusions and implication.

### **Research Questions**

The aim of this paper is to answer three questions, namely, to reveal the themes found in the anthems of Ghana's public universities; how these themes are projected linguistically and literarily; and the similarities or differences in the themes between the oldest and youngest public universities in Ghana.

### **Literature Review**

Anthems have received some attention from scholars over the years. Some of these scholars are Amenorvi and Grumah (2019), Cerulo (1993), Cusack (2005), Митрофанова (2015), Neustadt (2011), Onal (2017) and Voros et al. (2016). Let us discuss a few of these studies in to contextualise the present study. One thing that stands out in all these studies is that they all concentrate on national anthems. The focus of the present study is not anthems of nations but those of universities in Ghana. The study fills the lacuna that too much attention is given to the study of national anthems to the neglect of anthems of smaller institutions such as universities and other organisations.

Amenorvi and Grumah (2019) investigated themes espoused in the national anthems of English West African which comprises Ghana, Nigeria, Liberia, Sierra Leone and The Gambia. The themes they discovered that run in the anthems of these countries are unity, religion, freedom and modesty. Their findings confirm the popular view that anthems of countries in close proximity share similar themes. It is likely that these themes would be presented in the anthems of Ghana's universities and that these themes may not be the sole possession of national anthems. Moreover, just as the creation of a national anthems are carefully done and their words carefully chosen, the same could be said of anthems of universities and other organisations. Besides, since universities hold the position of torch bearers in the

world, there is no doubt that anthems of universities will be products of careful deliberation. The deliberations will be presented by their choice of words, themes and the overall literary use of language. That is what the present paper seeks to achieve with university anthems as its focus.

Митрофанова (2015) by a thematic survey sought to reveal the general meaning in national anthems. His findings show that national anthems express the identity of a people and a core function of national anthems is that they serve as a source of unity to citizens. The themes Митрофанова (2015) found in the world's most famous anthems such as "The Marseillaise", "The Star-Spangled Banner" and "God Save the Queen" stretch around issues such as authority, religion and political devotion. His study shows that one has to do a critical reading of anthems to be able to unearth the hidden details in it.

Митрофанова (2015) has shown that anthems reveal the identity of its people and serve as a source of unity among a nation. For an anthem to be able to express the collective identity of a people as well as serve as source of unity, it must mirror the lives, values and traditions of the people whose anthem it is. We know, however, too that all anthems rely on the economy of words as very few words are employed to express the identity of a people. It follows that every single item in an anthem counts and that each is not the result of coincidence but born out of conscious efforts. Most countries in their quest to accurately represent their values have altogether changed their anthems or altered some parts of them. By observation, university anthems have also served as a source of unity between present and past students of universities. At said at the outset, universities in Ghana use orientation periods for freshmen and freshwomen to teach these anthems. These anthems can be found in student handbooks or any other important documents of a university. When these university anthems are sung during inter-university games, they present the atmosphere of belongingness to a particular university. These roles played by university anthems are enough for them to be given the attention they deserve in language and literacy studies.

Another study on national anthems is Voros et al. (2016) who investigated whether suicide rates and attitude towards self-harm among nations are reflected in the lyrics of their anthems. They compared anthems of six European countries. It came out that English and Canadian anthems contain the most positive contents while the anthems of Hungary and Poland contain more negative labelling emotions. Their study concluded that nations with positive contents in their lyrics have lower suicide rates while nations with lyrics that show some ambivalence, denial or loss have high suicide rates. It is very interesting and very informative to learn that even suicide rates in a country can be traced to that country's national anthem. It goes to show that subject matters and themes of anthems must promote healthy thoughts in order to promote even the mental health of citizens. This is further proof that anthems are more than just lyrics – they are pregnant with values, identities and deep reflections.

Another scholar, Cusack (2005), investigated the themes and ideologies associated with the national anthems of Africa. His findings show that the anthems

of African countries look into the future as well as the past and their dominant themes convey this dichotomy. He mentions such themes as calls to awake and work for the progress of the nation, the honour to the already established state, traditions and culture and thanks to God among others. Cusack's (2005) study reveals that anthems of African countries focus on both the past and the future. This is the case likely because of the colonial history of African countries. If we take Ghana's anthem for example, we can see at least an indirect reference to her colonial past. The third and the fourth lines of the first stanza of Ghana's national anthem read:

Bold to defend forever  
The course of freedom and of right.  
(Ghana National Anthem, Stanza 1, lines 3-4)

The foregoing authenticates Cusack (2005) findings as we clearly see Ghana's reference to her fight for independence and freedom which happened in the past. Cusack (2005) also says that one of the themes that permeates the anthems of Africa countries is the expression of thanks to God, what Amenorvi and Grumah (2019) refer to as the theme of religion. Without going any further, we note this theme right in the opening words of the first stanza of Ghana's anthem, namely, "God bless our homeland Ghana". The prevalence of this particular theme in the anthems of Africa reveals that African culture is a very religious one. These themes may not only be found in national anthems; university anthems could also project them.

A final study to review in this paper is that of Onal (2017). Onal (2017) describes anthems as poetic verses that are sung to express the feeling, enthusiasm, hopes and joys of a nation. He focused on the musicality of the anthems of United Arab Emirates, Turkey, Israel, Egypt, Lebanon and Syria. He concluded that the basic musical elements of the sampled anthems are tone, tempo, meter, signatures and rhythm patterns; four of the anthems are composed in major tones while two are in minor tones. Onal (2017) connects the musicality of these anthems to the very themes they express. Onal (2017) shows that besides the use of language, anthems can be looked at from different angles. As stated at the outset, all the anthems discussed herein are national anthems. Anthems of smaller entities than a country such as universities have their themes that are also products of deep reflection. University anthems, therefore, deserve the same scholarly attention given to national anthems; a lacuna the present study fills and serves as a trigger to future studies on anthems of institutions and organisations rather than those of nations that have already received enough scholarly attention.

### **Methodology**

The present study is altogether qualitative in that conclusions and inferences are descriptive rather than reduced to numerical bases. The anthems of six public universities in Ghana, comprising the three oldest and the three youngest are analysed to reveal the themes they espouse. The three oldest public universities in the country are the University of Ghana (UG), Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) and the University of Cape Coast (UCC),

founded in 1948, 1952 and 1962 respectively. However, KNUST has adopted a popular hymn for her anthem and has, therefore, been replaced with the University of Education, Winneba which has an original anthem for the purpose of this study. The three youngest public universities have also been considered for this study, namely, University of Mines and Technology (UMaT), University of Energy and Natural Resources (UENR) and University of Health and Allied Sciences (UHAS) founded in 2004, 2012 and 2012 respectively. Major themes are identified in the anthems of all six universities. Besides, the projection of these themes by lexical item choice and literary use of language are analysed and discussed. Finally, the differences in the way these two groups have presented the themes are equally discussed, making this paper purely descriptive.

### **Findings and Discussions**

This section presents the findings of the present paper, answering the research questions one at a time. The main themes of the anthems in question are identified and attention is given how they are projected linguistically and literarily. First, we pay attention to the three oldest public universities in Ghana.

#### **Self-Importance**

Analysis has revealed that self-importance is a major theme that permeates the anthems of Ghana's sampled universities for this study. The expression "self-importance" does not appear explicitly in any of the anthems. This means that this theme is stated indirectly. Let us examine some examples that show the theme of self-importance.

1. Hail University of Ghana  
The nation's hope and glory. – UG
  
2. Let the great tower of learning  
Inspire both young and old – UG
  
3. UCC, UCC we're the loveliest of them all. – UCC
  
4. UCC, UCC we're the humblest of them all  
UCC, UCC we're the bedrock of all knowledge. – UCC

From Example 1, we clearly see the theme of self-importance or self-praise in the University of Ghana's (UG) anthem's opening words "Hail University of Ghana". Other overlapping words that are similar in meaning to "hail" are "praise", "salute" and "acclaim", all showing deep reverence that is accorded to someone or something of great importance. We further see this theme carried on in the words "The nation's hope and glory." We notice the singling out of UG as not a hope or source of glory for the nation but "the hope and glory for the nation." The nation here refers to Ghana. UG is, therefore, singling out herself as very important without which Ghana may be without hope and glory. In Example 2, UG is said to be "the great tower of learning," not a great tower. These expressions are clearly self-

explanatory. If UG is the hope and glory of Ghana, if she is the great tower of learning in Ghana, it is impossible for Ghana to continue without UG. The message of self-importance is indirectly but unequivocally conveyed in UG's anthem.

For the University of Cape Coast (UCC), we notice from Examples 3 and 4 that she is the "loveliest" of them all, the "humblest" of them all and the "bedrock" of all knowledge. We see that incomparability nature that UCC projects by her choice of the superlative forms of the adjectives employed. Indirect but very categorical, the University of Cape Coast, like UG, clearly conveys a theme of self-importance in her choice of words in her anthem.

Let us now focus our attention on how the theme of self-importance is projected linguistically and literarily in Ghana's universities. Linguistically, we notice that there is the conscious choice of content lexical items in projecting the theme of self-importance in both the anthems of UG and UCC. In Example 1, we see the employment of the lexical items, "hail" (verb), "hope" (noun) and "inspire" (verb). The foregoing are all content lexical items and their choice is a conscious one. Amenorvi and Grumah (2019) submit that the national anthems of English West Africa employ the use of conscious content lexical items such as nouns, adjectives, verbs and adverbs in projecting major themes. This seems to be the case also in the case of Ghana's universities. These content lexical items are the storehouse for meaning and their choice guarantees the projection of concrete thoughts and ideas loaded with meaning.

For UG and UEW, we see the employment of the verb "hail" directed to the institution. 'Hail' has such overlapping meaning as espoused in the words as "praise", "honour", "salute", "recognize", "glorify" and "exalt". No doubt the lexical item "hail" is not a mindless choice but a conscious one in projecting the theme of self-importance in anthems of Ghana's public universities. UCC's choice of lexical items in projecting the theme of self-importance is fully captured in her choice of adjectives. For example, UCC is the "loveliest", "kindest" and "humblest". These adjectives of degree are presented in their superlative form, showing the high position the University places herself among her peers; for UCC, the first position is theirs as regards such qualities as loveliness, kindness and humility. UCC also employs the noun "bedrock" or foundation of "all", not some. It follows literally that without UCC, no one can acquire wisdom anywhere since she is the foundation or "bedrock" of all wisdom. The employment of the adjective "all" also places UCC above any other university. For UEW, the choice of the verb "uphold" and the adjective "proud" in its third metre also vividly captures the theme of self-importance. In all, we can conclude without a doubt that the conscious choice of content lexical items has squarely conveyed the theme of self-importance in the anthems of Ghana's universities. Let us now turn attention to how the theme of self-importance is projected literarily in the anthems of the tree oldest public universities in Ghana.

In projecting the theme of self-importance, Ghana's Universities of Ghana, Cape Coast and Education, Winneba, have employed literary devices. The University of Ghana has employed a metaphor in projecting this theme when she

refers to herself as the “great tower” of learning. A physical tower serves as a protective fort and refuge for people. Towers can also help one to be able to see very far ahead. What one could see atop a tower one could not standing on the ground or on top of a normal building. Towers are also usually built with concrete and are, therefore, hard to bring down. The significance of UG’s employment of the metaphor of the “great tower” of learning is that of the University would be able to figuratively see ahead and at the same time provide figurative strength to the mind of the nation. And since UG is no ordinary tower, it can serve people of all walks of life to be able to see ahead in the areas of teaching, research and community service which are a core mandate for universities. UG is, therefore, indirectly saying via the ozone of the metaphoric tower that she is the best there is and that people should come to only her to learn for the betterment of Ghana and the world. So vividly has this metaphor captured the theme of self-importance for UG that the literary projection of this theme only confirms that of the linguistic discussed earlier.

The University of Cape Coast (UCC) on the other hand, has employed a hyperbole in projecting the theme of self-importance in her anthem. Dupriez (2016) submits that a hyperbole presents an excessive exaggeration of a matter to serve as the laying of emphasis on a point. UCC employs an excessive exaggeration in the words “We’re the humblest.... kindest...loveliest of them all”. Much as we see linguistically that these words are used in their superlative degree, so do we realise the hyperbole espoused in them literarily. A part of the hyperbole that projects the sense of the theme of self-importance is the expression that UCC is the loveliest of “them all.” Of course, “them all” refers to either all the universities in Ghana or the whole world. In reality, if the University of Cape Coast’s use of “loveliest...humblest...kindest” refers to being the best in Ghana while it is usually the third best after UG and KNUST in Ghana’s University rankings, all this the more makes the theme of self-importance relevant as a way of projecting UCC’s self-image. Indeed, UCC’s use of this hyperbole is very effective even as her projection of self-importance goes beyond reality.

For the University of Education, Winneba, the whole of her anthem is an apostrophe. Cuddon (2012) has shown how the employment of an apostrophe presents an address towards an entity that is either present or abstract. In the first three lines of UEW’s anthem, the University is addressed as though she were a human. The lines go thus:

We hail you, On UEW  
Your name is in our hearts  
We uphold you...

By the use of this apostrophe which encapsulates a personification, UEW, like UG and UCC, is projecting the University as a person with a profound achievement that must be “hailed”. This is self-importance carried on the shoulders of an apostrophe punctuated with personification. By saying UEW’s “name is in our hearts”, not “our heads”, the persona, a representation of all who pay allegiance to UEW, is saying that they would not forget UEW, which is an act of praise to the University.



## Religion and Knowledge

The next major theme across the anthems of the three oldest universities in Ghana are, of course, the theme of knowledge and that of religion. Let us look at the following examples.

5. Let the great tower of learning  
Inspire both young and old – UG
6. We ask for strength and wisdom – UG
7. We learn to teach; we find out and pass on – UCC
8. For you make the Nation's Teachers strong  
UEW shall grow  
By the power of GOD – UEW

Linguistically, the themes of knowledge and religion are cast via a deliberate employment of simple and unambiguous content lexical items. In Example 5, UG employs the noun phrase “the great tower of learning” which no doubt substitutes for University of Ghana in that context, forming a cohesive tie. The verb “inspire” follows and carries the compound object “both young and old.” In casting the theme of religion, UG employs the verb “ask” (pray) for “wisdom and strength”. This no doubt is a prayer to a deity.

While UCC's anthem does not have a theme of religion, it definitely has that of knowledge, which is the very essence of an institution of a higher learning. UCC's theme of knowledge is captured in the words of Example 7: “We learn to teach; we find out and pass on.” We note the concrete verbs of “learn” and “teach” on one hand and the phrasal verbs “find out” and “pass on” on the other hand. We also take cognizance that this very theme of knowledge is conveyed by simple everyday words such as discussed above. The aim, of course, is to present this theme in a clear, straightforward and unequivocal manner.

The University of Education, Winneba (UEW), like UG possesses both the theme of knowledge and religion in her anthem. Example 8 shows clearly that UEW's choice of knowledge is to train teachers for the nation. UEW, therefore, poised to make the “Nation's” teachers “strong”. We see the use of the adjective “strong” in relation to teachers. Naturally, the words “knowledgeable” or “intelligent” and other overlapping words would have presented more sophistication and more appropriateness for that context than “strong”. However, since anthems are consciously written with every word carefully chosen, the employment of “strong” for teachers in UEW's anthem is not a coincidence; UEW is expanding contextually the semantic field of the adjective “strong” by broadening its field to include “knowledgeable”. This is one clear instance that anthems may look simple *prima facie*, but when scrutinised *in toto*, they are heavily pregnant with meaning. UEW also casts the theme of religion by her use of “by the power of God”.

As in the case of the theme of self-importance, the themes of knowledge and religion are also projected via the employment of figures of speech. UCC employs pleonasm in Example 7, a form of repetition, in casting the theme of knowledge. We note that the example comprises two clauses separated by a semi-colon. The key words of the initial part are “learn” and “teach”, while the key phrases in the latter part are the phrasal verbs “find out”, which means the same as “learn”, and “pass on”, which means “teach”. This use of pleonasm is phenomenally beautiful to behold and creates a sort of musical rhythm in that one beat is captured in the single lexical items ‘learn’ and ‘teach’ which are musically monosyllabic and translated into double beats of ‘find out’ and ‘pass on’ on the other hand. Even literally, the consciousness displayed in the seemingly simple words of the three oldest university anthems of Ghana is phenomenal.

### **Differences between Old and New Universities**

We now turn our attention over to the three youngest public universities in Ghana side by side the three oldest universities to unearth any similarities or differences in themes as well as how they are cast. Analysis shows that these young universities also possess in their anthems the major themes of self-importance, knowledge and religion, captured in deliberate diction and in literary language. There is, however, a slight difference. Let us discuss the following examples:

9. Arise! Great giant  
God bless UHAS  
Move out.... with knowledge in excellence. – UHAS
  
10. Distinguished among your peers you shall show.  
Beacons of hope to you God's light has shown.  
Generate knowledge, in advance and apply. - UENR
  
11. God bless the University of Mines and Technology  
Our motto is knowledge, truth and excellence  
To fly above the limits of the sky – UMaT

For UHAS as shown in Example 9, the theme of self-importance is captured in the words “Arise! Great giant”. The “giant” here definitely substitutes for UHAS. So urgent is this sense of importance that the giant must “arise!” UHAS is unequivocal about the theme of knowledge by employing the very word “knowledge” in her anthem.

The other youngest public university in Ghana is the University of Energy and Natural Resources (UENR). In Example 10, UENR like all the other universities we have discussed so far, has the theme of self-importance in her anthem. That theme is captured in the words “Distinguished among all your peers you shall show.” The lexical item “peers” clearly refers to sister universities such as the ones found in this paper. The pronoun “you” substitutes for UENR, hence UENR shall be great amongst the other universities. Also, we find the theme of religion projected in

words such as “God’s light”; and not surprising is the theme of knowledge as portrayed in the lexical items “knowledge”, “radiance” and “apply”.

One of the youngest universities considered is the University of Mines and Technology. The theme of self-importance as we see in Example 11 is cast in the words “fly above the limits of the sky.” Even literally, this is self-importance in its purest form. Moreover, UMaT also speaks the theme of religion in her anthem as cast in the words similar to that of UHAS, namely “God bless the University of Mines and Technology.” The opening lines of the anthems of UHAS and UMaT are just a rereading of the opening lines of Ghana’s national anthem which opens with the words. “God bless our homeland Ghana.” According to Amenorvi and Grumah (2019), religion is one major theme in Ghana’s national anthem whose first stanza is altogether an apostrophe to God. The theme of religion is true in the anthems of the universities of Ghana as it is in the national anthem, revealing religion as a significant part of the lives of Ghanaians. Besides religion, UMaT also conveys the theme of knowledge as captured in Example 11 in the words “knowledge”, “truth” and “excellence”.

So far, we can confidently conclude that all six universities investigated in this paper possess the themes of self-importance, knowledge and religion and that all these themes are projected linguistically and literarily. The following paragraphs discuss how the youngest universities project these themes figuratively in their anthems.

Language is used both literally and figuratively even in the case of the three youngest public universities in their anthems. In Example 9, UHAS employs a metaphor, an apostrophe and personification in “Arise! Great giant”. The metaphor and personification lie in the comparison of UHAS to a giant as well as the humanising of UHAS. The significance of these figures of speech is that of bringing an inanimate thing to life and treating it as a human in order that it can “act” in respect to the ambition placed before it. For the apostrophe, UHAS is addressed as a human in “Arise! Great giant”. These cluster of literary sophistication in portraying the sense of self-importance reveals that this theme is one so cherished in the anthems of Ghana’s universities. Even without claiming absolute knowledge of all university anthems in the world, it is reasonable to say that the theme of knowledge may cut across university anthems, for their paramount reason for their establishment is the propagation of knowledge.

For UENR in Example 10, the literariness is concentrated in expressing the theme of religion as captured in the words “...to you God’s light has shown.” In these words, UENR employs imagery where she is in a mental picture of darkness, a figurative way of portraying her relatively young age among the universities of the country. Then God’s light, blessing, has shone on her, revealing her beautiful qualities of hope for the nation. The mental image painted in expressing the theme of self-importance for UENR is beautiful to contemplate. So intense and compressed are the conscious choice of the words of the anthems in question that in parsing them to reach their linguistic, literary and aesthetic core, they explode with

unfathomable sophistication; that is the theme of self-importance and religion on the shoulders of linguistic, literary and aesthetic flamboyance.

We refer back to the theme of self-importance for UMaT as presented in Example 11. UMaT intends to “fly above the limits of the sky.” This is without a doubt a cluster of a hyperbole and a metaphor. The former is captured in the impossibility in real life of “flying above the limits of the sky” and the latter compares UMaT to a bird that could “fly”. UMaT’s “flying above the limits of the sky” brings to mind the cliché “the sky is the limit”. To UMaT, the sky is not the limit as she could “fly above the limits of the sky”. These figures of speech give UMaT the superiority she seeks as a way of promoting self-image. We have seen so far how the anthems of the six universities of the present study are similar in projecting the themes of self-importance, religion and knowledge. While these institutions demonstrate these similarities, there are some differences presented in the following subheading.

### **Differences in the Projection of Themes**

The major difference found between the anthems of three oldest and youngest public universities in Ghana is seen in the way each side has presented the theme of self-importance. The oldest universities, particularly UG and UCC have cast this theme in a matter-of-fact way. For UG, they are “the nation’s hope and glory”, not a source of hope and glory for the nation. This straightforwardness in projecting the theme of self-importance in the case of UG may be because of UG’s position as being the very first university, public or private, in Ghana. Inherent in her name, ‘University of Ghana’, by itself is a proclamation of the theme of self-importance.

Like UG, UCC says in her anthem that she is the ‘loveliest’, ‘kindest’ of them all. UCC is very categorical in seeing herself as regards loveliness and kindness as the best among all the universities of the country. Paradoxically, UCC also proclaims to be the ‘humblest’ of them all. This paradox lies in the pride in proclaiming oneself to be humble. There is one thing worth noting though about the theme as proclaimed by UCC in her anthem. The words ‘loveliest’ ‘kindest’ and ‘humblest’ are not as categorical and heavy as those of UG’s nation’s ‘hope and glory.’ UCC’s choice may be determined by their acknowledgement that there is an older higher force like UG.

Moreover, the proclamation of self-importance in the anthems of the three youngest universities of Ghana is not as categorical as that of the three oldest universities. UENR’s “Distinguished among your peers you shall show” points towards the future, an acknowledgement in her anthem that there exist forces ahead of her to acknowledge. UHAS’s “Arise! Great giant” only refers to herself as a giant, not the giant, a recognition of the stronger power in the older universities of the country. UMaT’s “to fly above the limits of the sky” only projects UMaT’s singular ambition not in comparison with any other institution.

### Conclusion and Implication

The present thematic analysis of the anthems of six public universities in Ghana has revealed the major themes of self-importance, religion and knowledge across the anthems of all six universities sampled in this study. It goes to suggest that all of Ghana's university anthems may project these themes too. Moreover, the themes are projected linguistically by conscious content lexical items, namely, noun, verbs, adjectives and adverbs. Figuratively, literary devices such as metaphor, hyperbole, apostrophe, pleonasm and imagery are employed to cast these themes. Finally, the older universities are more categorical in projecting the theme of self-importance while the younger universities are less categorical and rather general in the self-image proclamation. In all, this study has revealed that anthems of universities or any other organisations are equally as sophisticated in style and loaded with meaning as national anthems. The implication of this study is to draw attention to anthems of smaller organisations such as political parties, universities and religious groups and societies. This attention would help fill the lacuna in the study of anthems by taking the focus off national anthems to those such as mentioned in this study.

### References

- Amenorvi, C. R., & Grumah, G. Y. (2019). A thematic analysis of the national anthems of English West Africa. *The Journal of Applied Linguistics and Applied Literature: Dynamics and Advances*, 7(1), 141-151. <http://dx.doi.org/10.22049/jalda.2019.26509.1130>
- Cerulo, K. A. (1993). Symbols and the world system: National anthems and flags. *Social Forum*, 8(2), 243-271. <https://doi.org/10.1007/bf01115492>
- Cuddon, J. A. (2012). *A dictionary of literary terms and literary theory*. John Wiley & Sons. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118325988>
- Cusack, I. (2005). African national anthems: 'Beat the drums, the red lion has roared.' *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, 17(2), 235-251. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13696850500448337>
- De Souza, A. A. (2006). The construal of interpersonal meanings in the discourse of national anthems: An appraisal analysis. 33rd International Systemic Functional Congress, 2006, 531-550. [https://doi.org/10.1163/9780080461588\\_023](https://doi.org/10.1163/9780080461588_023)
- Dupriez, B. (2016). *A dictionary of literary devices: Gradus, A-Z*. University of Toronto Press. <https://doi.org/10.3138/9781442670303>
- Geisler, M. (Ed.) (2005). *National symbols, fractured identities: Contesting the national narrative*. Middlebury College Press. <https://books.google.com.gh/books?id=CLVaSxt-sV0C&printsec=frontcover>
- Митрофанова, А. (2015). [Review of the book *Anthem quality. National songs: A theoretical survey*, by Christopher (Kit) Kelen]. *Ab Imperio* 2015(2), 490-496. <https://doi.org/10.1353/imp.2015.0052>

- Neustadt, R. (2011). Reading Spanish American national anthems: “Sonograms” of national identity. *Music and Politics*, 5(1), 1-19. <https://doi.org/10.3998/mp.9460447.0005.102>
- Onal F. G. (2017). Study on the words and musical patterns of the national anthems of the middle eastern countries. *Ulakbilge: Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, 5 (9), 153-177. <https://doi.org/10.7816/ulakbilge-05-09-08>
- Sondermann, K. (2013). Reading politically: National anthems as textual icons. In T. Carver & M. Hyvärinen (Eds.), *Interpreting the political: New methodologies* (pp. 128–42). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203435342-13>
- Voros, V., Osvath, P., Vincze, O., Pusztay, K., Fekete, S., & Rihmer, Z. (2016). Word use and content analysis of the first verses of six national anthems: A transcultural aspect of suicidal behavior. *Psychiatria Danubina*, 28(1), 82-85. [https://doi.org/10.1016/s0924-9338\(12\)7561](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0924-9338(12)7561)

## Authors' Biographies

---



**Cosmas Rai Amenorvi** is a Research Fellow in the Quality Assurance and Academic Planning Directorate at the University of Energy and Natural Resources, Sunyani, Ghana. He teaches English and Academic Writing and Communication Skills in the Department of Languages and General Studies at the same university. He is currently a PhD candidate of Linguistics in the Graduate School of Humanities at Leiden University, the Netherlands. He has been teaching and investigating English, Linguistics, Literature, and Communication for more than a decade now. He couples as a poet, language editor, and proof-reader. His research interests are in the areas of English, Sociolinguistics, Semantics, Discourse Analysis, Contact Linguistics, and Youth Language.



**Richard Baffour Okyere** is a Lecturer in the Department of Languages and General Studies at the University of Energy and Natural Resources, Sunyani, Ghana. He has been teaching language and communication in French for close to a decade. His research areas are Language and Communication, Diplomacy, French Literature, and Language for Specific

---



## **Ethical Conversation with the Other in Conrad Aiken’s “Silent Snow, Secret Snow”: A Levinasian Reading**

Mohammadreza Touzideh<sup>1</sup> and Farshid Nowrouzi Roshnavand<sup>2\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*MA in English Language and Literature, Azarbaijan Shahid Madani University, Tabriz, Iran, ORCID: 0000-0001-9025-7974  
Email: m.touzideh@azaruniv.ac.ir*

<sup>2</sup>*Corresponding author: Assistant Professor of English Language and Literature, English Department, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Mazandaran, Babolsar, Iran, ORCID: 0000-0002-5338-7785  
Email: f.nowrouzi@umz.ac.ir*

### **Abstract**

The ethical relation with the Other becomes of great significance in the postmodern ethos which considers the decentralization of subjectivity as one of its main philosophical and literary objectives. Emmanuel Levinas was one of the first philosophers who redefined the notion of ethics as a critical moment in which the subject’s encounter with the Other solely occurs through the use of ethical language, a mode of communication that essentially escapes any form of totalization in favor of the subject’s consciousness. Such an ethical meeting with the Other can be traced in Conrad Aiken’s short story “Silent Snow, Secret Snow,” which narrates the twelve-year-old protagonist’s encounter with the mysterious voice of snow. The results of the study show that the protagonist, once exposed to the speaking face of the Other, initiates an ethical conversation with it and, in so doing, loses his subjectivity to the ethical manifestation that the Other issues upon him.

*Keywords:* Emmanuel Levinas, ethics, ethical language, subject, the Other, Conrad Aiken

### ARTICLE INFO

Research Article

Received: Thursday, September, 2, 2021

Accepted: Friday, April 15, 2022

Published: Sunday, May 1, 2022

Available Online: Friday, April 15, 2022

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.22049/jalda.2022.27397.1347>

Online ISSN: 2821-0204; Print ISSN: 2820-8986



© The Author(s)

## **Introduction**

Throughout the second half of the twentieth century, literary and philosophical discourses have shifted their focus from the de-construction of subject and the Other to the re-construction of the identity of the Other and the question of ethics, a trend which can easily be traced in such literary approaches as feminism, postcolonialism, queer studies, disability studies, etc. This turn toward ethics has also been underlined by Emmanuel Levinas, a Lithuanian-born French philosopher (1906-1995), who once again revives the matter in his philosophy, a subject which had long been forgotten because of the calamities brought about by the outbreak of the two world wars.

Touching upon the relationship between the subject and the Other and how it is related to the concept of ethics, Levinas states,

the calling into question of the same - which cannot occur within the egoist spontaneity of the same - is brought about by the other. We name this calling into question of my spontaneity by the presence of the Other ethics. (1969, p. 43)

Thereupon, Levinasian ethics insists on a mode of ethics without any ethical foundation; it is a way of approaching the Other on the basis of responsibility in the reception of the Other. The Levinasian Other thence would be an undisclosable entity that escapes all the limitations within which the subject seeks to enclose it since the Other comes from a dimension of infinity that always already overflows my consciousness as a subject. Therefore, the subject's relation with the Other is enacted only as an ethical conversation which takes place in an encounter with the face of the Other.

Drawing on Levinas's notion of the ethics and his appreciation of the Other, the present paper analyzes "Secret Snow, Silent Snow," a short story by Conrad Aiken, to show how an ethical encounter between Paul, the protagonist, and the Other results in the absolute subordination of the subject once he is exposed to the speaking face of the Other. In so doing, the paper focuses on the language of the Other as an interruption that puts sovereignty of the subject under question. The next part outlines a brief review of the existing scholarship on the short story.

## **Literature Review**

Aiken's short story has already been analyzed from different perspective. Graham (1968) reads the work as a poem and refers to its lyric symbolism, particularly reflected in the image of the snow, and to its apt employment of alliteration among other poetic devices. Slap and Slap consider Paul to be ill and attribute his abnormal behavior to "his realization of his parents' sexual activity" (1980, p. 2). Likewise, Perkins maintains in a short review that Paul's retreat into his inner self symptomizes his "advanced schizoid personality," deciding that his disorder is sexually rooted (1962, p. 47). Swan (1989) investigates the role of silence in the short story and also in an earlier poem by Aiken called "Senlin: A Biography," pointing that in both works, silence and the silent represent "the neglected component of human reality" (p. 41).



Werlock (2010) calls the narrative a horror story in the manner of Edgar Allan Poe, citing Aiken's deep interest in psychology and his father's madness as his possible inspirations for writing this work. To Tressin (1966), the short story allegorizes the plight of a creative, artistic, introverted, and sensitive mind in a philistine, middle-class society where the "daydreaming" protagonist is seriously misunderstood. Stevenson uses Gestalt psychology to explain Paul's condition, which he calls snow-blindness; the protagonist is not able to see anymore because he has turned his eyes "towards the whiteness of the skull's bony interior, looking at the inside of his own head" (2004, p. 67). All these analyses are valid academic enterprises in their own right; however, no study has so far addressed "Silent Snow, Secret Snow" in the light of the Levinasian ethics and its delineation of the encounter between the ethical subject and the Other. Below is provided an overview of what the French philosopher has defined as ethics.

### **Saying the Unsaid, Unsayings the Said: Levinasian Ethical Language and the Other**

Levinas attempts to describe the Other in term of the experience of "metaphysics." In his terminology, metaphysics is referred to as that which is "turned toward the 'elsewhere' and the 'otherwise' and the 'other'" (Levinas, 1969, p. 33). He considers metaphysics as a movement which is aimed at what is beyond perception and understanding; it is that moment of philosophical astonishment whence what is unknown comes forth as a disturbance of what is within the scope of knowledge, a trembling that shakes the very consistency of the subject, a "movement going forth from a world that is familiar to us ... toward an alien outside-of-oneself" (Levinas, 1969, p. 33); it is a desire for what has been lost, a nostalgia, a "longing for return," an obsession for what goes beyond my understanding as a subject, a yearning for an invisible saying for which there is no equivalent (Levinas, 1969, p. 34).

Accordingly, subjectivity is imperiled by the emergence of the Other to whom one can converse only in "ethical language." In every description Levinas gives of it, ethical language is a non-verbal relation with the Other based on a radical asymmetry that occurs in the encounter with the "face" of the other. It is an encounter with that whose manifestation as a face is significantly the "first discourse" since "to speak is before all this way of coming from behind one's appearance, behind one's form - an opening in all the openness" (Levinas, 1986, 352). In this moment of ethical astonishment, "not only do I face the face in language, the face also faces in language: 'the face speaks'" (Robbins, 1999, p. 57).

This exteriority manifests itself as a saying that endures not as an answer to a question, but rather, as a question that distorts the establishment of any answering. The content of this ethical interruption for Levinas is in this "risky uncovering of oneself, in sincerity, the breaking up of inwardness and the abandon of all shelter, exposure to traumas, vulnerability" (Levinas, 1981, p. 48). As a result, ethical language would be the expression of the face in the form of an absence, a trace whose movement reveals itself to the subject and simultaneously withdraws from being disclosed. It should be noted that in order for the ethical language to emerge, there

must be a disruptive saying within the sequence of the said whose every motion “resound[s] as a silence without becoming a theme itself” (Levinas, 1981, p. 38).

According to Levinas of “Language and Proximity,” the “incommunicable” and “irresistible” presence of the Other, which is revealed to the subject through sporadic visions, is a non-verbal saying prior to anything verbally said; it is an act of interruption, which once said or seen, resists signification; it is a contentless relation “in which every transmission of messages ... is already established, [it is] the original language, a language without words or propositions, pure communication” (1987a, p. 119); a language that touches the Other in anonymity since the gist of the Other is “its very ambiguity, its enigma ... its transcendence outside of intentionality” (p. 125).

On that account, to experience the revelation of the Other’s face as an interruptive silence is the same as the experience of a mode of saying that Levinas calls *il y a*, the sheer *there is*, wherein there is existence, but no definite identity. As Levinas writes in *Time and the Other*, “Let us imagine all things, beings and persons, returning to nothingness. What remains after this imaginary destruction of everything is not something, but the fact that there is [il y a]” (1987c, p. 46). This mode of “anonymous existence” is an interruptive movement which leads not only to the dissolution of all things, but also, of “the very distinction between subject and object” (Robbins, 1999, p. 92).

Significantly, in the encounter with the Other, the irresponsible answer to the call of the Other’s face would be to limit and frame it in ordinary language; it would be to disclose the true essence of things with verbal and pictorial re-presentations; it would be to have “gratitude” in the recognition of the Other for gratitude requires a mutual communication that results in a total negation and categorization of the Other being in a meaningful structure. Nonetheless, the vision of the Other, acknowledged in its ultimate singularity and otherness, “requires an ingratitude of the other” since gratitude would in fact be “the return of the movement to its origin” (Robbins, 1999, p. 7), a state that Levinas associates with the biblical figure Abraham. Unlike the Odyssean journey in which “all the seemingly unforeseeable adventures are but an accident of the return home” (Robbins 1999, 4), Abraham, in an irreversible movement, leaves “his fatherland forever for a land yet unknown” (Robbins, 1999, p. 21), a one-way movement that goes unto the Other without any return to the point of departure.

In approaching the subject, as Levinas emphasizes in “Phenomenon and Enigma,” the face enters as a new order that dismantles the order of Being, and in so doing, the meeting of the two orders “ends in conciliation, in the constitution of a new order which ... shines through this conflict” (1987b, p. 64). This concrete form of alterity reenters the previous order as a disturbance whose non-definability threatens the establishment of meaning since in its revelation, the face becomes an order that causes disorder itself, a meaning that goes beyond meaning, a mode of advancing that simultaneously retreats; it is a way of manifesting in which the manifested exceeds manifestation, for the face is not a “simple ambiguity in which

two significations have equal chances and the same light,” but an enigma whose exorbitant meaning “is already effaced in its apparition” (1987b, p. 66).

It is worth mentioning that in the subject’s encounter with the Other, the face issues a primordial message of absolute responsibility which is rooted pre-historically in the expression of the face and takes the form of an ambiguity that dismantles the very foundation of the meaning whose visual or lingual expression is “not as something given or intended, but as a certain disquietude, as a *dérangement* which puts us out of our common tracks” (Waldenfels, 2002, p. 63; italics in original). In his description of such an ethical expression that “deranges” the ordinary route of being, Levinas emphasizes the non-intentional quality of the face, which in the form of an enigmatic vision, delivers a message that does not return to its original point of departure to signify; rather, it departs toward an unknown horizon wherein the sound of what is said resounds as a silence that not only signifies nothing and carries no content inside itself, but also, in its every movement, breaks the unity which is assumed for the transmitted message.

In addition, ethical language is materialized in a face-to-face encounter with the Other being whose primary visual manifestation is an ethical expression that compels me to respond as that “whose first word is obligation” (Wyschogrod, 2002, p. 196) and my response is a “signification opened up by utterance [which] is given to the other as *language*” (Wyschogrod, 2002, p. 194; italics added). For this reason, it is “the face to face relation, the essential moment of ethics” that first finds language, and as a result, the relation of the subject with the Other is primarily activated as an ethical conversation (Eaglestone, 1997, p. 121).

Thus, Levinas uses the correlation between saying and the said in order to emphasize the primacy of this “Other” ethical language whose signification is inextricable from its manifestation, a mode of utterance that serves as an “expression of answerability prior to the expression of questions and answers” (Llewelyn, 2002, p. 127). Before being said by the speaking face of the Other, saying, as an intrusion on the system, detracts order from the said as a meaningful entity and leaves its imprint on the said through being a Desire that language never satisfies, for “the desirable does not fill up my desire but hollows it out, nourishing me as it were with new hungers” (Levinas, 1986, p. 351).

The said, as “a ‘passive synthesis’ of what ‘passes’” (Levinas, 1981, p. 114), shows itself as a statement that reduces the reality of things to a single term and fixates saying by giving its passing transcendence a name so as to immobilize it with a meaning since saying is an in-process movement whose motion is frozen the moment it is manifested as a meaningful statement. As “the proximity of one to the other, the commitment of an approach, the one for the other, the very signifyingness of signification” (Levinas, 1981, p. 5), saying is the primordial state of meaningfulness that always already has a signification of itself before the ascription of any meaning to it. It is that reversal movement that conveys a message not of understanding but of sensibility and responsibility. This calling in silence reminds the subject of the very existence of another being who transmits to the subject a de-thematized message that is just meant to be heard rather than understood.

On that account, saying would be an absolute defiance against the objectification of thought, for to objectify thought would be to embellish it with forms and signs that are meant to take on meaning. In brief, saying “uncovers the one that speaks, not as an object disclosed by theory,” but rather, as the one that “discloses oneself by neglecting one's defenses, exposing oneself to outrage, to insults and wounding” (Levinas, 1981, p. 49). It is that groundless speech whose content touches the Other, leaving it with the remnants of its traces in the form of the said; it is a kind of presence of an absence whose signification belongs to an “irrecuperable, unpresentable” past, a proximity irreducible to consciousness (Levinas, 1981, p. 46). The next section of the present study will analyze Aiken’s “Silent Snow, Secret Snow” in the light of Levinasian philosophy in an attempt to shed light on the ethical relationship between the subject and the Other in the short story.

### **Silent Language, Secret Other: Provocation of Alterity in Aiken’s “Silent Snow, Secret Snow”**

Conrad Aiken (1889-1973) was a prolific American writer mostly famous for his collections of psychological poetry, one of which won him the Pulitzer Prize in 1930. However, Aiken is now frequently remembered for his highly anthologized short story “Silent Snow, Secret Snow,” first published in 1932. It is the story of a twelve-year-old schoolboy named Paul Hasleman who is living with his parents in an unspecified town. When Paul wakes up one morning, he notes that there is something markedly different about the footsteps of the postman who comes to deliver packages to the neighborhood on a daily basis. Paul feels that the postman’s footsteps are muffled for a few moments that morning and are then resumed; thus, he infers that it is snowing outside and reasons that the postman’s footsteps cannot be heard because he puts down his boots on the snow. Nonetheless, when he gets up and looks out of the window, to his dismay and disappointment, he sees nothing but bare, empty, and dry streets. That is when he realizes it is only he who can “hear” the silent, secret snow. The situation gets exacerbated as the intervals in which his footsteps cannot be heard are extended every single day, and this means he can hear the silent snow even more strongly.

The story is composed of four episodes. In the first part, Paul’s absentminded participation in the geography class is narrated parallel to his experience of the uncanny snowfall and also to his mounting apprehension that his parents have noticed his constant daydreaming and are now getting worried about his physical and mental health. The second section is devoted to Paul’s return from school to home, delineating how he is getting more and more detached from the external world, which is now ugly, dirty, and detestable to the protagonist’s eyes. The third episode pictures his parents’ attempt to diagnose the cause of his disquieting pensiveness by calling in Doctor Howells, a family friend. Tired of the seemingly interminable questions of the doctor and his parents and simultaneously hearing the snow’s inscrutable whispers to him, Paul ultimately succumbs to pressures and tells them he is obsessed with the snow. Finding how this confession has appalled the three adults and tempted by the seductive voice of the snow, he suddenly decides to escape to his room upstairs in a bid to find the soothing company of the snow. The

story reaches its climax in part four, a very short episode less than two pages. When Paul's mother enters his room to see if he is alright, he coarsely orders her out. The story ambiguously ends with the snow dominating all over the room.

From the opening lines of the story, one is recurrently exposed to the disruptive presence of a thing beyond conception whose encouragement to "silence," "cold," and "sleep" disengages the subjectivity of the protagonist. It is of great importance to note that Paul's ethical quest to encounter the cryptic Other ends up in a total annihilation of the self for the sake of retaining the alterity and novelty of the Other. It is a one-way movement that goes unto the Other without any return to the point of departure. The inability to escape the call of the Other is a responsive passivity on the part of the protagonist, a pure form of contact, before any mode of mutual communication actually occurs. As noted in the previous section, the Levinasian ethical encounter comes from a dimension of height, from a "beyond," where the Other is located at a distance that guarantees its unreachable exteriority. The unavailability of the Levinasian Other is well captured in Aiken's first-page representation of the unknowable "thing," that is, the snow, which is always shrouded in an atmosphere of mystery: "The thing was above all a secret, something to be preciously concealed from Mother and Father; and to that very fact it owed an enormous part of its deliciousness" (1934, p. 570).

Accordingly, Paul can be said to embody the Levinasian ethical subject whose confrontation with the Other is marked by an absolute passivity and inescapable responsibility which pave the way for the merging of the subject with the Other, since in Levinasian ethics, "to be I signifies not being able to escape responsibility" (Hutchens, 2004, p. 19). Paul's responsible interaction with the *thing* can be traced from the very first page of "Silent Snow, Secret Snow." The story tellingly starts with the manner Paul faces the Other; he does not know why "it" is happening to him, "nor would it even have occurred to him to ask" (p. 570). The impact of such passive responsibility on the subject is so grave that Paul, from the very beginning, prioritizes the ethereal world to the realm of the mundane. Notably, as the first episode of the story describes Paul's uncanny encounter with the snow, the events of the real world (that is, what goes on in the geography class) are recounted in parentheses (Ruthrof, 1973, p. 406), a narratorial technique which shows the ethical subject is entirely preoccupied with the Other world and therefore, the surrounding environment becomes less significant to him.

As can be seen in the text, instead of relating the content of this strange "thing" to his consciousness, Paul adopts a non-totalizing approach which emphasizes his inability to disclose the mystery of the Other since any attempt to do so would be to betray the incomprehensibility of the Other, a risk he is not willing to take. Once exposed to the face of the Other, not only does Paul never claim to unravel the signification of the Other through putting it into something "said" and meaningful, he even adds to the ambiguity of the Other by maintaining and protecting the secrecy and strangeness of this ominous being whose momentary revelation in the form of a face issues a call for responsibility in answering and addressing it, since "the self that responds to the command *that it must do something* does so without hearing the theme of *what* it must do" (Hutchens, 2004, p. 48; italics

original). This ethical relationship is manifest in the following excerpt from the story where Paul elaborates on the quality of his secret encounter with the snow:

As he listened to these things, he was already, with a pleasant sense of half-effort, putting his secret between himself and the words. Was it really an effort at all? For effort implied something voluntary, and perhaps even something one did not especially want; whereas this was distinctly pleasant, and came almost of its own accord. (p. 571)

Under such *ethical* circumstances, Paul describes his experience of the Other as an interruption in the straightforward direction of the said: "It was irresistible. It was miraculous. Its beauty was simply beyond anything - beyond speech as beyond thought - utterly incommunicable" (p. 575). As Robbins maintains, "Unlike other signs, facial expressions signify only themselves. They do not refer to something else, to states of mind or feeling. Their autosemification is presemiotic and has no cognitive content" (Robbins, 1999, p. 58). This means that for Paul, the experience of the sound of the postman's approaching steps and also his blurred vision of the snow would be to encounter the state of *il y a* (there is). At this point, Paul's subjectivity is interrupted in the presence of an absence whose expression as a face (or a vision) reminds him of a transcendence laid outside, which in anonymity invites the subject to *listen* rather than to *speak* since to listen would be to touch things in the non-existence of light, a situation in which all things are heard in their absence rather than seen in their presence. Such an experience of disturbance is imposed on Paul when that strange "thing" addresses him:

'Listen to us!' it said. 'Listen! We have come to tell you the story we told you about. You remember? Lie down. Shut your eyes, now - you will no longer see much - in this white darkness who could see, or want to see? We will take the place of everything ... Listen'. (p. 589)

In similar fashion, Aiken uses the tension between "seeing" and "listening" to prioritize listening over other perceptions as it symbolically allows the resigned subject to fulfill the Levinasian desire to be fully assimilated into the Other. Seeing here stands for the conventional ways of grasping the world in favor of the subject while listening, from a Levinasian perspective, is the sign of total subservience toward the Other and a pre-context to go beyond logical understanding. The conflict of the story is exposed when Paul starts to *listen* to the silent snow for the first time, but fails to *see* the snow in the real world. When Paul's daydreaming deepens and he gradually appears lost in familial conversations, his parents impute his absentmindedness to a possible eyestrain, in order to cure which, they buy a new lamp to add more light to Paul's study: "A new lamp provided for his evening work - perhaps it was eyestrain which accounted for this new and so peculiar vagueness of his" (p. 575). It needs to be mentioned here that as the story moves on, the protagonist gradually loses his "vision" of the world and, after a while, is unable to differentiate between what he sees outside and his not-visible-to-public interactions with the sound of silent, secret snow.

Notably, the snow, as the emblem of ethical saying, is so prominent in Paul's psyche that it turns into an integral part of his worldview. That is to say, he accepts

the ubiquity of the snow without questioning its origin, essence, and ultimate purpose, to such an extent that the silent snow, which is only visible and audible to the ethical subject, becomes merged with the actual world. For instance, when Miss Buell (Paul's geography teacher) asks him a question, he "stared through the snow towards the blackboard" (p. 577); or in the second episode, Paul, on his way homeward, lifts his hand "to shade his eyes against snow-sun" (p. 581) and looks through "the snow-laden sunlight" (p. 580). This symbiosis of the impossibles (i.e., the ethereal and the physical) which can be detected in numerous other examples throughout the text show that Paul never tries to impose his subjectivity on the Other; instead, he is passively inscribed by it.

The character of the postman is also of great importance in the Levinasian analysis of Aiken's short story. Importantly and contrary to our expectations, he is never shown to deliver any specific material objects to the Haslemans and other neighbors. Also, he is never seen by any of the characters, even the protagonist. He is an invisible messenger whose materiality is conveyed to Paul and also to the readers through the sound of his heavy boots and his knock on the Haslemans' door. The postman is the carrier of a silent, secret message regarding the partial absence of the Other. This message is never fully materialized and only "traces" of it are presented to the protagonist in the form of uncanny, incommunicable sounds.

The point of note here is that although Paul ethically disregards his subjectivity in favor of the postman, as the so-called messenger, and the snow, as his enigmatic message, there are other characters in the story such as Miss Buell, his parents, and the doctor, whose relationships with the Other(s) are of a totally different kind. Common among all these adult figures are a firm insistence on tagging other phenomena, a desire to label things according to the already existent frameworks, and an unflinching tendency to find clear-cut, definite explanations for opaque ambiguities. For instance, when a schoolgirl named Dreidre poetically and unconventionally describes the equator as "a line that ran round the middle" (p. 570), Miss Buell teases her by saying, "Ah! I see. The earth is wearing a belt, or a sash. Or someone drew a line round it!" (p. 571), making her the object of her classmates' ridicule. In fact, the extract shows definitions are so hard-and-fast and nonnegotiable in the realm of the mundane that even the slightest transgression in naming and explaining (O)ther phenomena is not tolerated.

The same fixed and fixating attitude can be traced in the manner Paul's parents and Doctor Howells attempt to determine the cause of his so-called abnormal behavior. According to Levinas, the inclination to "understand" the Other on the part of the subject would finally eventuate in a conscious struggle to manipulate and mold the Other, i.e., to divest the Other of its Otherness and transfigure it into another subject in the realm of the mundane. This restricted and restrictive frame of mind is illustrated in the therapy session for which Aiken deliberately chooses the *mise en scène* of a criminal interrogation, that is, the investigators clinically looking at the suspect under a dim light: "After supper, the inquisition began. He stood before the doctor, under the lamp" (p. 583). Significantly, the extract also alludes to inquisition, a scheme launched by the Catholic Church to identify and punish the heretics. The gruesome practice reached

its apex in the notorious Spanish Inquisition, initiated in 1478 by Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand of Spain (Bergemann, 2019, 35). The plan allowed the *unethical* employment of systematic torture to crack down on dissenters and all who seemed to be “withholding evidence” (Hassner, 2020, p. 1), i.e., all the Others.

Very much like Miss Buell, the doctor, the inquisitor, also utters his unyielding demand to procure answers from the protagonist: “Now Paul - I would like very much to ask you a question or two. You will answer them, won't you -” (p. 584), a statement which includes an indirect threat in the end. It is well to mention here that the words “question(s)” and “answer(s)” have been repeated 5 and 8 times, respectively, in different contexts throughout the story, signifying the importance of conventional, meaning-oriented communications in the world of unethical inquisitions. However, things are radically different in the Levinasian world of ethical encounters. It is for this reason that when Paul, as an ethical subject, is asked to ponder over every question (“think it over and be quite sure”), the request strikes him as absurd since to him, certainty is no more than an illusion:

He felt himself smiling again, at the notion of being quite sure. What a joke! As if he weren't so sure that reassurance was no longer necessary, and all this cross-examination a ridiculous farce, a grotesque parody! What could they know about it? These gross intelligences, these humdrum minds so bound to the usual, the ordinary? Impossible to tell them about it! (p. 586)

Ethically speaking, once Paul is subjected to the expression of the Other's face (i.e., the postman and the snow), which manifests itself as a disturbing saying, his consciousness fades away at the expense of a total surrender to the call of the Other. For Paul, to respond to that call is to go beyond the mathematical objectification of the Other since in the ethical encounter with the Other, there is no logical conformity but only compassion and respect to its alterity. This sublime status of the Other fills Paul with a sense of awe, wonder, and veneration:

What was this? this cruel disturbance? this act of anger and hate? It was as if he had to reach up a hand toward another world for any understanding of it, - an effort of which he was only barely capable. (p. 589)

Consequently, where language for Paul fails to present the Other as a theme in the form of something said, the expression of the Other's face speaks as a past that no memory can resurrect due to its being situated beyond consciousness and understanding. Similar to the ethical acts of generosity and sacrifice where the subject loses itself for the sake of the Other, to answer the demand of the Other's face is a one-way movement in which one leaves in order not to ever return. As Levinas notes, “the response to the enigma's summons is the generosity of sacrifice outside the known and the unknown, without calculation, for going on to infinity” (1987b, pp. 72-73). This means Paul's movement toward infinity becomes an ethical appreciation of saying that, from a Levinasian perspective, can be perceived “only through those ruptures - or traces of those ruptures - that it has left to the order of the Said” (Korhonen, 2017, p. 368).



As mentioned above, Paul, as a Levinasian ethical subject, gradually becomes one with the Other (i.e., the mysterious sound of the silent snow). This unification is about to become consummated in the third episode when Paul is being examined by the doctor. The voice of the Other is now finding unprecedented control over the subject who seems to be totally at its beck and call. This eerie nonexistent existence surreptitiously whispers to Paul, calling for the expulsion of the adults and a private rendezvous between the two: “Tell them to go away. Banish them. Refuse to speak. Leave them, go upstairs to your room, turn out the light and get into bed -I will go with you, I will be waiting for you” (p. 585).

Ultimately, when its demands are met and Paul flees to his room, the process of the unification of the subject and the Other is completed in episode four; Paul and the snow are united and this is the rest of the world (that is, the realm of the mundane and its inhabitants such as Mother, Father, Miss Buell, and Doctor Howells) which now transforms into an uncompromising rival. When Paul and the snow are alone in the room, “a gash of horrible *light*” disrupts their tryst and subsequently, the snow, feeling betrayed, “drew back” because “something *alien* had come into the room” (589; italics added). That is to say, the protagonist and the Other have become one at the end of the story and this is the intruding mother who is now granted alienation. Paul’s voice is presently no different from that of the snow as he has passively merged with the Other; his words are no more his, but are uttered at the command of the Other: “the exorcising words ... tore themselves from his other life suddenly – ‘Mother! Mother! Go away! I hate you!’ And with that effort, everything was solved, everything became all right” (p. 590). As the excerpt demonstrates, the ethical encounter in “Silent Snow, Secret Snow” culminates in the utopian moment of the fusion of the subject and the Other when “everything” improves to a new ethical status.

### **Conclusion**

The relationship between self and the Other has been one of the central concerns in postist discourses. This issue found a new resonance in the works of Levinas who founded his concept of ethics upon an idiosyncratic reading of the subject / Other encounter. This paper has analyzed Aiken’s renowned short story “Silent Snow, Secret Snow” in the light of Levinasian ethics. The study has employed Levinas’s account of the Other, as well as its expression in the form of a face, to examine the protagonist’s appreciation of an Other being that exists outside the ordinary track of comprehension. In other words, the way Paul adopts an ethical quest for the Other echoes the actions and *weltanschauung* of a Levinasian subject whose movement toward infinity requires a passive attentiveness to the demands of the Other. The result for such an ethical manner would be an unconditional annihilation of subjectivity for the sake of the Other.

Throughout the story, Paul perpetually hears the murmurs of an ominous absence whose traces are revealed to him in the forms of the silent sound of snow and the secret approaching footsteps of the postman. This manner of manifestation is a mode of ethical saying that recedes from signifying the moment it is said. That is the reason the vision of the snow and the sound of the postman are represented as an

absent presence only visible and audible to Paul, traces which serve as interruptions disturbing his consciousness. The Other invites him to a dark silence that reverberates in anonymity and resists to be touched since in order for the protagonist to enter this secret world, he must not speak or see but *listen*, as that whose first word is responsible responsivity before any mode of meaningful communication occurs.

### References

- Aiken, C. (1932). Silent snow, secret snow. *The Virginia Quarterly Review*, 8(4), 570-590. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26433593>.
- Bergemann, P. (2019). *Judge thy neighbor: Denunciations in the Spanish Inquisition, Romanov Russia, and Nazi Germany*. Columbia University Press.
- Eaglestone, R. (1997). *Ethical criticism: Reading after Levinas*. Edinburgh University Press.
- Graham, B. (1968). 'Silent snow, secret snow': The short story as poem. *The English Journal*, 57(5), 693-695. <https://doi.org/10.2307/812566>.
- Hassner, R. E. (2020). The cost of torture: Evidence from the Spanish Inquisition. *Security Studies*, 29(3), 1-36. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09636412.2020.1761441>.
- Hutchens, B. (2004). *Levinas: A guide for the perplexed*. Continuum.
- Korhonen, K. (2017). Levinas and literary interpretation: Facing Baudelaire's "eye of the poor." In J. Rivkin & M. Ryan (Eds.), *Literary theory: An anthology* (pp. 366-381). Wiley Blackwell.
- Levinas, E. (1969). *Totality and infinity: An essay on exteriority*. (Alphonso Lingis, Trans.) Duquesne University Press.
- Levinas, E. (1981). *Otherwise than being or beyond essence*. (Alphonso Lingis, Trans.) Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Levinas, E. (1986). The trace of the Other. In M. C. Taylor (Ed.), *Deconstruction in context* (pp. 345-359). University of Chicago Press.
- Levinas, E. (1987a). Language and proximity. (Alphonso Lingis, Trans.) *Collected philosophical papers* (pp. 109-126). Martinus Nijhoff Publishers.
- Levinas, E. (1987b). Phenomenon and enigma. (Alphonso Lingis, Trans.) *Collected philosophical papers* (pp. 61-73). Martinus Nijhoff Publishers.
- Levinas, E. (1987c). *Time and the Other*. (R. A. Cohen, Trans.). Duquesne University Press.
- Llewelyn, J. (2002). Levinas and language. In S. Critchley & R. Bernasconi (Eds.), *The Cambridge companion to Levinas* (pp. 119-138). Cambridge University Press.
- Perkins, G. (1962). Aiken's 'Silent snow, secret snow'. *The Explicator*, 21(3), 47-48. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00144940.1962.11482322>.

- Robbins, J. (1999). *Altered reading: Levinas and literature*. University of Chicago Press.
- Ruthrof, H. (1973). A phenomeno-sociological approach to fiction. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 33(3), 399-407. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2106952>
- Slap, L. A., & Slap, L. R. (1980). Conrad Aiken's 'Silent snow, secret snow': Defenses against the primal scene. *American Imago*, 37(1), 1-11. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26303809>.
- Stevenson, S. (2004). The anorthoscopic short story. *Oxford Literary Review*, 26, 63-78. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44030807>.
- Swan, J. G. (1989). At the edge of sound and silence: Conrad Aiken's 'Senlin: A biography' and 'Silent snow, secret snow.' *The Southern Literary Journal*, 22(1), 41-49. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20077971>.
- Tressin, D. (1966). Toward understanding. *The English Journal*, 55(9), 1170-1174. <https://doi.org/10.2307/812307>.
- Waldenfels, B. (2002). Levinas and the face of the Other. In S. Critchley & R. Bernasconi (Eds.), *The Cambridge companion to Levinas* (pp. 63-81). Cambridge University Press.
- Werlock, A. H. P. (2010). *The facts on file companion to the American short story*. Facts On File.
- Wyschogrod, Edith. (2002). Language and alterity in the thought of Levinas. In S. Critchley & R. Bernasconi (Eds.), *The Cambridge companion to Levinas* (pp. 188-205). Cambridge University Press.

### Authors' Biographies

---



**Mohammadreza Touzideh** received his B.A. and M.A. in English Language and Literature from the University of Mazandaran and Azarbaijan Shahid Madani University, respectively. His main areas of interest are Ethical Criticism, Literary Studies, and Postmodernism.



**Farshid Nowrouzi Roshnavand** is an Assistant Professor of English Language and Literature at the University of Mazandaran, Iran. He received his B.A. from Ferdowsi University of Mashhad and his M.A. and Ph.D. degrees from the University of Tehran. His research interests include Disability Studies, African American Studies, and Écriture Feminine.

---





## **Spiritual Shelley: A Study of the Ideological Sublime in Percy B. Shelley's "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty"**

Masoud Farahmandfar<sup>1\*</sup> and Ghiasuddin Alizadeh<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Corresponding author: Assistant Professor of English Literature, Department of English, Faculty of Persian Literature and Foreign Languages, Allameh Tabataba'i University, Tehran, Iran, ORCID ID: 0000-0001-8194-6719  
Email: farahmand@atu.ac.ir; masoudfarahmandfar@yahoo.com*

<sup>2</sup>*Assistant Professor of English Literature, Department of English, Faculty of Literature and the Humanities, Malayer University, Malayer, Iran,  
ORCID ID: 0000-0002-4119-2251  
Email: ghiasuddin.alizadeh@gmail.com*

### **Abstract**

Shelley's "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty" has suffered a critical overlook compared with the immense bulk of studies dedicated to his poetical and philosophical works. The reason behind the poem's resistance to understanding is that it stands in stark contrast to Shelley's theological and philosophical opinions which he held throughout his life. Shelley's poem is torn between the need for a transcendental signified which would bestow meaning on human existence and the tragic realization that no such an ultimate guarantee can ever exist, that the lack in the Other is ontological and, as such, can never be compensated for. Availing itself of the theories of Slavoj Žižek, the present article argues that Shelley's illusion is twofold: besides his opinion that a full access to Beauty will eradicate uncertainty and inconstancy from the human life, he locates the roots of the present universal discontent and suffering in the absence of the Spirit, rather than seeking the causes of failure in the very essential defectiveness of the symbolic reality.

*Keywords:* Shelley, "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty", Romanticism, Žižek, ideological sublime

### ARTICLE INFO

Research Article

Received: Sunday, September, 5, 2021

Accepted: Friday, April 15, 2022

Published: Sunday, May 1, 2022

Available Online: Friday, April, 15, 2022

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.22049/jalda.2022.27401.1348>

Online ISSN: 2821-0204; Print ISSN: 2820-8986



© The Author(s)

## Introduction

Shelley's "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty" has suffered a critical overlook compared with the immense bulk of studies dedicated to his poetical and philosophical works. As McNiece (1975) points out, it "has been less studied and perhaps little understood" (p. 311). Probably, the reason behind the poem's resistance to understanding is that it stands in stark contrast to Shelley's theological and philosophical opinions which he held throughout his life. The poem abounds with terms and concepts borrowed from Christianity, and the reader becomes quite curious once they take into consideration Shelley's life-long aversion to theistic and religious beliefs. "[Shelley] borrows subversively the language of Christian mysticism, but to what effect?" Richard Cronin asks; "Shelley becomes the hierophant of Intellectual Beauty in opposition to the prophets of the Christian God, but it is far from clear how seriously his prophetic role is to be taken?" (cited in Callaghan, 2017, p. 90). McNiece tries to provide an answer by reading the poem as an instance of Shelley's practice of the "Romantic irony," a poem which would "express his yearning for the infinite and the absolute and record his somewhat disillusioning realization that the yearning must forever remain yearning" (1975, p. 311). "Shelley", McNiece argues, "comes to realize that the finite can never grasp the infinite and may conclude despairingly by acknowledging the inadequacy of language and consciousness" (1975, p. 312). From this perspective, it becomes obvious that Shelley, contrary to Cronin's suggestion, did mean his work to be taken seriously, since it presents his innermost conviction regarding the ontological presentiment of the human condition. Shelley qua the ironist "creates something like a transcendental illusion and at the same time reveals himself as the creator or manipulator," in order to signify the nullity of the attempt to "rediscover value and meaning in a world drained by doubt" (McNiece, 1975, p. 312). That is to say, the Romantic ironist is torn between the need for a transcendental signified which would bestow meaning on human existence and the tragic realization that no such ultimate guarantee can ever exist, that the lack in the Other is ontological and, as such, can never be compensated for.

A careful study of Shelley's oeuvre, however, reveals the insufficiency of McNiece's reading of "Hymn". In "Essay On Christianity," Shelley, having repudiated the established conception of God in Christian theology as "the idle dreams of the visionary, or the pernicious representations of impostors, who have fabricated from the very materials of wisdom a cloak for their own dwarfish or imbecile conceptions," (1859, p. 258) puts forth his own view on the existence of the transcendental Power who presides over the universe:

We live and move and think; but we are not the creators of our own origin and existence. We are not the arbiters of every motion of our own complicated nature; we are not the masters of our own imaginations and moods of mental being. There is a Power by which we are surrounded, like the atmosphere in which some motionless lyre is suspended, which visits with its breath our silent chords at will.

Our most imperial and stupendous qualities – those on which the majesty and the power of humanity is erected – are, relatively to the inferior portion of its mechanism, active and imperial; but they are the passive slaves of some higher and more omnipotent Power. This Power is God. (1859, p. 278)

### **Literature Review**

There is a gap in the existing research on Shelley's 84-line ode "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty." Most of the critical pieces written on this particular poem by Percy Shelley revolve either around its platonic features (Notopoulos, 1943) or around its treatment of religion and religious mythmaking (Hall, 1983). A reading which examines the relation of beauty to sociological and psychoanalytical notion of desire lacks in all these critical studies and analyses. Bridging this gap defines the purpose of the present study.

### **Method**

It should be expressed that the present study is a library research and, therefore, uses various sources accessible in physical and virtual libraries, including: books in different mediums (e.g. print, pdf, epub, etc.), articles from printed and online journals, websites, and general encyclopedias. The present study uses the method of description and analysis. For this purpose, the present study employs Slavoj Žižek's theories.

The proper question, which should be raised, concerns the nature of beauty. What exactly is beauty? Žižek's argument directly relates the notion of beauty to the Lacanian concept of the Thing. That is to say, an ordinary object turns into an attractive object of desire once it is sublimated to the status of *das Ding*, once it is invested with libidinal cathexis due to occupying the place of the ontological lack. Of course, this empty place is opened due to the primordial prohibition characteristic of the oedipal stage, whereby the incestuous desire of the child for the mother is prohibited by the intrusion of the Name-of-the-Father, and the mother turns into the impossible / prohibited lost object of desire. The only possible way to maintain interest in an object and consider it a perfect match for the empty place of the Thing is to avoid a direct encounter with it by all possible means. In other words, the object manages to keep its spell on the subject as long as it remains un-possessed, as long as the subject remains at a distant from it. The moment the subject gets too close to the object, the moment the line of proximity between the two is violated; that moment the object reveals its "true" face and falls, as a result, from its exulted place down into the abyss (Žižek, 1989, pp. 30-40).

It is this insight which Žižek hints at in the above-mentioned argument regarding the role of the beloved in courtly love. The lover remains under the beloved's influence and keeps on idealizing her as long as he is kept at distance, as long as he is not allowed to get too close to the beloved. However, when he finally is given permission to pass the line as a reward for his long-lasting sufferings and unconditional servitude to his lady's "whims," she "turns her other, reverse side towards him" so that he can see the real of his desire. The ugly, terrifying face of the beloved is, in fact, an embodiment of the primordial void, a bodily manifestation of

the pit of “disgusting substance of life,” that is, the pit of *jouissance*. In his encounter with the Thing, therefore, the lover perceives the futility of his quest and the nullity of his dreams. As a result, as the tradition of courtly love often ended in under the influence of Medieval Christianity, he finds the only way to escape the deadlock of desire in renouncing the earthly love and directing instead all his attention towards a heavenly beloved, in “*desublimating*” the “figure of *die Frau-Welt* (the woman who stands for the world, terrestrial life) and choosing a spiritual sublime object of desire (Žižek, 2013, p. 101).

From a Lacanian perspective, the Thing belongs to the realm of the Real, since it introduces an incision into the seam of the symbolic order. Of course, one of Lacan’s final definitions of the Real is the element which has extimacy, that which ex-sists. (Fink, 2017). Actually, Žižek explains Lacan’s notion of ex-sistence in its relation with the Real, as “the impossible-real kernel resisting symbolization.” “It is, of course, this ex-sistence of the Real, of the Thing embodying impossible enjoyment,” Žižek claims,

that is excluded by the very advent of the symbolic order. We could say that we are always caught in a certain *vel* (or in Lacanian terminology, a false and forced choice), that we are always forced to choose between meaning and ex-sistence: the price we have to pay for access to meaning is the exclusion of ex-sistence. (Žižek, 1998, pp. 136-7)

In other words, the moment we enter the symbolic order, the moment we acquiesce to castration and accept the confiscation of our *jouissance* (a temporary moment of transgressive pleasure) by the Other, we unconsciously choose existence over ex-sistence, that is, we exclude forever the possibility of attaining the ultimate object of desire and a full enjoyment of the Thing.

The same process, in fact, is applicable to ideology as well. Ideology provides its subjects with peaceful life in a social space, in an organic community where everyone finds himself at home and enjoys his life under the protective shield of a transcendental signified. That is to say, as socio-ideological subjects, we are presented with an appealing picture of our condition, with the sweet dream of the possibility of attaining the object of desire and filling our lack. This happens, we are told, once we follow the path shown to us by ideology, once we trust in the promise that one day our ideological prophecies are realized. But, the moment we start to doubt the Cause, the moment we lose our faith in the truth of the ideological narrative and begin to question the possibility of attaining unity and completion, the social paradise will turn into an abyssal hell, where instead of peace there is eternal and unending suffering and woe. In order to preserve our socio-ideological “sanity,” in other words, we have to embrace what Žižek calls “ideological anamorphosis,” to learn to look through ideological glasses and avoid tearing down the veil of fantasy (Žižek, 1989, p. 110). Of course, the element which keeps the integrity of an ideology intact and gives meaning to the ideological field as a whole is the sublime object, or (in Lacanian terms) the master-signifier, the element which, despite its seemingly semantic saturation, is nothing but a senseless, non-signifying object, similar to the skull at the bottom of Holbein’s Ambassadors so often referred to by



Lacan, as a perfect example of how the gaze qua the real cuts into the texture of the symbolic order, disturbing the subject's sense of control over the overall picture:

If we look at what appears from the frontal view as an extended, "erected" meaningless spot, from the right perspective we notice the contours of a skull. The criticism of ideology must perform a somewhat homological operation: if we look at the element which holds together the ideological edifice, at this "phallic", erected Guarantee of Meaning, from the right (or, more precisely – politically speaking – left) perspective, we are able to recognize in it the embodiment of a lack, of a chasm of non-sense gaping in the midst of ideological meaning. (Žižek, 1989, p. 110)

### **Discussion and Analysis**

The assertoric nature of Shelley's argument proves that, for him, God is more than a transcendental "illusion." In fact, Shelley definitely believed in the existence of a supernatural power from which we inherit "our most imperial and stupendous qualities." As a result, reading "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty" as an instance of the Romantic irony completely subverts Shelley's self-professed beliefs. Shelley's world is not a "world drained by doubts," neither is his mission to "rediscover meaning and value" therein (McNiece, 1975, p. 312). Rather, it is a place where each corner and nook radiates with divine presence, where every face, every thought, mirrors the majesty of the "Universal God." It only needs a change in perspective and attitude to become aware of this heavenly Being, that is to say, the subject who is

free from the contamination of luxury and license...whosoever is no deceiver or destroyer of his fellow-men – no liar, no murderer...whosoever has maintained with his own heart the strictest correspondence of confidence, who dares to examine and to estimate every imagination which suggests itself to his mind...has already seen God. (Shelley, 1859, p. 277)

Having thus corrected the misconception regarding the supposedly ironic nature of the poem, it is time to cast a new glance at Shelley's "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty," and to find a proper answer to the questions raised in and by the poem. It begins with the description of what Shelley calls "Intellectual Beauty," probably his term for the "Power" which presides over the universe. This Power moves "unseen" throughout the world, the effect of which is sometimes manifest and sometimes hidden from our intuition:

The awful shadow of some unseen Power  
Floats though unseen among us; visiting  
This various world with as inconstant wing  
As summer winds that creep from flower to flower;  
Like moonbeams that behind some piny mountain shower,  
It visits with inconstant glance  
Each human heart and countenance;  
Like hues and harmonies of evening,  
Like clouds in starlight widely spread,

Like memory of music fled,  
Like aught that for its grace may be  
Dear, and yet dearer for its mystery. (*Poetical Works*, "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty", pp.1-12)

The images evoked by Shelley all pertain to evanescent and fleeting phenomena: none of the objects with which he compares the "unseen Power" have a determinate and concrete substance. This, as the poem argues, corresponds to the inconstancy of the Power itself. The mind cannot probe a way into the nature of this universal presence, since it is nothing but a shadow whose source remains unknown to the perceiver. It is only through its effect, through its "inconstant glance" onto "each human heart and countenance," which we become aware of its existence. However, in spite of its transience and mutability, the Power is dear to the poet not only because of its "grace," but also due to its "mysterious" nature, because it escapes a rigid and definite knowledge. Put differently, the universal Power becomes for the poet the ultimate object of desire, an entity which gives meaning and significance to his life as such. The ever-elusive nature of the Power is also reminiscent of the evanescence of *das Ding*, which we know exists only through its effects on our psychological life, only through experiencing its power of attraction whenever we come into its presence. Shelley believes that the Power is more revered, more "awed," because of its inconstancy, that is to say, he takes the Power's mutability a condition of its appeal and endearment. Yet, why should the absence of the Thing be so much libidinally invested? Is it not the case that our whole life is a pursuit for attaining this lost object? Do we not search for the sublime object behind every veil? Then why should its absence be more pleasing to us than our constant proximity and closeness to it?

This passage, McNiece points out,

underlies a central change of attitude occurring in Shelley's thought...If we lived unremittingly in the presence of beauty, the responsiveness to beauty might be blurred and lost...An argument borrowed from traditional theodicy is here converted to the purposes of a revolutionary and agnostic humanism. (1975, p. 329)

McNiece here draws on the traditional cliché that an object continues to exert its charm and appeal to our imagination as long as it maintains its distance from us, as long as it resists to submit to our understanding. As soon as the object of desire becomes available to us, as soon as we manage to hold it in our hands and experience a full enjoyment of it, it turns into a useless and ordinary thing like all other objects, an excremental object which has nothing more to captivate and enthrall our imagination. However, what is missing from McNiece's argument is the crucial fact that the object is, at the end of the day, nothing but a mirage, a mere appearance which points to nothing behind it. That is to say, it is impossible to live "unremittingly at the presence" of the Thing, since there is no object at whose presence we might dwell in the first place. The object of desire is a place-holder for an ontological lack, which means that primordially there is no lost object as such. This sense of loss is a mirage, a sham, to trick the subject into movement.

Something is not in its place, no doubt. The fact is, it has never been. In other words, this loss is ontological, which means it is not lost in the first place, based on the common understanding of the term, “to lose.” Loss presupposes existence, the way absence presupposes presence; it determines a quest for retrieval, for revocation. It is here that McNiece falls into the trap of associating Shelley’s “unseen Power” to a substantial object, to a real entity which exists behind the veil of phenomena, and relates the theme of mutability in Shelley’s thought to an actual absence from the presence of the object of desire.

The second stanza takes the first stanza’s argument further. The Power, which is identified here as the “Spirit of Beauty” (l.13), is the element which gives meaning to human life. However, this signifying element has left the poet’s world and turned it into a despondent and gloomy place. The question about the absence of the “Spirit of Beauty” acquires deep ideological overtones, as it is submerged under the general category of the human condition as such. That is to say, Shelley links the ephemerality of Beauty to the concept of universal mutability, which is at work in all the levels of the worldly existence. The Spirit fades because its noumenal existence surpasses our perception, because its phenomenality follows the universal design where everything which “once is shown” is doomed to “fail and fade” (l.20). Our life is a constant flux from one opposite pole to another, from fear to dream, from death to birth, from love and hope to hate and despondency. Therefore, it is the necessary “mutability” of worldly life, Shelley argues, that is responsible for our separation from the source of all grace and bliss, from the Power which is the transcendental guarantee of all we say and do. The questions raised by Shelley regarding the transience of natural phenomena, the mutability of human dreams and hopes, and the inability of man to separate love from hate and despondency from hope, are not raised the with an eye for a proper answer, since Shelley is already aware that human mind does not have the capacity to comprehend truth; rather, they are raised in order to reveal the limitations of philosophical thought and condemn to failure in advance all attempts to come up with the suitable answer.

Stanza III stages Shelley’s enduring aversion to theological doctrines and his criticism of the solutions offered by different ideologies throughout history to the problems raised in the previous stanza. Each ideology, Shelley seems to argue, has created a fantasy scenario in order to account for the apparent inconsistencies which constantly plague human life. However, apart from their imaginary and false premises, these ideologies cannot exert any positive effects on the amelioration of the dire circumstances since they neither present decent and proper answers nor are successful in bringing peace to our minds. Amid the turbulent and agitated sea of life, in the middle of “life’s unquiet dream” (l.36), it is only Beauty which can bestow “grace and truth” (l.36) to human existence. All we hear and see, Shelley laments, are merged with “doubt, chance and mutability” (l.31), making it impossible for us to find a permanent and stable foothold in life. Religion and philosophy have tried to bring back constancy to human life; however, they have failed since none of them have managed to find the proper object which would provide an anchor to human being’s wandering and unsettled soul. In other words, Shelley believes in the possibility of a bright future, of an end to the dark and

gloomy space of doubt and uncertainty pressing on us from all directions, only if we break the spell of all religious myths on our hearts and souls and fill them, instead, with the pure and illuminating light of the Intellectual Beauty, the sublime Thing which can alone fill the empty place of lack at the heart of our existence.

In the next stanza, Shelley provides the answer to the question which he raises earlier, that is, the question regarding the reason behind the perpetual absence-presence design which dominates human life in this world. The reason that “love, hope, and self-esteem” (l.37), which constitute the heart of Shelley’s moral and ethical universe, are not attained perpetually is that they are emanations of the Intellectual Beauty, which itself has an unknown and inconstant condition. In fact, if we gained lasting access to this omnipotent Power, we would surpass the limits of humanity and turn into gods, no longer at the mercy of change and mutability: “Man were immortal and omnipotent / Did thou, unknown and awful as thou art / Keep with thy glorious train firm state within his heart” (ll.39-41). The only solution to the restlessness of the soul, the moment of man’s apotheosis and immortality, is when Beauty dawns on our life and makes our hearts firm and stable. Beauty is the source of all inspirations, the fount and origin of all our ideas and opinions. Without it, thought would turn into a feeble flame, the dying light of a taper, which would not suffice to illumine our path towards humanity. As McNiece points out, the image of the dying light and a dark and sable background is “a brilliant success, summing up dramatically Shelley’s central theodicy,” since it asserts that, without the intervention of a divine Power, our endeavor to find the way out of life’s labyrinth and negotiate our intellectual limits and deficiencies would end in failure (331). Therefore, the concluding lines of the stanza turn into a poetical equivalent of religious supplication, where Shelley raises his voice in prayer and implores the Spirit of Beauty to stay forever and no more depart, “lest the grave should be, / like life and fear, a dark reality” (ll.47-48).

Here, it turns into a matter of paramount importance to analyze the concept of Beauty in order to disclose the central illusion which dominates Shelley’s thought. What exactly is beauty? When does an object seem beautiful to us? Is beauty an intrinsic feature of an object or is it the result of a certain optical illusion? Perhaps, the best way to approach the issue is to follow Žižek’s interpretation of Lacan’s analysis of courtly love. In the tradition of courtly love – a doctrine of love in which love between the sexes, with its erotic and physical aspects spiritualized, is regarded as the noblest passion this side of heaven – the lover idealizes and idolizes his beloved, and subjects himself to her every whim. Yet, what constitutes the basis of this idealization? What is the reason behind the sublimation of the Lady? According to Žižek, such an idealization does not have any relation whatsoever to the beloved’s essential features. Rather, her beauty and ideal state is the result of the place she occupies in the overall structure. “The moment the poet or the knight serving her approaches her too closely,” Žižek argues, “she turns her other, reverse side towards him, and what was previously the semblance of fascinating beauty is suddenly revealed as putrefied flesh, crawling with snakes and worms, the disgusting substance of life (1997, p. 83).

The charm of the sublime object is nothing but an illusion, the effect of the symbolic re-working on the terrifying void of the real. “The gap that separates beauty from ugliness,” according to Žižek, “is thus the very gap that separates reality from the Real: what constitutes reality is the minimum of idealization the subject needs in order to be able to sustain the horror of the Real” (1997, p. 83). That is to say, in order to lead a minimum of “normal” life in a social field, it is necessary to repeal a portion of *jouissance*, to keep the symbolic reality safe from the intrusion of the real.

This leads us to the illusion at the heart of Shelley’s “Hymn to Intellectual Beauty”. Shelley’s Beauty is *das Ding* in disguise, the ex-sisting element which holds our existence together by procuring the minimum amount of *jouissance* necessary for the subjectivization of the foreign body of the Other. It is the sublime object (in its positive sense) which gives purpose to our otherwise dull and boring life, which secures in what we do and say a minimal enjoyment of our own, although we never gain a precise knowledge of its nature. That is to say, like all the other objects which are chosen to materialize the Thing, Beauty can have effect as long as it keeps its distance with us, insofar as, in Shelley’s words, it remains “unseen” and “inconstant.” Therefore, what Shelley asks for in his recourse to Beauty, that it no longer depart the scene of life and become accessible to him, equals a total collapse of the symbolic reality which, in turn, is the very medium for intellectual activity and thought. In a Kantian twist, what prevents a full access to the source of *jouissance*, to the source of intellectual nourishment, what constitutes the condition of impossibility of a perfect coincidence of the object and the Thing, turns into the “condition of possibility” of our reality as such. This is precisely what Lacan meant with his notion of the surplus enjoyment: the paradox of *jouissance* is that it can only be experienced as a surplus, since it comes into being as the direct result of prohibition. Prior to the Father’s “No!” there is no *jouissance*; it is only after the advent of Law that *jouissance* comes into existence. Or better say, *objet petit a* qua the embodiment of surplus enjoyment “exists only in its distorted state (visually, for example, only insofar as it is viewed from aside, anamorphotically extended or contracted) – if we view it ‘straight,’ ‘as it really is,’ there is nothing to see” (Žižek, 2013, p. 28).

Equally, Shelley’s Beauty exists as long as it is anamorphotically perceived, insofar as it remains an absent impossible Thing – if we look at it straight, if we get too close to it, it loses its sublime features and becomes an excremental object, like what Shelley believed to be the “vain endeavor” and “frail charm” of the previous ideologies. From a Žižekian point of view, what differentiates Shelley’s Beauty from “Demon, Ghost, and Heaven” of the poets and sages is only the name. In essence, they are all sublime objects meant to occupy the empty place of the Thing. What proves this argument, that Beauty is Shelley’s version of the sublime object of ideology, comes in stanza VI, where Shelley puts forth his ideological dreams and expectations which, he believes, can only be realized through a belief in transformative power of Beauty.

## Conclusion

What the present study adds to the existing body of research on Shelley is this important fact that the key to the prison of bondage and “dark slavery” (l.70) in which human soul has been enchained throughout history is in the hands of Beauty. Shelley confesses that all his life, through his childhood and adolescence to his years of maturity, he has not passed a second without cherishing the hope that one day, the Spirit of Beauty, the Power who presides over the universe, will come and bring down to earth the throne of tyrants and the house of false priesthood: “I vowed that I would dedicate my powers / To thee and thine: have I not kept the vow?” (ll.61-62). The millennial prophecies of the Apocrypha, the prospect of the Second Coming of Christ, the emancipation of humanity from the bonds of oppression and the establishment of the Heavenly Paradise on Earth, all find reverberating resonance in Shelley’s dreams, albeit in atheistic and agnostic disguise. Shelley’s illusion, therefore, becomes twofold: besides his opinion that a full access to Beauty will eradicate uncertainty and inconstancy from the human life, he locates the roots of the present universal discontent and suffering in the absence of the Spirit, rather than seeking the causes of failure in the very essential defectiveness of the symbolic reality: “They know that never joy illumed my brow, / Unlinked with hope that thou wouldst free / This world from its dark slavery” (ll.68-70).

Shelley concludes the poem by an invocation to the Intellectual Beauty to bestow its power upon him and supply him with peace and calmness, upon him “who worships thee / and every form containing thee” (ll.81-82), he “whom, Spirit fair, the spells did bind / to fear himself, and love all human kind” (ll.83-84). These concluding lines bring to mind Shelley’s early political poem, *Queen Mab*. In that poem, Shelley put forth his aversion to all religious and theological doctrines, while he supported revolutionary principles and ideals, drawing the picture of a bright future where, freed from the shackles of false ideologies, human beings would finally achieve the highest standards of morality and humane values. When the future comes, the bitter events of the past and the dire situation of the present will be seen as necessary phases without which our dreams of universal freedom and prosperity would have never been realized.

It is now that we could return to McNiece’s argument regarding the ironic nature of Shelley’s “Hymn to Intellectual Beauty” and change the center of its focus a little bit. Shelley’s own words about Beauty and his firm belief in its omnipotence, together with Mary Shelley’s mentioned description of her husband’s ideological leanings, would give us the right to claim with safety that Shelley’s was a case of irony. However, this irony differs totally from the one intended by McNiece, and by other de Manian critics. The irony of Shelley’s life is more a dramatic irony rather than a Romantic one, with the crucial difference that in this case, Shelley himself was the victim of his ignorance as to his ideological views rather than one of his characters. Shelley thought he had finally managed to escape the chains of ideology, to go beyond the limited view of religion and theological enslavement. Yet, what he, ironically, did not realize was that, unawares, deep in his unconscious, he was more Christian than the Pope himself. Shelley’s failure to recognize in the universal misery of mankind a sign of an ontological antagonism, essential to our life as

subjects of the symbolic reality, led him to a life-long struggle with those to whom, at the end of the day, he turned out to be more a peer than an enemy. Of course, the only possible way to free ourselves from the grips of ideology, as Žižek claims, is to acknowledge the constitutive lack which marks the core of reality as such, to acknowledge the futility of all the attempts to fill the empty place of the Thing with any positive objects. In a sense, the most important lesson to be drawn from psychoanalysis is that the only positive thing, the only possible substance, is the lack itself. It is only when we come to terms with this primordial lack, when we perceive in all ideological narratives the same quilting process under different and often opposing disguises, only then can we claim that we have achieved “true” freedom and liberty and have finally broken the spell of ideology. No need to emphasize further, Shelley never reached this realization. He was as ideologically oriented as mature Wordsworth and Coleridge, both of whom he deeply loathed for their “false” ideology.

### **Acknowledgments**

The authors wish to express their gratitude to *JALDA* editors and reviewers.

### **References**

- Callaghan, M. (2017). *Shelley's living artistry: Letters, poems, plays*. Liverpool University Press.
- Fink, B. (2017). *The Lacanian subject: Between language and jouissance*. Princeton University Press.
- Hall, S. (1983). Power and the poet: Religious myth-making in Shelley's 'hymn to intellectual beauty'. *Keats-Shelley Journal*, 32, 123-149. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/30210198>.
- McNiece, G. (1975). The poet as ironist in "Mont Blanc" and "hymn to intellectual beauty". *Studies in Romanticism*, 14(4), 311-36. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25599982>.
- Notopoulos, J. A. (1943). The Platonic sources of Shelley's 'hymn to intellectual beauty'. *PMLA*, 28 (2), 582-584. <https://doi.org/10.2307/459068>. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/459068>.
- Shelley, P. B. (1859). *Memorials: From authentic sources. Ed. By Lady Shelley. To which is added an essay on Christianity*. Smith, Elder and Co.
- Žižek, Slavoj. (2013). *Enjoy your symptom!: Jacques Lacan in Hollywood and out*. Taylor & Francis.
- Žižek, Slavoj. (1998). *Looking awry*. MIT Press.
- Žižek, Slavoj. (1997). *The plague of fantasies*. Verso.
- Žižek, Slavoj. (1989). *The sublime object of ideology*. Verso.

### Author's Biography

---



**Ghasuddin Alizadeh** received his B.A., M.A., and Ph.D. degrees in English Language and Literature from Shahid Beheshti University, Iran. He is now a faculty member at Malayer University. His area of interest includes Psychoanalysis and Romantic poetry.



**Masoud Farahmandfar** received his PhD in English literature from Shahid Beheshti University in 2017; he is currently a faculty member at Allameh Tabataba'i University in Tehran, Iran. His research interests include Comparative Literature, Postcolonial Studies, and Orientalism. He has recently translated into Persian Alexander Lyon Macfie's *Orientalism* and Cyrus Ghani's *Shakespeare, Persia, and the East*. He has given talks and has published articles related to Comparative Literature and Orientalism. He can be reached via his email address: farahmand@atu.ac.ir

---





## **Ambrose of *Lost in the Funhouse*: A Confluence of Quantum Mechanics, Dasein, and Baroque**

Ali Emamipour<sup>1\*</sup> and Farideh Pourgiv<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Ph.D. Candidate in English Language and Literature, Kish International Campus,  
University of Tehran, Iran, ORCID: 0000-0002-1759-1471  
Email: a.emamipour@ut.ac.ir*

<sup>2</sup>*Professor of English Literature, Department of Foreign Languages and Linguistics,  
Shiraz University, Iran  
Email: fpourgiv@rose.shirazu.ac.ir*

### **Abstract**

It has been quite a while since research in different disciplines has become widely cross-fertilized. The cultural matrix of our era has made it possible for ideas and metaphors to move across disciplines. John Barth has been one of the most-celebrated cross-disciplinary fiction writers, who has been perceptive of and receptive to breakthroughs in other disciplines to reinvigorate fiction. Despite the fact that Barth's literary career, particularly from *Lost in the Funhouse* (*Funhouse*), coincides with the coronation of Quantum Mechanics as the regime capable of addressing reality in a more precise way, the recognition of the influence of Quantum Mechanics on *Funhouse* has been conspicuously absent from the critical enterprise, and the bulk of research has viewed it in the light of Poststructuralism, whose application to contemporary fiction has been exhaustible by now. Establishing the framework of the Article based on some concepts for which the Copenhagen Interpretation and the Many-Worlds Interpretation of Quantum Mechanics are famous, the present study offers a new perspective to approach the idiosyncrasies of Ambrose in the series, thereby employing an unprecedented methodology to replenish a work which has been subjected to a barrage of metafictional readings.

*Keywords:* baroque, phenomenology, quantum mechanics, the uncertainty principle, wave-particle duality

### ARTICLE INFO

Research Article

Received: Thursday, September, 28, 2021

Accepted: Friday, April 15, 2022

Published: Sunday, May 1, 2022

Available Online: Friday, April 15, 2022

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.22049/jalda.2022.27427.1358>

Online ISSN: 2821-0204; Print ISSN: 2820-8986



© The Author(s)

## Introduction

The application of quantum mechanics (QM) concepts to literature has been quite fertile. Coale (2011), for instance, in “Quantum Flux and Narrative Flow: Don DeLillo's Entanglements with Quantum Theory” has disclosed DeLillo’s grappling with QM in his notebooks, which shows the novelist’s preoccupation with applying QM as a framework to his fiction. Thomas Pynchon’s academic background in physics, similarly, allowed him to take advantage of physics concepts in his fiction. Such conscious utilization of QM and explicit references to its terminology has facilitated the work of researchers, for the clues are conspicuous and the connections can be readily made. However, the recognition of the influence of QM on Barth’s earlier fiction, particularly *Lost in the Funhouse* (*Funhouse*), has been conspicuously absent from the critical enterprise. One reason is that in Barth’s earlier works, explicit references to modern physical terminologies have been few and far between. Even though Barth’s explicit references to modern physics terminology in both his more recent fiction and non-fiction could nudge researchers to sit up and notice, the studies on these works have been mostly limited to newspaper articles and short reviews. Barth’s literary career, particularly from *Funhouse* on, coincides with the recognition of QM as the regime capable of addressing reality in a more precise way; yet, the bulk of research has viewed his fiction in the light of Poststructuralist mimesis, the main reason of which can be the historical proximity of *Funhouse* publication to the late 1960s, the period associated with the emergence of Poststructuralism. Nas (1999) and Davis (1985), for instance, in “‘Scheherazade, c’est moi’: Narrativist Mimesis and the Principle of Metaphoric Means in John Barth,” and “The Case for a Post-Structuralist Mimesis: John Barth and Imitation,” respectively, overemphasize the role of “fiction imitating itself,” whose application to Postmodern fiction has become exhaustible by now.

That Barth had already been acquainted with modern physics prior to the publication of *Funhouse* is not merely pure conjecture, given his Friday retreats to Chesapeake Bay where he beseeches a muse of another kind. *The Friday Book* (1984) and *Further Fridays: Essays, Lectures, and Other Nonfiction* (1995) have been the products of these musings. In some essays in these collections, one can see Barth grapple with cutting edge developments in physics, particularly chaos theory and quantum mechanics: “I don’t pretend to be an expert about quantum mechanics, but I do enjoy reading about the subject in the same spirit that prompted Coleridge to attend Sir Humphrey Davy’s lectures on chemistry: To renew his stock of metaphors” (as cited in Reilly, 2000, p. 612). Explicit references to QM concepts in Barth’s more recent fiction, *On with the Story*, for instance, attest to the fact that Barth has consciously attempted to imbue his latter fiction with modern physics notions.

To Plotnitsky (2017), the central pillars of Postmodern thinking consist of *irreducible* multiplicity, *irreducibly unthinkable* in thought, and *irreducible* chance. The irreducible nature of these features, Plotnitsky observes, makes its way to the forefront particularly if we consider the fact that the multiple, the unthinkable, and the chance were not foreign to classical and modern thinking. While the multiple,

the unthinkable, and the chance in classical and modern thinking could be reduced to unity, accessibility to thought, and causality, respectively, it is the irreducibility of these characteristics which distinguishes Postmodern thinking (p. 65).

If we approach QM in the context in which Plotnitsky has defined the Postmodernist era, the commonalities between QM and Postmodernism become more conspicuous. Classically, randomness would stem from our lack of knowledge to perceive an underlying pattern behind an otherwise causal system while in QM, contingency and noncausality have nothing to do with our inability to make head or tail of any causal behavior of a quantum system; rather, contingency and noncausality have been threaded into the very fabric of the subatomic realm. Although the outcome to quantum events, in aggregate, produces a pattern that can be predicted based on probability, the individual processes which take place prior to the outcome are utterly unrepresentable (Plotnitsky, 2017, pp. 73-74). After all, nobody has ever caught an electron red-handed; only the trails it leaves in measuring instruments imply its spectral existence. Likewise, Dillard (1983) argues that in the contemporary milieu, science, along with art and philosophy, can no longer deal in certainties; nor can its data be verified under all circumstances:

What can we know for certain when our position in space is limited, our velocity may vary, our instruments contract as they accelerate, our observations of particles on the microlevel botch our own chance of precise data, and not only are our own senses severely limited, but many of the impulses they transmit are edited out before they ever reach the brain? (p. 55)

Furthermore, competing hypotheses on a single phenomenon, thought experiments such as Schrödinger's cat, and the metaphors of wormhole or electron cloud underline how fictitious and spurious science can be (Front, 2015, p. 20). Umberto Eco once observed, "In every century the way that artistic forms are structured reflects the way in which science or contemporary culture views reality" (as cited in Booker, 1990, p. 584). Under the aegis of this spirit and endorsing Barth's bona fide call for replenishing literature with innovative ideas, this present study ventures into establishing affinities between QM and Ambrose-centered stories in Barth's *Funhouse*, a niche whose Poststructuralist mimesis residues need to be replenished. Rather than adopting the frame and the method which Barth might have had in mind – i.e., metafiction – while penning his novel, it is the rupture which defines the point of departure of this study. After all, one should "[n]ever trust the artist. Trust the tale. The proper function of a critic is to save the tale from the artist who created it" (Lawrence, 1995, p. 12).

### **Quantum Mechanics**

Baulch (2003) laments the fact that with the advent of New Historicism, literary studies have tended to approach literature in terms of the context in which a work has been produced and consumed. Despite the fact that hard sciences offer a rich reservoir to approach literature, literary criticism under the influence of New Historicism opposes any pure formalism and instead embraces the orthodox sense of time and space, hence falling into the same pitfall of linearity that modern physics has dismissed as spurious (p. 73). To avoid the monopoly set by New Historicism,

the methodology has included QM in its both pure and metaphoric forms and in later sections, the authors will discuss its relevance to *Funhouse*.

During the latter nineteenth century and the early twentieth, physics, as the arch-discipline, could not stick to her guns of mechanical causality any longer. Once taking pride in spelling out the objective reality out there, this section will pursue the trajectory of decisive events which led the physicists to settle for the *observation* of nature, rather than the study of Nature herself: “. . . even in science the object of research is no longer nature itself, but man’s investigation of nature. Here, again, man confronts himself alone” (Heisenberg, 1955, as cited in Merrell, 2006, p. 56). To begin with, there were some new experiments which toppled some of the long-perished pillars of the classical mechanics: in 1905, Einstein posited that in a light beam the energy comes in packets called quanta. This postulate implied that light was made of particles and replaced James Clerk Maxwell’s conjecture that light was a wave. That light could behave both as a particle and as a wave dealt a death blow to classical physics and although disturbing to Einstein, his ideas regarding particles of light (photons) helped construct QM.

QM hinges on the subatomic realm in which the uncertainty reigns supreme. Being the only interpretation of the embryonic QM, the Copenhagen Interpretation (CI) was not threatened by any competing theories for several years. The mention of the phrase “the Copenhagen interpretation” rose particularly when alternative approaches, Bohm’s hidden-variables and Everett’s Many-Worlds Interpretation (MWI), for instance, were proposed. Quintessential to the CI are the uncertainty principle, the statistical interpretation, the complementarity concept, and wavicle (wave-particle duality) nature of matter and light. Based on this probabilistic interpretation, “if a particular experiment involving an electron is repeated over and over again in an absolutely identical manner, the same answer for, say, the measured position of an electron will *not* be found over and over again” (Greene, 1999, p. 107). Rather, if the experiment is repeated several times, the result will be a probability wave with peaks and troughs. The peaks in such a wave should not be associated with a high distribution of electrons, but with the probability that the electrons are most likely to be found.

When the system does not undergo any observation, it is governed by the Schrödinger’s equation, which describes the form of the probability wave (wavefunction) governing the motion of particles. Prior to measurement, the system exists in a superposition, “quantum fuzziness, which is a spectrum of all its possible states simultaneously” (Front, 2015, p. 13). Upon measurement, however, the wavefunction collapses to only one of the possible states. Unlike the case with classical mechanics, in which observation does not affect the outcome, Bohr (1987) submitted that “any observation of atomic phenomena will involve an interaction with the agency of observation” (as cited in Katsumori, 2011, p. 12), which necessitates an inevitable interference with the state of phenomena: “We are both onlookers and actors in the great drama of existence” (as cited in Katsumori, p. 24) – Bohr’s oft-cited dictum shows the relationship the human / measuring equipment as the subject bears to the object of knowledge.

The act of observing the particle necessitates shining light on it. This action destroys the interference pattern, due to the fact that the photons, which exist in the beam of light, exude a minimum uncertainty in momentum, enough to mess up the pattern (Shankar, 2016, p. 411). To account for this change in the particle's momentum prior to and following the measurement, Brian Greene (2004) has reasoned thus: measuring the position of any object necessitates interacting with it in one way or another. However, the plain fact which most of us overlook is that interacting is a reciprocal process, affecting not only us but also the object under scrutiny:

As the light bounces off the electron, it changes the electron's speed, much as your own speed is affected by a strong, gusty wind that whips around a street corner. In fact, the more precisely you want to identify the electron's position, the more sharply defined and energetic the light beam must be, yielding an even larger effect on the electron's motion. (p. 97)

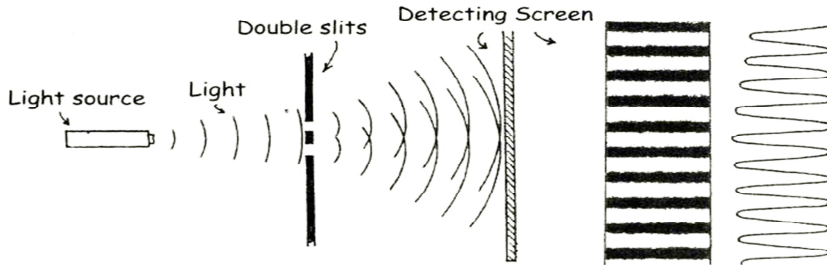
From the late 1930s on, however, Bohr qualified his statement on the act of observation and a possible "disturbance" in the state of affairs in a quantum system: "Speaking, as is often done, of disturbing a phenomenon by observation, or even of creating physical attributes to objects by measuring processes, is, in fact, liable to be confusing" (as cited in Katsumori, 2011, p. 27). Having de-emphasized the influencing role of observation, Bohr came to hold the belief that the phenomenon is only "conditioned by the experimental arrangement" (p. 28). In this, he was joined by other physicists: Greene (2004), for instance, observes that it is misleading to reason that the data get contaminated due to the involvement of a human subject meddling with the microscopic realm: "Uncertainty is built into the wave structure of quantum mechanics and exists whether or not we carry out some clumsy measurement" (pp. 97-98).

The double-slit experiment has been identified by Richard Feynman to exhibit the heart of QM (Shankar, 2016, p. 387). Together with Schrödinger's Cat, they are among the most important Gedankenexperimente (German: "thought experiment;" the term was coined by Einstein to describe his approach of employing conceptual rather than actual experiments in constructing the theory of relativity). The double-slit experiment is pivotal in the sense that it belies Newtonian mechanics notion of light as a particle (also known as the corpuscular theory of light) and Maxwell's wave theory of light. The experiment, which proves light has features of both a particle and a wave, was initially performed by Thomas Young in 1803 and was later extended by other physicists to define the behavior of electrons, atoms and molecules. Louis de Broglie (1924), the French physicist, in his Ph.D. thesis, *Recherches sur la théorie des Quanta (Research on the Theory of the Quanta)*, argued that if light, previously thought of as a wave, is actually made up of particles, then things we always viewed as particles, like electrons, must behave like a wave. In other words, all entities exhibit wave-particle duality at the microscopic level (matter-wave hypothesis). In the double-slit experiment, a particle / photon is sent into a barrier with two apertures. A distant photographic plate (made up of tiny pixels which would change color when light hits them) is used for detecting the particle. All physics can tell us is that if we repeat the experience enough number of

times a pattern develops. However, which aperture the particle takes or whether the particle interferes with itself cannot be fully explained. It appears that the particle, initially localized, in the process smears as a wave, passes through both holes, and due to the interference pattern, creates light (high concentration formed by little dots) and dark (zero concentration) fringes on the detecting plate (see figure).

**Figure 1**

*The Double-Slit Experiment from K. W. Ford (2004). The Quantum World: Quantum Physics for Everyone. Harvard UP.*



Heisenberg’s Uncertainty Principle, postulated in 1927, dealt a death blow to the causal connections. To know the state of a particle, it is necessary to calculate its position and velocity. Based on the Uncertainty Principle, however, determining both the exact position and velocity (the speed and direction of an object’s motion) of a particle with precision at a time is not feasible. Any observation of the state of affairs in the subatomic realm alters the system irrevocably. Determining the position of an electron with a short wavelength beam of light inevitably transfers energy and consequently forecloses the possibility to measure its momentum at the time of observation. In a similar vein, while using a weak long wavelength beam of light allows us to measure an electron’s momentum, the increased distance renders it impossible to accurately measure the electron’s position. As a corollary to this principle, past, present, and future are forever shrouded in mystery, for we can never study the cause-and-effect relationship between initial and subsequent states. It can be argued that the uncertainty principle precipitated dissension among physicists. The proponents of the ontological interpretation of this principle believed that “it reflects a deep truth about how the universe actually works” (Kinch, 2011, p. 14). Initially championed by Niels Bohr, this interpretation argues that “it is the nature of reality not to submit to a singular description; rather, the system must be measured by complementary arrangements” (Kinch, 2011). By contrast, Einstein and Schrödinger advanced the epistemological interpretation, believing that advances in technology would allow us someday to “talk about the properties of a system without observing it” (Kinch, 2011, p. 15) – an argument which has been proven to be spurious.

The detractors to the CI, however, rule out the role of measurement in collapsing the wavefunction. A polemical interpretation of QM in the physics academia, the Many-Worlds Interpretation (MWI) was proposed by Hugh Everett in

1957. Based on this competing interpretation of QM, instead of a collapse in the wavefunction, “all potentialities embodied by a probability wave are realized in separate universes” (Greene, 2004, p. 539). The MWI gained support by such eminent physicists as John A. Wheeler, Bryce DeWitt, and Stephen Hawking (Bell, 1992, p. 1212). The MWI postulates that there are some erratic processes deep down the quantum realm which bifurcate the universe into multiple copies, hence actualizing every possible outcome (Ryan, 2006, p. 639).

### ***The Collapse of Ambrose’s Wave-Like Trajectory***

Ambrose makes his explicit appearance in three stories in *Funhouse*: “Ambrose His Mark,” “Water-Message,” and “Lost in the Funhouse.” The title story pivots around the thirteen-year-old Ambrose who goes on a trip to the beach with his family and the fourteen-year-old neighbor’s girl, Magda. His inexperience with the opposite sex, his teenage angst, and the insecurity he feels as a result of the pubescent changes to his body undergoes cause him to shy away from the outside world, in general, and the opposite sex, in particular, and make him a meticulous observer rather than an active agent (Martin, 1997, p. 152). The trip’s taking place on the Independence Day, the fourth of July, has been regarded by critics as a turning point in Ambrose’s life as the introspective teenage boy endeavors to gain his independence not only from his family but also from his crippling self-consciousness. Their swimming plan, however, is thwarted as they learn that “the surf was spoiled with crude oil from tankers recently torpedoed offshore” (Barth, 1981, p. 76) and decide to go through the funhouse, instead. This and other clues in the text have led the critics to identify Ocean City, Maryland during the World War II as the setting of the story.

While the funhouse is fun for lovers, “it is a *place of fear and confusion*” for Ambrose (Barth, 1981, p. 69). Ambrose laments the fact that while every teenager enters through the same portal into the funhouse, not everyone, including him, is able to find his way out of the various turns and twists of the funhouse: “Yet everyone begins in the same place; how is it that most go along without difficulty but a few lose their way?” (p. 75). The twists and turns and the funhouse itself, however, have symbolic significance in that they prepare the teenagers for the sexual roles they are to assume:

In the tumbling-barrel, too, just inside the Devil’s-mouth entrance to the funhouse, the girls were upended and their boyfriends and others could see up their dresses if they cared to. Which was the whole point, Ambrose realized. Of the entire funhouse! (p. 85)

Ambrose’s ineptitude and being treated as a social misfit, however, is not without precedent: in “Water-Message,” Ambrose is ostracized by other teenagers and is not allowed to attend their secret meetings in the Den. Although their gang’s name, the Occult Order of the Sphinx, was proposed by Ambrose, the members of the Order decided that little kids like him and the seven-year-old Perse were not old enough to attend their secret meetings and were prone to reveal their secrets. All Ambrose was allowed to was to accompany his older brother, Peter, and the others along the beach and into the woods. Upon assembling into the Den, however, Peter would order,

““You and Perse skeedaddle now”” (p. 44). Ambrose’s failure to engage with the funhouse sexual play is not unprecedented, either: once Ambrose was playing Niggers and Master with Peter and Magda and in the absence of Peter, it was his turn to be Master. Although being afraid to punish her alone, Magda leads him to the toolshed where she kneels before him and pleads for mercy. His self-consciousness, however, gets the better of his desire and does not let him enjoy the encounter with Magda:

But though he had breathed heavily, groaned as if ecstatic, what he’d really felt throughout was an odd detachment, as though someone else were Master. Strive as he might to be transported, he heard his mind take notes upon the scene: *This is what they call passion. I am experiencing it.* (p. 81)

The quotation above illustrates the crippling effect of introspection and too much self-consciousness on Ambrose. In the thick of his encounter with Magda, his desire to love is overshadowed by his desire to perceive as he stares at a picture on a cigar box:

He even recalled how, standing beside himself with awed impersonality in the reeky heat, he’d stared the while at an empty cigar box in which Uncle Karl kept stone-cutting chisels: beneath the words *El Producto*, a laureled, loose-toga’d lady regarded the sea from a marble bench; beside her, forgotten or not yet turned to, was a five-stringed lyre. Her chin reposed on the back of her right hand; her left depended negligently from the bench-arm. The lower half of scene and lady was peeled away; the words EXAMINED BY \_\_\_\_\_ were inked there into the wood. (pp. 74-75)

In accounting for the collapse of the wave-function, physicists have proposed various hypotheses: observing the state of a particle necessitates interacting with it through measuring devices. The interaction of these measuring devices, which are located in the macroscopic world, to study the particle, which is located in the microscopic realm, inevitably disturbs the state of the particle and, therefore, the results obtained concerning different aspects of a particle, like its position and momentum, are inconclusive. On the other hand, some physicists, Eugene Wigner, for instance, have contended that the collapse of a particle into a defined state takes place in the consciousness. By extending the laws of QM to the macroscopic realm, these physicists claim that both measuring devices and human brain are made up of atoms and particles and, therefore, follow the rules of QM. Being matter, the measuring device and the brain cannot collapse the state of a particle into a single outcome. The primary culprit, according to this hypothesis, is the non-matter realm of consciousness. The reason that we humans perceive only one outcome out of a wave of possibilities is that the collapse occurs within the limits of our consciousness. Whereas Peter and other teenagers in the story are not stagnated in their wave-like progress (velocity suggests going with the flow) and are quite normal in the course of their growing-up and involvement with desire, Ambrose collapses and gets stuck, specifically because of his overactive self-consciousness, his crippling introspection, and his keen ability to observe subtleties which others tend to ignore.



Based on the ontological interpretation of the uncertainty principle, it is not possible to arrive at a complete description of the subatomic reality through one experiment. The trajectory an electron takes in the double-slit experiment is unintelligible and does not follow a definite path. While it is true that the distribution of a group of particles and the pattern they collectively form on the photographic plate can be determined based on probability by wave mechanics, gaining any knowledge about the properties of a single particle, its position and momentum, for instance, is not feasible unless we observe the particle; nonetheless, the observation / measurement itself, due to the disturbance effect, is not satisfying, as it does not provide us with any exact knowledge about the properties of a single particle.

Unlike the classical literature in which there is a sense of progress and the events unravel toward resolution of the conflict, “the plot doesn’t rise by meaningful steps but winds upon itself, digresses, retreats, hesitates, sighs, collapses, expires” (Barth, 1981, p. 92). Ambrose gets stuck in the funhouse and, ultimately, dissipated from the story altogether. As the reader reads the fictional text, they reconstruct the fictional world which has already been constructed by the author. When it comes to the “zero texture” and the lacunae in fictional worlds, Ambrose’s fate, for instance, Iser (1974) has famously posited the interactive model and views these gaps to be filled by the reader’s imagination: “One text is potentially capable of several different realizations, and no reading can ever exhaust the full potential, for each individual reader will fill in the gaps in his own way, thereby excluding the various other possibilities” (as cited in Edwards, 1985, p. 274). Unlike Iser who views gaps informational in essence, desperately in need of the reading process to be filled in, Doležel regards incompleteness as the immutable feature of fictional texts and ontological in nature. In other words, Doležel reasons, the fact that the worlds of fiction are human constructs makes incompleteness an ineluctable consequence of fictional world: “It would take a text of infinite length to construct a complete fictional world. Finite texts, the only texts that humans are capable of producing, are bound to create incomplete worlds” (Doležel, 1998, p. 169). Similarly, the incompleteness with which fictional worlds are replete has been an indispensable part of quantum reality as it is impossible to gain knowledge about different properties of a particle (position / velocity, for instance) simultaneously. This fact of quantum mechanics might explain why in the mirror-room, as hard as he tries, Ambrose cannot get a glimpse of any meaning and identity as he is looking at the mirror:

In the funhouse mirror-room you can’t see yourself go on forever, because no matter how you stand, your head gets in the way. Even if you had a glass periscope, the image of your eye would cover up the thing you really wanted to see. (Barth, 1981, pp. 81-82)

As he loses himself in the reflection, the narrator notes, “the necessity for an observer makes perfect observation impossible” (p. 90). Any interception in the trajectory of a particle, be it the consciousness, the measuring device, or the act of observation, brings about a collapse of the wavefunction associated with that particle and deprives us of recovering any precise information about its various aspects.

Likewise, Ambrose's outstanding powers of observation not only fail to quench his thirst for meaning but also lead to his alienation from his peers and hinder his wave-like trajectory into adulthood.

### ***Quantum Mechanics, Dasein, and Ambrose***

Pivotal to phenomenology is the concept of reduction explored by Husserl. Phenomenological reduction insists that we suspend approaching the everyday life through the lenses of classical physics and desist from looking for causal interactions between subject and object. Eidetic reduction calls for moving from the consciousness of individuals (observations made through sense perception) to the realm of pure essences (the sphere of imagination) and digging out the invariable and essential structure out of apparent contingencies. If unleashed, the flight of imagination will allow us to acknowledge that what lies underneath the concrete and factual content is uncertainty, ambiguity, and irreducibility. Ultimately, it is necessary that the transcendental ego make the world the object of his or her thought and unearth an invariable structure which defines the objects. Heidegger, on the other hand, views the subject-object dichotomy with which the whole western tradition has been fraught misleading and asserts that we should resist being distracted by trivialities of quotidian life in order to retrieve our severed connection with the authentic Being:

The rational paradigm which since Descartes has separated and since Kant has increasingly alienated the human as subject from a world of things in themselves neglects or denies and suppresses: human being, always already ontically/ontologically in-the-world, the world always already engaged as it is drawn into history by and in that relationship. (Slaughter, 1989, p. 95)

Should we discard social norms and amenities of the modern world, we might be able to enjoy the pre-Socratic proximity of human beings to nature. Our finitude and lack of power should be no barrier to trying to exhaust different possibilities which we are capable of attaining. Both QM and phenomenology are part of the human attempt to discover the nature of reality – what it means to *be*.

On the way to Ocean City, Ambrose is, once again, stung in the privy: “It was the honeysuckle on the lattice of the former privy that drew the bees” (Barth, 1981, p. 77). As a result, he walks with a limp. The apian visitation both in his infancy and adolescence is significant in two ways: first, the bees landing on his eyes confer on him the gift of vision:

People don't know what to make of him, he doesn't know what to make of himself, he's only thirteen, *athletically and socially inept*, not astonishingly bright, but there are antennae; he has . . . some sort of receivers in his head; things speak to him, he understands more than he should, the world winks at him through its objects, grabs grinning at his coat. (pp. 84-85)

While other teenagers are distracted by common teenage trivialities, it is Ambrose who spots the sea-borne bottle on the beach and ponders on the effaced paper. Furthermore, the apian visitation bestows upon him wild flights of fancy: “Peter [his brother] didn't have one-tenth the imagination *he* had, not one-tenth” (p. 80). While

Peter was amused to do naming-their-children thing as he daydreamed about his conjugal life with Magda, Ambrose exactly knew how it would feel like to be married and start a family: how to

be a loving husband and father, and go comfortably to work in the mornings and to bed with your wife at night, and wake up with her there. With a breeze coming through the sash and birds and mockingbirds singing in the Chinese-cigar trees. His eyes watered, there aren't enough ways to say that. (p. 80)

Second, his more recent visitation by bees, being stung on the leg, symbolically, accounts for his failure to catch up with his peers in regard to developing relationships with girls: "Some people, perhaps, don't 'hit their stride' until their twenties, when the growing-up business is over and women appreciate other things besides wisecracks and teasing and strutting" (p. 80). By placing it in the context of visitations as such – bees have symbolically been associated with eloquence and vision depending on their landing site – we may infer that this last visitation brings about stagnation, rather than development, in the process of sexual maturity to Ambrose. Contrary to the stance adopted by most researchers – they have interpreted the bee incident ironic in that instead of sharpening the character's vision, the visitation results in Ambrose's inability to find his way out of the funhouse – this last epiphany allows Ambrose to step into an uncharted territory of the funhouse:

Ambrose is off the track, in some new or old part of the place that's not supposed to be used; he strayed into it by some one-in-a-million chance, like the time the roller-coaster car left the tracks in the nineteen-teens against all the laws of physics and sailed over the boardwalk in the dark. And they can't locate him because they don't know where to look. Even the designer and operator have forgotten this other part, that winds around on itself like a whelk shell. That winds around the right part like the snakes on Mercury's caduceus. (p. 80)

The passage quoted above challenges the adequacy of both classical physics and literature to account for the contemporary reality in which uncertainty and chance reign supreme. The self-conscious spermatozoan of "Night-Sea Journey," the first story in the series, which has been thrown, inadvertently, into the world bears striking similarities with the notion of Dasein employed by Heidegger. Heidegger views human beings to have been thrown into the world inadvertently, who are to adapt themselves to the social norms and tradition. Yet in order to recuperate our lost unity with nature and other entities, it behooves us to forfeit the inauthentic beings (social norms and amenities of modern life, among many other things) which distract us from the authentic Being and to reclaim the pristine pre-Socratic proximity of human beings to nature. Projecting ourselves into the past provokes pangs of conscience in us while projecting ourselves into the future brings about angst because of the realization of an impending mortality. It is in present which we can find some solace: we understand that in spite of the limited time span before us, there is an infinite number of possibilities some of which we can attain. Ultimately, it is our perception of reality, not the external reality per se, which defines our Being.

While it is true that Ambrose, conceived out of the combination of the self-conscious spermatozoan of the “Night-Sea Journey” with an ovum, lacks the sexual knowledge most of his peers possess, his visionary and auditory gifts bestowed upon him as a result of his visitation by bees, allow him to hear and see a reality of a different kind. Hattie, their maid, whose husband bet on horses, insisted that the radio be on during the races. The race commentary itself did not amuse Ambrose the least; however, Ambrose had a penchant for the musical selections played between the races. On one occasion, while listening to between-races-classical music, he pictures himself having been killed by his archenemy, Wimpy, and he visualizes his family coming to visit him at his graveside during which his vengeful brother, Peter, vows to be revenged on his brother’s killer and his father blames himself for not being as munificent as he should have been. The shift in music tune inspires another vision in which a benevolent Ambrose saves Wimpy’s life against attacking hounds. In yet another picture evoked by the music, what he dreamed of is realized as Peggy expresses her love to him. His proximity to nature, as he spends most of the time on the beach, the smell of the woods where he pays frequent visits, and the between-races-classical music he listens to evoke his imaginative powers as he ponders over what possibilities lie before him. As his imagination exhausts one possibility after another, Ambrose comes to acknowledge the fact that the beast which lurks underneath these various life stories, the essence of reality, is indeterminacy.

***The Many-Worlds Interpretation of Quantum Mechanic and the Baroque: The Funhouse as an Exhaustive Trove of Possibilities***

Jacob Horner, the protagonist of Barth’s *The End of the Road*, cannot choose how to act when confronted with a series of possibilities and is paralyzed. The Doctor in the novel prescribes “Mythotherapy” for his condition, based on which a person should be free to take different personalities at will. The fact that Ambrose in the funhouse strays “in some new or old part of the place that’s not supposed to be used ... by some one-in-a-million chance” (Barth, 1981, p. 80), Martin (1997) notes, does not stem from his inability to find the exit; “rather, confronted with the labyrinth of possibilities, he finds himself paralyzed, unable to make the first step in an attempt to find his way out” (p. 155). That many of Barth’s characters are unable to practice some sort of order to their lives has been referred to as “cosmopsis” by Barth. Realizing how insignificant and futile his life is in the presence of the vast macrocosm, coupled with his recognition of the arbitrary nature of his choices, Martin argues, Ambrose finds himself overwhelmed, unable to come up with any deliberation. To negotiate this hindrance and his mental paralysis, Ambrose realizes that there are many roles he can assume and begins to rearrange his past and consider different possibilities which lie before him. Through mentally readjusting himself and rearranging the past events and considering various possibilities ahead of him, this “therapeutic endeavor” helps Ambrose create himself anew, recovering from the pangs of cosmopsis (p. 155). It is within this context that the Austrian novelist Robert Musil calls John Barth a “possibilitarian.”

Anyone possessing it [a sense of possibility] does not say, for instance, here this or that has happened, will happen, must happen. He uses his imagination and say: Here such and such might, should or ought to happen. And if he is

told that something *is* the way it is, then he thinks: Well, it could probably be just as easily some other way. So the sense of possibility might be defined outright as the capacity to think how every thing could ‘just as easily’ be, and to attach no more importance to what is than to what is not. (as cited in Morrell, 1976, p. 102)

The narrator of “Title” laments that “Everything’s been said already, over and over; I’m as sick of this as you are; there’s nothing to say” (Barth, 1981, p. 102). The only hope which remains for the Postmodern writer is to “fill the blank” and turn the ultimacy against itself through a style which exhausts its own possibilities: “The final possibility is to turn ultimacy, exhaustion, paralyzing self-consciousness and the adjective weight of accumulated history. ... Go on. Go on. To turn ultimacy against itself to make something new and valid” (p. 106). The way that Borges has deployed the concepts of labyrinth and baroque to his own end has informed Barth’s writing as well. “According to Barth’s conception of the Baroque,” Hinden (1973) notes, “a work eventually must serve as model to *itself*, defining and exhausting its own possibilities of invention and procedure as if to caricature its own emerging form” (p. 110). It is in this context that we should approach the effaced message Ambrose finds on the shore. The parallel stories he conceives as he enters the funhouse are but exhaustive ways before a Postmodern writer, which allow them to replenish the blank.

Order, balance, decorum, and lofty language were among the characteristics of the sixteenth-century art; the lack of these prerequisites in the works of the seventeenth-century metaphysical poets (for instance, the poems of Richard Crashaw which are steeped in strange conceits) might explain why the adversaries to the metaphysical poets employed the term “baroque,” an oddly-shaped *pearl* in Spanish, to stigmatize the art which lacked the *gem* of classical ideals. In the history of art, baroque has been recognized as the stage of European art which follows the Renaissance. Woelfflin (1929), who reinterpreted and revalued baroque and was the first to transfer it to literature, defines baroque by opposing its qualities against those of the Renaissance. Most of the characteristics he has enumerated bear witness to the fact that baroque exudes a freer conception of art as opposed to the Renaissance (as cited in Hauser, 1962, p. 161): linear and painterly<sup>1</sup>; plane and recession; closed and open form; clearness and unclearness; multiplicity and unity. In sum, “inexhaustibility, incomprehensibility and infinity of representation” are the dominant features of baroque (p. 163). Borges, however, is unwilling to countenance that baroque is a historical movement which defines mainly the art of the seventeenth century and, instead, views baroque as recurring and eternal: “I would say the baroque is that style which deliberately exhausts (or wants to exhaust) its possibilities and which borders on its own caricature” (as cited in Johnson, 2020, p. 384).

While Borges praises classic writing: “Classic is that book which a nation or group of nations or the test of time has decided to read as if everything in its pages was deliberate, inevitable [*fatal*], profound like the cosmos and capable of endless interpretation” (as cited in Johnson, 2020, p. 380), his stance toward baroque, the style which exhausts all the possibilities, seems to inform much of his thinking and writing as well. Concerning “The Garden of Forking Paths,” Gilles Deleuze writes,

“Borges, one of Leibniz’s disciples, invoked the Chinese philosopher-architect Ts’ui Pên, the inventor of the ‘garden with bifurcating paths,’ a baroque labyrinth whose infinite series converge or diverge, forming a webbing of time embracing all possibilities” (as cited in Johnson, 2020, p. 398). Leibniz’s belief in the conceptual existence of different possibilities (within the mind of God) and his notion of the individuals as monads capable of perceiving infinite relations seem to have attracted Borges.

As mentioned earlier, according to the Many-World Interpretation of QM, instead of a collapse in the wavefunction, whenever a particle generates a wavefunction, parallel universes sprout in the cosmos. In a similar vein, Ryan notes, fictional worlds come into being as a character ponders on their options. The parallel universes of QM give way to decision trees with different branches in fiction, with the same ontological status. That all fictional worlds enjoy the same ontological existence has also been expressed by David Lewis under the rubric “indexical” theory of reality: if by actual we mean the world in which I am located, then all possible worlds are actual from the perspective of their inhabitants. This multiverse cosmology in fiction, which amounts to parallel universes in QM, provides us with some interesting insight on Ambrose’s idiosyncrasies.

The Devil’s-mouth entrance to the funhouse has been viewed by Fletcher as the portal through which Ambrose visits the underworld. The operator of the funhouse is described as somewhat sad and exhausted, “a small old man, *in appearance not unlike* the photographs at home of Ambrose’s late grandfather” (Barth, 1981, p. 84) and has been argued to stand for Barth’s literary forefathers, ancient and more recent, Tiresias and, particularly, Joyce, “now reduced to a symbol of ‘used-upness” (Fletcher, 2019, p. 62). Unlike Tiresias who imparts some homecoming knowledge to Odysseus, the old operator of the funhouse is bereft of any pragmatic wisdom to account for the acausal quantum reality. As he loses himself in the labyrinthine turns and twists of the funhouse, Ambrose creates different mutually exclusive parallel realities before him: he pictures himself successful, married and having children of his own, adolescent angst far behind him. Unlike his reserved father who despite appearing as an “intelligent man (as indicated by his role as grade school principal), neither encouraged nor discouraged his sons at all in any way—as if he either didn’t care about them or cared all right but didn’t know how to act” (Barth, 1981, p. 90), Ambrose establishes a close rapport with his children. Tender as he was all through his unhappy childhood, he wishes his father had solaced him and stood by him. Determined not to let his son undergo such angst, “when the lad [Ambrose’s child] reached thirteen or so,” Ambrose “would put a strong arm around his shoulder and tell him calmly: ‘It is perfectly normal. We have all been through it. It will not last forever’” (p. 81). Having become famous in his line of work, he reminds Magda, his wife, at an elegant dinner party of his youthful passion, their teenage trip to Ocean City, and the erotic fantasies he used to have about her:

Would she have imagined that the world-famous whatever remembered how many strings were on the lyre on the bench beside the girl on the label of the cigar box he’d stared at in the toolshed at age ten while she, age eleven. Even

then he had felt *wise beyond his years*; he'd stroked her hair and said in his deepest voice and correctest English as to a dear child: "I shall never forget this moment". (pp. 80-81)

In yet another version, while lost in the funhouse, Ambrose comes across another lost person in the dark with whom they manage to find their way out of the labyrinthine funhouse. By the time they find the right exit, they would become intimate friends, even lovers should she be a girl;

they'd know each other's inmost souls, be bound together *by the cement of shared adventure*; then they'd emerge into the light and it would turn out that his friend was a Negro. A blind girl. President Roosevelt's son. Ambrose's former archenemy. (p. 83)

In another parallel reality, Ambrose is, in the end, out of the funhouse. The fact that the companion with whom Ambrose sought their way out of the funhouse happened to be a blind negro girl gives Uncle Karl an excuse to tease Ambrose on their way back home. In another parallel reality, Ambrose "died of starvation telling himself stories in the dark<sup>2</sup>" (p. 92) and in a couple of years when that uncharted area of the funhouse becomes visible, his skeleton is mistaken for a part of the machinery. However, little did he know that an assistant operator of the funhouse, the operator's daughter, squatting behind the plywood partition, overheard his stories and recorded them word for word:

Though she had never laid eyes on him, she recognized that here was one of Western Culture's truly great imaginations, the eloquence of whose suffering would be an inspiration to unnumbered. And her heart was torn between her love for the unfortunate young man (yes, she loved him, though she had never laid though she knew him only – but how well! – through his words, and the deep, calm voice in which he spoke them) between her love et cetera and her womanly intuition that only in suffering and isolation could he give voice et cetera. (p. 92)

Or it might be that the family decided to ride on a merry-go-round instead of going through the funhouse in the first place (p. 84). These possibilities exist along each other and the reader can never be certain about the fate of Ambrose. From his paternal origin – was it due to Andrea's, his mother, betrayal or a fit of madness that Hector, his father, stormed into the delivery ward? – to his ambiguous birthmark, Ambrose's life has been tinged with indeterminacy. His acquisitive mind cannot be appeased as his metaphoric quest in the funhouse for a meaning beyond sexuality and reality brings about possibilities, not certainties: "Uncertainty announces the very condition of the postmodernist hero who must question everything, persist in confusion and negotiate what possibilities are available" (Edwards, 1985, p. 272). Rather than fostering a sense of authorial wholeness, Ambrose's underworld visit metamorphoses into a "frenzied, out-of-control, illogical sequence of possible endings, a 'garden of forking paths'" (Fletcher, 2019, p. 62). And while Odysseus, following his underworld visit, ascends as a transformed storyteller, Ambrose vanishes into thin air in the turns and twists of the funhouse, never mentioned again in the rest of the stories which follow in the series.

## Conclusion

The 1960s, during which *Lost in the Funhouse* was written, features a world on the cusp of falling apart: Deconstruction brought about incredulity in privileged hierarchies of the Western thought; and the ferment set in following the Vietnam War and political assassinations imbued the climate of the decade with skepticism. The mental climate defining philosophy and literature in the 1960s had already affected physics in the first half of the century, during which quantum physics shattered the way reality had been perceived for a long time. Formerly proud of Newtonian absolutism, modern physics suddenly found it impossible to deal in certainties: competing hypotheses (the CI; the MWI of QM), thought experiments (the double-slit experiment; Schrödinger's Cat), and metaphors employed by physicists to express the inexpressible, all in all, bear witness to the fact that indeterminism and uncertainty have not been confined to the domain of fiction; rather they define the gestalt of the epoch.

Literature has always been responsive to paradigm shifts in physics. From chains of causality in plot to the mélange of private times one can see the imprint of classical physics and Theory of Relativity in fiction. The more recent breakthrough in modern physics is quantum mechanics, which has been regarded as the contemporary paradigm shift, challenging our ontological understanding and nature of reality. Despite the fact that in his more recent fiction, Barth has made explicit references to contemporary physics and has consciously deployed QM concepts, *Funhouse* has been devoid of such a direct influence. Nevertheless, exploring some stories in the series reveals some surprising affinities and parallels with some of the concepts for which quantum mechanics is famous. In fact, alongside such approaches as Deconstruction and Poststructuralism, there were also the developments in modern physics, namely quantum mechanics, whose implications one can sniff in Barth's *Funhouse*.

John Barth has been a cross-disciplinary avid reader. To do justice to such an author, who has been perceptive of and receptive to breakthroughs in other disciplines to reinvigorate fiction, perhaps researchers in the field of literary studies, provided competent in a second discipline, should aspire to deploy contemporary theories in other fields as the framework to their discussion. Even if one is skeptical whether QM offers the most accurate description of reality, it pays big dividends as a framework to approach literary works: the uncertainty, indeterminism, wave-particle duality and parallel universes on which it pivots imbue narrative with turns uncharted otherwise.

## Acknowledgements

The authors wish to express their debt to MIT and Yale University Open Courses on Quantum Mechanics, in particular inspiring lectures given by Professor Ramamurti Shankar and Allan Adams which have facilitated the absorption of otherwise arcane features of QM.



## References

- Barth, J. S. (1981). *Lost in the funhouse: Fiction for print, tape, live voice*. Bantam Books.
- Baulch, D. M. (2003). Time, narrative, and the multiverse: Post-Newtonian narrative in Borges's the garden of the forking paths and Blake's Vala or the four zoas. *The Comparatist*, 27, 56-78. [www.jstor.org/stable/44367186](http://www.jstor.org/stable/44367186)
- Bell, J. S. (1992). Six possible worlds of quantum mechanics. *Foundations of Physics*, 22(10), 1201-1215. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01889711>
- Booker, M. K. (1990). Joyce, Planck, Einstein, and Heisenberg: A relativistic quantum mechanical discussion of *Ulysses*. *James Joyce Quarterly*, 27(3), 577-586. [www.jstor.org/stable/25485062](http://www.jstor.org/stable/25485062)
- Coale, S. C. (2011). Quantum flux and narrative flow: Don DeLillo's entanglements with quantum theory. *Papers on Language and Literature*, 74(3), 261-294. <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1011088122?accountid=45153>
- Coulthard, A. R. (1994). Barth's lost in the funhouse. *The Explicator*, 52(3), 180. <https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/barths-lost-funhouse/docview/216771890/se-2?accountid=45153>
- Davis, R. C. (1985). The case for a post-structuralist mimesis: John Barth and imitation. *The American Journal of Semiotics*, 3(3), 49-72. <https://search.proquest.com/docview/213746945?accountid=45153>
- de Broglie, L. (1924). Recherches sur la théorie des quanta. *Annales de Physique*, 10(3), 22-128.
- Dillard, A. (1983). *Living by fiction*. Harper Colophon.
- Doležel, L. (1998). *Heterocosmica: Fiction and possible worlds*. The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Edwards, B. (1985). Deconstructing the artist and the art: Barth and Calvino at play in the funhouse of language. *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature*, 12(2), 264-86. <https://journals.library.ualberta.ca/crccl/index.php/crccl/article/view/2649>
- Fletcher, J. (2019). *Myths of the underworld in contemporary culture: The backward gaze*. Oxford University Press.
- Front, S. (2015). *Shapes of time in British twenty-first century quantum fiction*. Cambridge Scholars.
- Greene, B. (1999). *The elegant universe: Superstrings, hidden dimensions, and the quest for the ultimate theory*. Random House.
- Greene, B. (2004). *The fabric of the cosmos: Space, time, and the texture of reality*. Alfred A. Knopf.
- Hauser, A. (1962). *The social history of art: Renaissance, mannerism and baroque*. Routledge.

- Hinden, M. (1973). Lost in the funhouse: Barth's use of the recent past. *Twentieth Century Literature*, 19(2), 107–118. [www.jstor.org/stable/440892](http://www.jstor.org/stable/440892)
- Johnson, C. D. (2020). On Borges's B/baroque. *Comparative Literature*, 72(4), 377-405. <https://doi.org/10.1215/00104124-8537731>
- Katsumori, M. (2011). *Niels Bohr's complementarity: Its structure, history, and intersections with hermeneutics and deconstruction*. Springer.
- Kinch, S. S. (2011). *Quantum mechanics and modern fiction* (Order No. 3037511). [Doctoral dissertation, the University of Texas at Austin, Ann Arbor]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. <https://search.proquest.com/docview/304728312?accountid=45153>
- Lawrence, D. H. (1995). *The spirit of place: Studies in classic American literature*. Atlantic Publishers and Distributers.
- Martin, W. T. (1997). Self-knowledge and self-conception: The therapy of autobiography in John Barth's *Lost in the funhouse*. *Studies in Short Fiction*, 34(2), 151-157. <https://search.proquest.com/docview/195690422?accountid=45153>
- Merrell, F. (2006). Jorge Luis Borges and early quantum labyrinths. In J. Hoeg, & K. S. Larsen (Eds.), *Science, literature, and film in the Hispanic world* (pp. 49-73). Palgrave Macmillan. [https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230601963\\_4](https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230601963_4)
- Morrell, D. (1976). *John Barth: An introduction*. The Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Nas, L. (1999). "Scheherazade, c'est moi": Narrativist mimesis and the principle of metaphoric means in John Barth. *Journal of Literary Studies*, 15(1-2), 132–145. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02564719908530221>
- Plotnitsky, A. (2017). Philosophical skepticism and narrative incredulity: Postmodern theory and postmodern American fiction. In P. Geyh (Ed.), *The Cambridge companion to postmodern American fiction* (pp. 63-80). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781316216514.006>
- Reilly, C. (2000). An interview with John Barth. *Contemporary Literature*, 41(4), 589–617. [www.jstor.org/stable/1209004](http://www.jstor.org/stable/1209004)
- Ryan, M. L. (2006). From parallel universes to possible worlds: Ontological pluralism in physics, narratology, and narrative. *Poetics Today*, 27(4), 633-674. <https://search.proquest.com/docview/204269671?accountid=45153>
- Shankar, R. (2016). *Quantum mechanics: The main experiment. Fundamentals of physics II: Electromagnetism, optics, and quantum mechanics*. Yale University Press.
- Slaughter, C. N. (1989). Who gets lost in the funhouse. *Arizona Quarterly: A Journal of American Literature, Culture, and Theory*, 44(4), 80-97. [doi:10.1353/arq.1989.0017](https://doi.org/10.1353/arq.1989.0017)

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Hauser (1962) defines “painterly” as “the dissolution of firm, plastic and linear form into something moving, hovering and incapable of being grasped” (p. 161).

<sup>2</sup>This possible outcome to Ambrose’s life story reminds Coulthard of Kafka’s famous faster in “A Hunger Artist.” Just as Ambrose cannot find solace within society, Kafka’s protagonist cannot help fasting, because he cannot find the food which can nourish him. Ambrose dies reciting stories to himself; the hunger artist, in a similar vein, is the sole spectator to his art, “fasts ‘on and on . . . but no one counted the days’” (as cited in Coulthard, 1994, p.180). Both stories underline the fact that the true artist is doomed to live a life of alienation, with art being the only resort for them to take refuge (p. 180).

## Author’s Biography

---



Having matriculated in the Ph.D. program at Kish International Campus, University of Tehran, Iran in 2017, **Ali Emami-pour** is currently an ABD student of English Literature. He had been teaching English Literature undergraduate courses at Islamic Azad University – Kerman Branch before he pursued his postgraduate studies. His research interests are in the area of Interdisciplinary, Comparative Literature, Afro-American and Postcolonial studies.

His most recent publication is “William Shakespeare’s Caliban and Margaret Atwood’s *Surfacer*: Survival Through the Third Space/Thing” in *Comparative Literature: East & West* (2018).



**Farideh Pourgivi** is a Professor of English Literature at Shiraz University and the editor of *Persian Literary Studies Journal* (plsj.shirazu.ac.ir). She has published numerous papers and books. She has written reviews for *The British Journal of Middle East Literature*. She has contributed to the *Compendium of World Novels and Novelists* published in 2008. Her areas of interest are Fiction and Children's Literature.

---





## **Thirst for Knowledge in Patricia Cornwell's *Postmortem***

Mehri Nour Mohamad Nejhah Baghaei<sup>1</sup>, Abolfazl Ramazani<sup>2</sup>,  
and Sara Saei Dibavar<sup>3\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*M. A. in English Language and Literature, Azarbaijan Shahid Madani  
University, Tabriz, Iran, Email: mehri6413@gmail.com*

<sup>2</sup>*Assistant Professor of English Language and Literature, Department of  
English Language and Literature, Faculty of Literature and Humanities,  
Azarbaijan Shahid Madani University, Tabriz, Iran,  
ORCID:0000-0002-6460-4503*

*Email: a.ramazani@azaruniv.ac.ir (also: ramazani57@yahoo.co.uk)*

<sup>3</sup>*Corresponding author, Assistant Professor of English Language and  
Literature, Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of  
Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Mazandaran, Babolsar, Iran,  
ORCID:0000-0003-1883-5498*

*Email: s.saei@umz.ac.ir; saei\_sarah@yahoo.com*

### **Abstract**

“I CAN’T HELP READING!” is the common comment uttered by Detective Fiction readers who lose control over themselves as they begin reading a crime novel. The genre is a crystal clear formulaic structure which abounds with repetition: following a crime, an investigation is initiated by a detective to capture the criminal. Still, its clichéd nature does not lessen the universality of Detective Fiction. How could a story replete with puzzles and vague incidents be enticing? More importantly, why would the reader avoid discarding a book which sketches horrible deeds and inhuman interests of the criminal? What is the powerful element of Detective Fiction which places it among popular literature? This paper intends to answer these crucial questions by focusing on “conjecture,” a term introduced by Umberto Eco as the key feature of Detective Fiction’s appeal. To this end, an article by William F. Brewer and Edward H. Lichtenstein entitled, “Stories Are to Entertain: A Structural-Affect Theory of Stories” (1982) is targeted to shed light on the claim of conjecture as a way to knowledge by elaborating on three analytical components—surprise, suspense, and curiosity—of a story which make it strikingly attractive.

*Keywords:* detective fiction, knowledge, suspense, surprise, curiosity

### ARTICLE INFO

#### Research Article

Received: Thursday, February, 3, 2022

Accepted: Friday April 15, 2022

Published: Sunday, May 1, 2022

Available Online: Friday, April 15, 2022

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.22049/jalda.2022.27649.1393>

Online ISSN: 2821-0204; Print ISSN: 2820-8986



© The Author(s)

## Introduction

The introduction to this Article includes two parts as follows:

### Patricia Cornwell and the Tradition of Detective Fiction

Bergman (2009) in “Crime Fiction as a Popular Science” acknowledges the “declining interest in science education” (p. 193) in the last decade; therefore, academic institutions have managed to solve the issue by presenting science in popular fiction, particularly crime fiction in order to raise the public interest in the field of science. People appreciate science not in scientific books but in fiction and mass media. While they do not select crime fiction with the primary goal of majoring in science, they are “interested in what is going on in the world around them, and science is part of the world” (p. 204). As a result, crime fiction might be a valuable choice in favor of popularizing science among people.

Detective Fiction, a popular subgenre of crime fiction which appeals to almost everyone from a vivacious teenager to a quiescent aged person, is prone to numerous criticisms from various perspectives. Edgar Allan Poe’s three praiseworthy works “The Murder in the Rue Morgue,” “The Purloined Letter,” and “The Mystery of Marie Roget” won him the title of the father of detective story. The genre achieved its peak in the time of interwar, the Golden Age, by the stories of talented authors particularly, Agatha Christie who created a permanently living detective character, Monsieur Poirot. The genre’s popularity has not diminished since its emergence. Indeed, the latter part of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century have augmented its charm by the immeasurable advancement of technology.

Patricia Cornwell, the well-known author of Scarpetta series, had the opportunity to work at the Virginia medical examiner’s office for six years. “Many of her experiences weren’t pleasant. But she was a superb observer of life” (Feole & Lasseter, 2005, pp. 3-4); six years of hard work in such a critical place added to her knowledge in this field (p. 4). In 1990 she succeeded with her best-selling novel, *Postmortem*, which won her a large number of awards (p. 6). In this novel, she created a protagonist, Kay Scarpetta, whom readers appreciate for her high intelligence and sympathetic heart. In *Postmortem*, Cornwell pictures the crime scene in detail, which mirrors the inhuman act of the killer that might recur in disparate parts of the story. Although these gruesome images – as well as ghastly depictions of autopsy – chill the reader, readers still take immense pleasure in pursuing the story. Readers accompany the detective throughout the novel because as human beings, they are eternally in search of truth. Since the creation of man is the biggest unresolved question, they are obsessed with truth, thus any endeavor to reveal truth is enjoyable for them. Findings of the detective adds to their “knowledge” and uncovers facts which pleases the reader to comply with the story. Achieving success through her well-liked character, Kay Scarpetta tempted Cornwell to make a series of the so-called detective’s investigations: *Body of Evidence* (1991), *All That Remains* (1992), *Cause of Death* (1996), *Black Notice* (1999), *Blow Fly* (2003), *Book of the Dead* (2007), *Scarpetta* (2008), *The Scarpetta*

*Factor* (2009), *Port Mortuary* (2010), *Red Mist* (2011), *The Bone Bed* (2012), *Dust* (2013), *Chaos* (2016), and *Autopsy* (2021).

### **The Novel, *Postmortem***

Patricia Cornwell's first published novel, *Postmortem*, which has sold more than 100 million copies was "the first novel to ever win the Edgar, Creasey, Anthony, and Macavity awards, as well as the French Prix du Roman d'Aventure, all in a single year. The book remains the only American crime novel to have ever won the coveted British Gold Dagger award" (Feole & Lasseter, 2005, p. 4). On the 1st of March, 1996, "six of Patricia Cornwell's books were included on the USA Today list of the twenty-five bestselling crime novels to date, including *The Body Farm*, *From Potter's Field*, *Postmortem*, *Cruel and Unusual*, *Body of Evidence*, and *All That Remains*" (p. 5).

*Postmortem* reveals the story of some horrible crimes committed in Richmond, Virginia. The first character introduced is Scarpetta, the sleuth detective, whose career covers a large portion of her life. She is a divorcee who runs a romantic relationship with the commonwealth's attorney, Bill Boltz. The other important man in her life is detective-sergeant Marino who stubbornly follows the cases in order to help solve the crime. Another significant person in her life is Lucy, her ten-year-old niece who is visiting her.

The story begins with a phone call from Marino who gives Scarpetta the address of a crime scene. It has been almost two months since the first murder happened and this one is the fourth. The victim is a young woman found dead by her husband in her bedroom. She has been raped and strangled in a fashion identical to the three previous cases. The only clue is a kind of substance found on the dead bodies. Matters exacerbate as the fifth crime happens to the sister of Scarpetta's acquaintance. Frustration prevails as detectives cannot find any meaningful connections between the five cases. Finally, however, they succeed in discovering a lead; all five victims had dialed 911 at a point in their lives for individual causes. Based on the newly found evidence, they infer that the killer must be a 911 dispatcher that was seduced by voices on the phone to chase and trap his baits. At the night of this discovery, the murderer breaks into Scarpetta's house while she is sleeping. He tries to do the same to her as he did to his other five victims, but Marino heroically appears in the room and shoots the killer dead.

### **Theoretical Background**

Since its naissance, the popularity of crime stories has been the subject of scrutiny to the extent that numerous explanations have attempted to justify its fame. By emphasizing Umberto Eco's claim on "conjecture" expressed in *Postscript to The Name of the Rose*, published in 1983, we intend to foreground one of the exemplary characteristics of Detective Fiction which qualifies it as "popular literature." Eco, the Italian philosopher and novelist, believes that people enjoy crime novels "not because there are corpses or because there is a final celebratory triumph of order (intellectual, social, legal, and moral) over the disorder of evil." On the contrary, the preliminary pleasure is obtained from the fact that "crime novel

represents a kind of conjecture, pure and simple” (1983, p. 54). For Eco, there is a strong bond between philosophy and Detective Fiction. In this regard, he avers that:

After all, the fundamental question of philosophy (like that of psychoanalysis) is the same as the question of the detective novel: who is guilty? To know this (to think you know this), you have to conjecture that all the events have a logic, a logic that the guilty party has imposed on them. Every story of investigation and of conjecture tells us something that we have been close to knowing. (Eco, 1983, p. 54)

Following Eco’s lead, we try to shed light on one of the key factors behind Detective Fiction’s global popularity. In order to achieve this goal, we make use of the term “knowledge” coined by Umberto Eco to justify the pleasure gained through reading detective stories and to conclude that superficial formulaic structure of these stories in fact delve into extremely complicated areas behind the scene. To further clarify our approach – and to make the fans of the genre conscious about their zeal for it – we draw on the two plots which comprise Detective Fiction: the first is the crime and the second which orbits around the detective and occupies most part of the text is investigation. The detective strives to close the case through interrogation, forensic means, and inference. Crime fiction readers accompany this detective in chasing the clues and observations to reach the conclusion. From the beginning of the novel to the end their thirst for knowledge is quenched and stimulated again, a kind of pleasure which persuades them to keep reading.

### **Literature Review**

Patricia Cornwell’s success in writing tangible stories with violent crimes has drawn the attention of critics to examine her novels from manifold approaches. She is a prolific American author whose works have received numerous prizes. While mentioning all the researches done previously is worthy of consideration, the academic requirement to fit it into a certain scale would allow fewer criticisms to cite:

Sayers (1936) in “Aristotle on Detective Fiction” acclaims Aristotle’s *Poetics* as a fundamental resource for criticizing works of literature, in addition to announcing Aristotle as the chief advocate of Detective Fiction. She believes that Aristotle criticized the Greek Theater for the reason that it was the only available piece of literature, and indeed “what, in his heart of hearts, he desired was a Good Detective Story” (p. 24). Later, she underlines all the essential components of tragedy to employ them on Detective Fiction together with convincing explanations to intensify its significance as good literature. By quoting Aristotle from *Poetics* to prove her claim, she avers that “he had a stout appetite for gruesome” (p. 24), which is the essence of the crime. She maintains that Aristotle in spite of inappropriate mysterious stories, shortcomings of detective heroes who compromised of unsympathetic Gods, and no trace of forensic science to assist unravelling the truth still brings about significant components of Detective Fiction.

In her essay entitled “Bodies of Knowledge Pleasure and Anxiety in the Detective Fiction of Patricia Cornwell,” Sue Turnbull elaborates on four conspicuous appealing aspects of Scarpetta novels. Firstly, she discusses “a



pleasurable frisson of carefully structured anxiety with the promise of an ultimate resolution” (Turnbull, 1993, p. 3). The formulaic structure of detective stories may be the key factor of Cornwell’s books’ popularity. Secondly, pleasure is “derived from the scientific knowledge” (p. 5). Clues and traces found by the detective in crime scene, in addition to the autopsy done on the victim which clarify answers for questions such as the motif of the criminal, time of murder, and means of killing, all attribute to solve the riddle that readers are confronted. Thirdly, she mentions “the ambiguous pleasure of looking at what we most fear, that is death” (p. 16). Readers experience contradictory feelings of threat and security by death. And finally Scarpetta as a female detective dealing with cases of female victims feels a sense of threat that “produces suspense which renders these books compelling reading” (p. 27). Scarpetta sympathizes with the women victims and treats them in the autopsy in a very delicate and passionate way in which she seems to be talking to their dead bodies.

In a short essay entitled “A Pedagogical Approach to Detective Fiction,” Augustine Reyes-Torres claims to exploit the popularity of Detective Fiction as a tool to attract foreign language students to read and engross in literature. He announces “the mystery, the action, and the suspense in the story” (Reyes-Torres, 2011, p. 33) to be the substantial appealing components of the genre. According to him, through reading these stories three educational goals are achieved: progress of an individual mind, acquaintance with other cultures, and development of language skills (pp. 33-34). He proposes Detective Fiction to raise the students’ attention since it “is one of the most globalized, most popular, and best selling of commercial literary genres” (p. 33). Quite interestingly, all Detective Fictions include the same formula; a murder happens, the detective begins his research to assemble clues in order to solve the crime, and bring the criminal to justice; yet, each story expresses a totally different context with disparate plots, because “Every author in every country is distinguishable from another due to the local aspects that differentiate his or her work” (p. 35).

Bill Phillips in “Crime Fiction: A Global Phenomenon” presents an example story from the “Book of Daniel, chapter thirteen” (Phillips, 2016, p. 6) to argue that Detective Fiction goes back to the ancient time. The story reveals life of a virtuous young woman whom two elder judges are to seduce to have a relationship with. Shamelessly these two elders accuse the woman of having a relationship with a young man. In the court, people believe elders of high reputation, so the woman is condemned to death. God sends Daniel to defend her by cross examining the elders. Their lies are divulged and the young woman regains her honor. Phillips endeavors to convince people of crime’s existence from long ago when Daniel acted the detective. Phillips considers crime fiction as a source of truth in which the real events of each epoch may be deeply studied, that is, it “enables us to share emotions and comprehend the psychological consequences of events in a way that impersonal historiography does not” (p. 12). He delivers several instances from various countries to prove that the genre is a worldwide phenomenon. Furthermore, supposing its plurality and variety, “one of the things these texts reveal is a common global desire for justice to be done, and to be seen to be done” (p. 5). According to

him, Detective stories might pursue disparate themes such as politics, identity, or neocolonialism. Depending on the region and the common issues of that location, types of crime differ; however, the main concern is for “social justice and the betterment of our world” (p. 13).

### **Discussion**

There is a virtually active sense of curiosity in human’s inner self. By instinct, we crave to acquire what is going on around us. Some people attempt to weaken this desire in order not to be troublesome as quidnunc, whereas others develop this wish by feeding it more and more. Although the first group may seem favorable, the second group might turn out to be more productive if the desire is directed on the right path. In fact, it is an insatiable appetite for knowledge implanted in human being which exhorts us to know more. Absorbing the required knowledge implies satisfaction in the beginning; yet, in time, this transient pleasure subsides and the thirst for more arises. The one who prefers Detective Fiction intensifies this desire for two overt reasons; first, the obvious job of a detective – to follow the clues and glean information – assists the reader to accompany the detective throughout the story and increase his findings along the way; second, the methodology that the modern detectives apply to solve the crime by utilizing high-tech facilities also augments one’s scientific knowledge.

Additional information is added to the earlier knowledge. Sometimes we are in need of urgent knowledge and willingly or reluctantly attempt to gain it. However, infovore system boosts our desire to learn things which we are not in need of, though “the knowledge obtained may have some practical value in the future” (Biederman & Vessel, 2006, p. 247). Therefore, it is of no significance that we require knowledge in order to use it; still “there is, in evolutionary terms, adaptive value to its acquisition” (p. 247). Acquired knowledge fills us with such a pleasure that unconsciously we get drawn towards anything or anyone that is potentially able to convey information to us. That is why we are generally attracted to intelligent people since they act as a source of knowledge to us, “a trait that is strongly correlated with mate selection in every human culture that’s been studied” (p. 247).

Knowledge is an essential achievement in Detective fiction. The detective occupies most part of the story in order to unfold the truth which was either scattered or covert. In *Philosophies of Crime Fiction*, Joseph Hoffmann identifies a detective as a philosopher who follows the traces to get to the knowledge. He defines a philosopher as “not someone who loves wisdom, but rather someone who appreciates knowledge, who actively pursues it” (Hoffman, 2013, p. 13). A philosopher is the permanent follower of knowledge. World is a big enigma to him and doing the puzzle to unravel the truth prioritizes his life. Variable reasons breed crime. Sometimes the reason and sometimes the perpetrator of the crime signify the detective’s predisposition to gather the clues to foreground the truth. Hoffmann believes that the reader paves the same path that the detective does. In order to obtain the proportionate knowledge, the detective must be intellectually adroit to make a distinction between essential and vacuous traces as Hoffmann reminds us

that “rationality, or reason is also an important tool in a detective’s work, though by no means the only one” (p. 13).

One of the ancient dominant philosophers who remains as an unprecedented paradigm of wisdom is Aristotle. Although he elaborated on tragedy profoundly, Hoffmann states that “he appreciates a myth (fable) in which the sequence of single episodes is probable and necessary and which contains the essential component of recognition, in other words a transformation from ignorance to knowledge” (p. 14). Suspense was a substantial component of the story for Aristotle. Moreover, discovering the truth to end the suspense was the ultimate goal of his writings. Hoffmann brings forth the popular Italian philosopher, Umberto Eco’s statement into attention to affirm his view on Aristotle. He asserts that “to Eco, the detective novel is Aristotle’s poetics reduced to its most essential elements because the novel contains a series of events (pragmata), the threads of which are tangled or have been lost. The plot (mythos) depicts how the detective finds these threads and connects them again” (p. 17).

The individual who pursues philosophy possesses a head replete with various questions on human’s origination. A philosopher is a never retiring learner for whom solving each riddle opens up new doors of mystery. Similar to Philosophy, there might be no definite explanation for many incidents in Detective Fiction; yet, the detective interminably attempts to get out of darkness created by the vicious character whose act is probably beyond comprehension. Deleuze (1994), the eminent French philosopher who is popular for his metaphysical ideas, was interested in Detective fiction as he declares:

A book of philosophy should be in part a very particular species of detective novel, in part a kind of science fiction. By detective novel we mean that concepts, with their zones of presence, should intervene to resolve local situations. They themselves change along with the problems. They have spheres of influence where, as we shall see, they operate in relation to “dramas” and by means of a certain “cruelty.” (p. xx)

The detective finds himself in the crime scene where a crime has already been perpetrated. The murderer has concealed all the traces in order not to get captured. The detective begins her job by disclosing the concealed truth to reach an understanding of the incident. On the other hand, psychoanalysis is a field in which a patient approaches the psychoanalyst with no more than a blurry dream. The patient is incapable of interpreting what his perplexing and vague dream conveys. As a result, the psychoanalyst is a refuge for the dreamer to bring what is left in darkness into light. The popular Slovenian philosopher and psychoanalyst, Slavoj Žižek, makes a “similarity between the procedure of the analyst and that of the detective” (Žižek, 1991, p. 53). Indeed, both hunt for hidden knowledge. In the former ambiguity of the fact is due to one’s specifically intellectual function of the mind, whereas, in the latter, disguise of the truth is on purpose. Žižek believes that there are multiple sources which rectify the psychoanalytic underlying fundamentals of Detective Fiction as “the primordial crime to be explained is parricide, the prototype of the detective is Oedipus, striving to attain the terrifying truth about

himself” (p. 50). Psychoanalysis attempts to clarify the obscure nature of dreams which are unfathomable for an ordinary person. Zizek (1991) avers that this procedure occurs in Detective Fiction as well:

The scene of the crime with which the detective is confronted is as a rule, a false image put together by the murderer in order to efface the traces of his act. The scene's organic, natural quality is a lure, and the detective's task is to denature it by first discovering the inconspicuous details that stick out, that do not fit into the frame of the surface image. (p. 53)

Hoffmann in the analysis of a philosophical novel, *Zadig*, by the French philosopher, Voltaire, adds more to the covert similarities between Detective Fiction and Philosophy. He states that Voltaire observes the world “as a place of crime and catastrophe, a place in which murder, greed and ideological conflicts are the driving forces” (Hoffmann, 2013, p. 36). In fact, human being is the omniscient witness of the incessant crime committed in the society. Here and there one observes or more frequently hears of the crime with various plots. People all are of criminal desires. Some might transmute this desire into reality while others struggle to confide it in themselves and look innocent. There is no guarantee for anyone's absolute discretion. An event or a pernicious habit might turn everything upside down since “all that seems steady and unshakeable today can come to an end tomorrow” (p. 36).

Dutta-Flanders (2017) in her popular book, *The Language of Suspense in Crime Fiction*, states that “suspense is more about unfolding the offender traits in a storyworld backgrounded in the dominant narrative, and is essentially an emotional process” (p. 2). Human beings have strong desires to get to what is kept from them. As the story proceeds, enigmatic questions will gradually be answered which not only do satisfy the reader by settling the curiosity but also widen their view of the world. Indeed, suspense does magic to mind since as it “emerges in the unfolding of the criminality, it has the ability to provoke an intellectual as well as an affective response, shaping our overall outlook of the crime” (p. 2).

In their popular article, “Stories Are to Entertain: A Structural-Affect Theory of Stories,” Brewer and Lichtenstein (1982) elaborate on three significant components of a story, namely surprise, suspense, and curiosity, which “account for the enjoyment of a large proportion of stories” (p. 13). Each one is intended to be explored largely on its own term and be applied on the selected novel of Patricia Cornwell, *Postmortem*.

According to *Merriam Webster Dictionary*, “surprise” is the feeling caused by something unexpected or unusual. Detective stories generally begin with a surprise which is the initiating element of their success to attract the readers. Brewer and Lichtenstein (1982) declare:

In a surprise discourse organization, the critical information from the beginning of the event structure is omitted from the discourse, without letting the reader know that it has been omitted, and then is inserted later in the discourse. We assume that the reader will be surprised when the reader reaches the point where the omitted information is revealed, and that the surprise is

resolved when the reader reinterprets the underlying event sequence in light of this new information. (pp. 13-14)

Following the plot of the story, readers construct their own imagination which leads to a singular interpretation and a sort of expectation for the final result. However, a twist of the outcome surprises the reader greatly, which intensifies the pleasure they were finding along the way. As Brewer and Lichtenstein state, “the basic discourse force of stories is assumed to be the entertain force” (p. 12).

*Postmortem* begins with a call to the medical examiner, Doctor Scarpetta, to report a crime. Neither the reader nor the characters have any initial information about the crime. The victim’s name is “Lori Petersen, a white female, thirty years old. Her husband had found her body about half an hour earlier” (Cornwell, 1990, p. 2). It is the author’s strong skill that “withholds the critical information at the beginning of the story, information that is necessary for a correct interpretation of the story” (Graesser & Klettke, 2001, p. 57).

The novel consists of several minor and major surprises. Arriving at the scene of the crime, Doctor Scarpetta, the chief examiner, finds medical equipment in the house. She supposes they might belong to the husband; but, to her dismay, they are for the victim. On the exact night of the murder, while the house is fenced as crime scene and the police are doing investigations, Marino, Scarpetta’s colleague, realizes that the killer has used the only unlocked window in the bathroom to enter the house. He is surprised by the husband’s explanation that he was “replacing the screen last weekend ... [and] it’s possible he forgot to relock the window when he finished” (p. 13) There are a few windows in the house which are all locked and neither has been touched in an attempt to break into the house. It seems the murderer already knew well which way to try. The husband is a literature student getting his Ph.D. in another city, Charlottesville. He stays the whole week there and only visits his home and wife on the weekends, “then goes back to Charlottesville on Sunday night” (Cornwell, 1990, p. 14). To their great surprise the crime has been committed on the night he returns home.

To arouse the feeling of surprise, the author does not follow a chronological order of events. This disorderly revelation of the events originates a sort of anxiety in the reader who is determined to get the whole account of the story. As Sternberg in “Telling in Time (II): Chronology, Teleology, Narrativity” asserts, “among narrative effects, surprise evidently lies on tension, because a sequence communicating the events in their proper occurrence would reveal all and so leave nothing unexpected” (1992, p. 519). Readers do not receive the primary event in the beginning and follow a kind of chaotic sequence of events which increase their bewilderment; yet, to make a clarification in their mind they need to reach the concluding chapters of the story which shall disclose what was kept from them. This is where “the surprise will occur when the reader reaches the moment where the missing information is revealed” (Albuquerque et al., 2011, p. 8). Indeed, the authors skillfully position the reader in a particular path where everything seems to be moving as it should be, whereas the final revealing section faces the unexpected and the surprise.

The biggest surprise comes with a residue found on the scenes of the crime on various parts of the victims' bodies. The detective will not solve the crime unless she discovers the nature of the strange substance since "the information omitted for surprise must allegedly be 'critical'" (Sternberg, 2003, p. 623). It becomes even odder as they recognize the growing amount of the residue following the crimes. The fourth victim seems to be entirely covered with it. Not only does the obscurity of the substance perplex them, but they are also worried about the possibility of another impending crime. Sternberg (2003) declares that "with a permanent gap, the discontinuity forced open remains unfilled, or too variously, improbably, unreliably filled: the questions unanswered, the possibilities unambiguated, the hypotheses multiple, however incompatibly" (p. 522).

The case becomes even more dazzling as they conduct a number of examinations to find out that the residue looks like the substance Doctor Scarpetta uses in the autopsy. They become suspicious of each other, which adds to the confusion of the case. Sternberg (2003) strongly suggests that "surprises born of misdirection, along with less drastic yet as pleasurable zigzags in hypothetical reconstruction, are at the heart of the detective story's own teleology of telling in time" (p. 555). Approaching the final parts of the novel, it becomes apparent that the glitter comes from a particular kind of soap to wash the hands. The detective is in absolute wonder at the outcome as she utters that "I desperately wanted to know the origin of the residue we'd been finding on the bodies. But I'd never, not in my wildest fantasies, hoped it would turn out to be something found in every bathroom inside my building" (Cornwell, 1990, p. 194).

Readers might be kept in a condition of puzzlement virtually to the end; yet, the pleasure received from this perplexity and consequently unfolding of the mystery is greater since "readers will enjoy narratives whose discourse organizations succeed in producing surprise and resolution" (Brewer & Lichtenstein, 1982, p. 15).

Eventually, after a long run, they recognize the murderer is someone working in the radio room, 911, who responds to people's panicked calls. It is the final surprise which reveals the murderer's true character. So, the readers are expected to be surprised when they reach "the point where the limited information is revealed, and that the surprise is resolved when the reader reinterprets the underlying event sequence in light of this new information" (Brewer & Lichtenstein, 1982, pp. 13-14).

According to the Structural-Affect Theory, suspense is the second significant discourse structure which adds to the pleasure of Detective Fiction. It is a state of uncertainty and anxiety intentionally created by the author to keep the reader in doubt. In this regard, Brewer and Lichtenstein (1982) state:

A suspense discourse organization must contain an initiating event or situation. An initiating event is an event which could lead to significant consequences (either good or bad) for one of the characters in the narrative. The event structure must also contain the outcome of the initiating event. In a suspense discourse organization, the initiating event occurs early in the discourse. The initiating event causes the reader to become concerned about the consequences for the relevant character and this produces suspense. (p. 14)

Readers are obstinate in their search for the truth which is held back from their observation; so, when the suspense appears “in the unfolding of the criminality, it has the ability to provoke an intellectual as well as an affective response, shaping our overall outlook of the crime” (Dutta-Flanders, 2017, p. 2). Suspense awakens intellectual antennas of the human mind to look for the required information. Detective Fiction not only provides the reader with forensic science which augments the reader’s general knowledge, but also paves the way for them to make calculations in the mind and reach a comprehensive understanding.

In his article, “The Paradox of Suspense,” Carroll (1996) defines suspense as “an emotional response to narrative fictions” (p. 151). Doctor Scarpetta, the main character of *Postmortem*, is the principle source of the readers’ attempt to discard suspense. He continues that suspense can “evolve in reaction to whole narratives, or in response to discrete scenes or sequences within a larger narrative whose overall structure may or may not be suspenseful” (p. 151). In fact, *Postmortem* is a fiction in absolute suspense. Not only the reader but also the main characters are in a dilemma to recognize the villain. Based on their own interpretations they construct hypotheses neither of which proves to be true. Doctor Scarpetta is the only one who holds onto extended range of possibilities in solving the crime. Moreover, it involves several minor sections of suspense which appeal to the reader.

Suspicious behavior of the fourth victim’s husband, data leak from Doctor Scarpetta’s office, and unreliability of Doctor Scarpetta’s boyfriend who is also a colleague accumulate suspense. The most exciting and horrifying instance occurs in the final chapter of the novel. Doctor Scarpetta is in her house doing the research when she eventually decides to take a rest. Even her dream adds to the intensity of suspense as she puts it into words:

A bird was circling lazily overhead as I rode in a van with someone I neither knew nor could see. Palm trees flowed by. Long-necked white egrets were sticking up like porcelain periscopes in the Everglades. The white heads turned as we passed. Watching us. Watching me.

Turning over, I tried to get more comfortable by resting on my back.

My father sat up in bed and watched me as I told him about my day at school. His face was ashen. His eyes didn’t blink and I couldn’t hear what I was saying to him. He didn’t respond but continued to stare. Fear was constricting my heart. His white face stared. The empty eyes stared.

He was dead.

‘Daddddyyyy!’ (pp. 321-322)

Proceeding with unfolding of the events in the novel, excitement increases since the “emotion of suspense takes as its object the moments leading up to the outcome about which we are uncertain” (Carroll, 1996, p. 152). In the case of Doctor Scarpetta, anxiety is mixed with horror and thrill. These are the concluding sections of the novel; thus, the readers are aware of the significance of the events which are to draw them out of darkness and shed light on the truth. Carroll declares:

Suspense is not a response to the outcome; it pertains to the moments leading up to the outcome, when the outcome is uncertain. Once the outcome is finalized and we are apprised of it, the emotion of suspense gives way to other emotions. Moreover, the emotion we feel in those moments leading up to the outcome is suspense whether the outcome, once known, is the one we favored or not. (p. 153)

The anxiety and suspense reach the climax when it comes to the safety of Doctor Scarpetta since with suspense “the question we are prompted to ask does not have an indefinite number of possible answers, but only two. Will the heroine be sawed in half or not?” (Carroll, 1996, p. 154). The tension is high; yet, “pleasurable flirtation with fear is at the center of the experience of exciting stories” (Mikos, 1996, p. 85). A significant reason for the reader’s involvement in the suspense might be their concern for the characters whom they admire. Brewer (1996) calls this particular feeling “character sympathy.” He believes that when “there is the potential for a significant outcome for a character, the reader must be concerned about the character in order for the reader to feel suspense for the character” (p. 228).

In addition to surprise and suspense, as discussed above, Brewer and Lichtenstein introduce curiosity, another factor in Structural-Affect Theory, which adds to the appeal of crime fiction. Curiosity is defined in dictionaries as a strong desire to know. Its application in the novel is described as:

In a curiosity discourse organization the significant event is omitted from the discourse, but (unlike surprise) the reader is given enough information to know that the event is missing. This discourse organization leads the reader to become curious about the withheld information. The curiosity is resolved by providing enough information in the later parts of the discourse for the reader to reconstruct the omitted significant event. (Brewer & Lichtenstein, 1982, p. 15)

Detective Fiction includes a riddle in its core. The criminal’s unidentified personality is the major problem which needs thorough examination and questioning to be solved. There can be found nothing emotionally pleasing in this genre; yet, the strangeness of the events and characters intensifies the reader’s interest and curiosity to delve into the text and bring the mystery into light. Edmund Burke believes that “the first and simple emotion which we discover in the human mind, is Curiosity” (Burke, 1823, p. 41).

Curiosity does not allow us to enjoy the composure as “we readers know that we do not know and proceed accordingly, looking back to the past for clues and forward to the future for rounded closure” (Sternberg, 1992, p. 515). Readers are blissfully aware of the missing information. The absence of some knowledge in order to do the puzzle is self-explanatory; hence, the reader is to seek for the necessary parts to have a panoramic view of the incident. Curiosity in the text “requires a discontinuity between the telling and the told” (p. 526). Obviously some events have happened earlier; yet, the story begins from the section that these significant occurrences are left in the earlier.



In the selected novel, *Postmortem*, the police and more importantly the detective are looking for clues which are pretty hard to recognize. In serial killings, there is usually a common feature among the victims that attracts the wicked. However, in this case, there are four murdered women who share no apparent characteristics. They lived in entirely different areas. They did not own similar complexions since three were white and one was black. Each had a different profession. It was even unlikely that “they shopped or dined out or did their banking or anything else in the same places” (Cornwell, 1990, p. 71). So, curiosity is intensified as they remain with no clues to follow. Leaving no trace behind stresses the high intelligence of the villain. Scarpetta believes that these types of people are anomalies:

Genetically, these individuals are fearless; they are people users and supreme manipulators. On the right side, they are terrific spies, war heroes, five-star generals, corporate billionaires and James Bonds. On the wrong side, they are strikingly evil: the Neros, the Hitlers, the Richard Specks, the Ted Bundys, antisocial but clinically sane people who commit atrocities for which they feel no remorse and assume no blame. (p. 78)

The intellect and smartness of the murderer augments the reader’s curiosity to follow the story eagerly. “The hidden discontinuities that arouse one reader’s curiosity—pulling his attention back to the narrative past and altering him to the textual future in the hope of closure—” (Sternberg, 1992, p. 532) succeed in creating pleasure. Although the gap created from the missing information perplexes the reader, it is strongly motivating to keep the reader on the alert for filling the gaps since “curiosity throws the reader forward into the opacity of opaqueness” (Dutta-Flanders, 2017, p. 151).

Curiosity results in appearance of a number of particular features. The first is “realized by retarded exposition” (Tan, 1996, p. 333). The omitted information is not presented immediately for the reader. It takes considerable time to reveal what was held back from the reader. Detective Fiction in which the identity of the criminal is of significant value is unfolded to the reader gradually. Indeed, time helps both the detective and the reader discover the real identity of the murderer. Hidden facts contribute to the bewilderment of the reader since “retardation of setting information also results in a lack of comprehension of motives and major plans, from which the complete plot unit structure is dependent” (Tan, 1996, p. 333). The unidentified substance which plays an important part in the novel impedes reader’s understanding of the events. Proceeding with the story, the examiners recognize the substance as being an “inorganic” stuff. A long-term examination discloses the residue “coming from something granular, a powdery substance of some sort” (Cornwell, 1990, p. 193). Nonetheless, they do not give up on investigation. Along these findings the reader’s curiosity is appeased slightly. Medical examination certifies the substance’s being “a cheap soap powder found in public restrooms all over the city” (p. 206). This finding actually does a great deal to help the police search for the right person by narrowing the scope of the investigation.

Critical events do not pave a smooth path for readers. For a few pages readers are given the opportunity to follow a particular incident; however, they are stopped somewhere to continue with another event. So, “apart from retarded exposition, interruption of suspense may alter the narrative procedure and promote curiosity” (Tan, 1996, p. 333). Doctor Scarpetta’s worries increase after the fourth victim is identified as a medical examiner like her. In most cases, she ponders on the matters and sometimes succeeds in finding answers in her solitude. The readers understand more about not only medical doctors’ abilities but also the tension of the situation. They are deeply drawn into the plot when, all of a sudden, Scarpetta’s thought is put into silence and the story moves to portray events from a totally different angle.

The advancement of technology has mollified the readers’ curiosity by representing absolute facts. Forensic science is known as “the application of science in the solving of mysteries and crime” (Kaye, 1995, p. 3). The major principle of a crime fiction is to identify the criminal. Therefore, every method which could be of even the slightest aid is greatly welcomed to reveal the truth. In addition to the traces left behind by the wrongdoer and eye witnesses, forensic science, an absolute reliable source, facilitates the detective’s job in acquiring the facts. It is a tool which becomes an appealing feature in crime fiction. What it does in real life to solve the ambiguous crimes is priceless:

Over the last 20 years considerable advancements have been made in forensic science as an investigative and intelligence tool for police officers in criminal cases. These advances have changed the way police services around the world have conducted criminal investigations from murder cases to computer crime. Advancements in the methods of identifying biological material (e.g. DNA profiling) found at crime scenes have, in particular and especially, increased the possibility of linking persons of interest to the scene as well as removing the innocent from ongoing investigation. (Julian et al., 2011, p. 218)

Detectives observe the crime scene meticulously, gather clues, possibly question a few suspects and then, based on their suppositions, determine the guilt of the criminal. The knowledge might appease readers but not on fundamental grounds; because, after all, it is merely the detective’s view that judges one guilty and the other innocent. What if the detective is wrong or the information the police gathered did not come from solid sources? Yet, forensic science is “an integral part of the criminal justice system through the application of science to the available physical evidence in order to reach just outcomes in relation to criminal incidents” (p. 223). Science is famous for its precision and infallibility. Without this tool, there are probabilities of accusing innocent people who have no proofs to adduce and discard the accusation.

Learning science via academic books might be a boring experience to many readers. Detective Fiction is capable of turning this uninteresting topic to a matter of great interest. Patricia Cornwell is exemplary in her application of this influential tool in most of her novels, particularly in *Postmortem*. The novel presents scientific jargon to the readers. It seems as though the fiction does the job of teaching. For instance, through a simple sentence readers learn about science when Doctor

Scarpetta in the middle of her speech mentions that a fingerprint “left on human skin can emit light and may be identified in cases where traditional powder and chemical methods will fail” (Cornwell, 1990, p. 23). A didactic book has almost never been attractive for the readers, whereas, learning through fiction is highly efficacious. Patricia Cornwell puts her years of knowledge studying and working in a medical institution into words in her novels. Readers are entertained and instructed in science.

### **Conclusion**

Human beings’ thirst for information and knowing more is a matter of discussion in this article. To elaborate on the significance of this topic, Structural-Affect Theory by William F. Brewer and Edward H. Lichtenstein is selected to support the above-mentioned hypotheses. According to them, what make Detective Fiction a popular genre are three main feelings—surprise, suspense, and curiosity—aroused by these stories. Surprise foregrounds sections of the novel and brings about information later in the following episodes of the book, information that was purposely omitted from the beginning in order to fill the reader with thrill. To create suspense, the author introduces an initiating event in the earlier sections of the novel which ignites concern in the reader to move forward. Readers interestingly follow the relevant pieces in order to get to the outcome which intends to satisfy their suspense by revealing the truth. Curiosity is a self-explanatory theme which pushes the reader to continue reading to gain the knowledge that is removed from the introductory section of the story. However, unlike surprise that keeps the reader unaware of the omitted information, curiosity makes the reader perk up the ears since the reader is utterly conscious of the missing parts. Following knowledge to get the hold of a definite answer is the principle concern of Detective Fiction. What helps human beings to find answers is worthy of attention. We are born to this world with no certain cause, always wondering on the essence of our creation. Multiple hypotheses are offered on this subject; yet, none has soothed us entirely, which is why we are constantly in need of a definite answer to all questions. The extent to which they please us is limitless.

### **References**

- Albuquerque, A. C., Pozzer C. T., & Ciaarlini A. E. M. (2011). The usage of the structural-affect theory of stories for narrative generation. SBC - Proceedings of SB Games, 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.1109/SBGAMES.2011.38>
- Bergman, K. (2009). Crime fiction as popular science. The case of Asa Nilsonne. NORLIT 2009: Codex and Code, Aesthetics, Language and Politics in an Age of Digital Media, 17(42), 193-207. <http://www.ep.liu.se/ecp/042/017/>
- Biederman, I., & Vessel, E. A. (2006). Perceptual pleasure and the brain. *American Scientist*, 94(3), 247-253. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27858773>
- W. F. (1996). The nature of narrative suspense and the problem of rereading. In P. Voreder (Ed.), *Suspense: Conceptualization, theoretical analyses, and empirical explorations* (pp. 213-251). Routledge.

- Brewer, W. F., & Lichtenstein, E. H. (1982). Stories are to entertain: A structural-affect theory of stories. Center for the Study of Reading: Technical Reports 265, 1-23. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0378-2166\(82\)90021-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/0378-2166(82)90021-2)
- Burke, E. (1823). *A philosophical enquiry into the origins of our ideas of the sublime and beautiful*. Pall-Mall Press.
- Carroll, N. (1996). The paradox of suspense. In P. Voreder (Ed.), *Suspense: Conceptualization, theoretical analyses, and empirical explorations* (pp. 147-188). Routledge.
- Cornwell, P. (1990). *Postmortem*. Scribner.
- Deleuze, G. (1994). Difference and repetition. (P. Patton, Trans.). Continuum.
- Dutta-Flanders, R. (2017). *The language of suspense in crime fiction: A linguistic stylistic approach*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Eco, U. (1983). Postscript to the name of the rose (W. Weaver. Trans.; 1<sup>st</sup> ed.). Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Feole, G. L., & Lasseter, D. (2005). *The complete Patricia Cornwell companion*. Berkley Publishing Group.
- Graesser A. C., & Klettke, B. (2001). Agency, plot, and a structural affect theory of literary story comprehension. In D. Schram & G. Steen (Eds.), *The psychology and sociology of literature: In honor of Elrud Ibsch* (pp. 57-69). John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Hoffman, J. (2013). Philosophies of crime fiction. (C. Kelly, N. Majid, & J. R. Abreu, Trans.) In S. Mair (Ed.), No Exit Press.
- Julian, R. D., Kelty, S. F., Roux, C., Woodman, P., Robertson, J., Davey, A., Hayes, R., Margot, P., Ross, A., Sibly, H., & White, R. (2011). What is the value of forensic science? An overview of the effectiveness of the forensic science in the Australian criminal justice system project. *Australian Journal of Forensic Sciences*, 43(4), 217-229. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00450618.2011.610820>
- Kaye, B. H. (1995). *Science and the detective: Selected readings in forensic science*. VCH.
- Mikos, L. (1996). The experience of suspense: Between fear and pleasure. In P. Voreder (Ed.), *Suspense: Conceptualization, theoretical analyses, and empirical explorations* (pp. 84-108). Routledge.
- Phillips, B. (2016). Crime fiction: A global phenomenon. *Journal of Literature and Librarianship*, 5(1), 5-15. <https://doi.org/10.22492/ijl.5.1.01>
- Reyes-Torres, A. (2011). A pedagogical approach to detective fiction. *International Education Studies*, 4(5), 33-38. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/ies.v4n5p33>
- Sayers, D. L. (1936). Aristotle on detective fiction. *English*, 1(1), 23-35. <https://doi.org/10.1093/english/1.1.23>

- Sternberg, M. (1992). Telling in time (II): Chronology, teleology, narrativity. *Poetics Today*, 13(3), 463-541. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1772872>.
- Sternberg, M. (2003). Universals of narrative and their cognitive fortunes (II). *Poetics Today*, 24(3), 517-638. <https://www.muse.jhu.edu/article/51535>.
- Tan, E. (1996). Suspense, predicative inference, and emotion in film viewing. In P. Voreder (Ed.), *Suspense: Conceptualization, theoretical analyses, and empirical explorations* (pp. 290-352). Routledge.
- Turnbull, S. (1993). Bodies of knowledge, pleasure and anxiety in the detective fiction of Patricia Cornwell. *Australian Journal of Law and Society*, 9, 19-42. <https://search.informit.org/doi/10.3316/IELAPA.81114268184>
- Zizek, S. (1991). *Looking away: An introduction to Jacque Lacan through popular culture*. Mitt Press.

### Author's Biography

---



**Mehri Nourmohamad Nezhad Baghayi** has received both B.A. and M. A. degrees from Azarbaijan Shahid Madani University. She is an English instructor and has been teaching for over 10 years. Her interests include Criminology, Epistemology, and Detective Fiction.



**Abolfazl Ramazani** is an Assistant Professor of English in the Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Literature and Humanities, Azarbaijan Shahid Madani University, Tabriz, Iran, where he teaches various English Literature courses. He has presented articles on English and related Literature at several national and international conferences. He has published some articles on English Language and Literature, Persian Literature, and Comparative Literature in national and international journals. His main areas of research include Romanticism(s) and Comparative Literature (comparative study of topics in Romanticism(s) (British and Iranian)).



**Sara Saei Dibavar** is an Assistant Professor of English Literature at University of Mazandaran, Iran. Her interests include Literary Theory, Cultural Studies, and Modern/Postmodern Fiction. Her most recent contributions are “Dr(e)amatic encounters: The role of embedded narratives in J.M. Coetzee’s *Waiting for the Barbarians*,” in *English Text Construction*, July 2020, and “The Metaphorical Stage of J. M. Coetzee’s *Waiting for the Barbarians*,” in *Research in African Literatures*, January 2020.





## Hybridity, Mimicry, and Uncanny: Postcolonial Character in Bharati Mukherjee's *The Bride Tree*

Masoumeh Baei<sup>1</sup>, Behzad Pourgharib<sup>2,\*</sup>, and Abdolbaghi Rezaei Talarposhti<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*M.A in English Language and Literature, Golestan University, Gorgan, Iran  
Email: masoumebaee@yahoo.com*

<sup>2</sup>*Corresponding author: Assistant Professor of English Literature, Department of  
English Language and Literature, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences,  
Golestan University, Gorgan, Iran, ORCID: 0000-0002-6162-7312  
Email: b.pourgharib@gu.ac.ir; pourgharib\_lit@yahoo.com*

<sup>3</sup>*Assistant Professor of English Literature, Department of English Language and  
Literature, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Golestan University,  
Gorgan, Iran, ORCID: 0000-0002-6380-4845  
Email: a\_rezaei\_t@yahoo.com*

### Abstract

The endeavor to establish reconciliation between the opposing demands of two cultural communities lies at the heart of some literary works associated with postcolonial literature. This theme, which is also central to the novels of Bharati Mukherjee, especially *The Tree Bride*, forms the plot of the novel and serves as an axis around which the characters are developed. The present article adopts the theories of Homi. K. Bhabha to expound upon the gap that distances the oriental and the occidental cultures from one another and renders fragmented the identity of the postcolonial individual. Bhabha's notions of the uncanny and the hybrid identity are two central concepts that can serve as keys to explaining the postcolonial encounter. They can significantly contribute to the discussion of the novel as they can prepare the ground for the investigation of how anti-colonial resistance becomes possible through the third space that is created through hybridity and the uncanny. In *The Tree Bride*, the protagonist finds herself between two cultures that attempt to draw her into their own orbits. The protagonist's mimicry of the target culture is an ironic one, since it consists of acceptance and rejection at the same time. In other words, while Tara Chatterjee mimics the norms and criteria of the target culture toward which she strives, she is influenced by her ancestral culture. The paper argues that such uncanny condition can be detrimental to the individual and plunge her into a deep identity crisis.

*Keywords:* Bharati Mukherjee, *The Tree Bride*, mimicry, hybridity, uncanny

### ARTICLE INFO

Research Article

Received: Monday, April, 26, 2021

Accepted: Friday, April 15, 2022

Published: Sunday, May 1, 2022

Available Online: Friday, April 15, 2022

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.22049/jalda.2022.27229.1305>

Online ISSN: 2821-0204; Print ISSN: 2820-8986



© The Author(s)

## **Introduction**

Bharati Mukherjee is a leading novelist who is associated with what is called the Asian-American immigrant novel. Kain (1993) argues that “the dominant theme for which Mukherjee has become known is the coexisting pain and exhilaration involved in the ‘refashioning of the self’ central to the experience of Asian characters (women, ordinarily) who have emigrated to North America” (p. 151). Drake slams the idea that Mukherjee sought to promote American multi-culture, arguing instead that the Indian-American writer “fabulizes America, Hinduizes assimilation, and represents the real pleasures and violence’s of cultural exchange” (1999, p. 61). In this regard, Mukherjee opines that one of the essential elements in her fiction is its transnational aspect:

I think the most important compelling force in my fiction has been being transnational: the experience of having started out incredibly solidly rooted in a traditional culture, then having found myself deracinated from that culture, and gradually becoming re-rooted in an alien. (Interview with Lavigilante, 2014, p. 179)

The very emphasis on transnationalism reminds one of the questions of hybridity and the function it has in resistance to colonialism.

Because of the dominance of transnationalism in Mukherjee’s thought and literary productions, the present paper seeks to apply Bhabha’s theory of hybridity to Mukherjee’s novel *The Tree Bride* in a bid to investigate how and to what extent the concepts of mimicry, hybridity, and uncanny play a role in the formation of the characters. As the primary focus of Bhabha’s theory is on the opportunity for resistance that hybridity and his other postcolonial notions provide, the present paper tries significantly to answer the questions what opportunities hybridity and the uncanny provide for the protagonist of Mukherjee’s novel and how the novel as a cultural product creates alternative discourses with the aim of de-centering the centrality of the colonial discourse and history.

### **Bhabha, Hybridity, and Uncanny**

“Postcolonial studies” today continues to study the formation of colonies and empires in history. As a result, racial power relations, subjectivity, identity, the role of the nation-state in determining one’s identity, cultural imperialism and resistance remain central to postcolonial studies in academia. Post-colonial theory came into being when “once colonized peoples had cause to reflect on and express the tension that ensued from ... this powerful admixture of imperial language and local experience” (Ashcroft et al., 2007, p. 1). Postcolonialism is a very significant and strategic branch of literary criticism and the growing number of articles and books published on this topic reflects the attention it has attracted in the previous years.

Postcolonial scholarship has been an academic tool to defy the “traditional model of empire where Europe represented the centre and the colony, the margins” (Nayar, 2015, p. 28). Like most approaches in the realm of literary criticism, postcolonialism encompasses divergent concepts and theories for analyzing the encounter, or sometimes the conflict, between the colonizer and the colonized as the



representatives of two cultural communities. The present article takes as its theoretical framework some of the major ideas developed by Homi Bhabha.

One of the most widely used and most conflicting terms in postcolonial theory is hybridity. The term “commonly refers to the creation of new transcultural forms within the contact zone produced by colonization” (Ashcroft et al., 2007, p. 8). Not only is the term challenging by itself, it also challenged many of the assumptions which offer a pure and authentic nature for postcolonial concepts. As Bhabha argues, hybridity displays “necessary deformation and displacement of all sites of discrimination and domination” (1995, p. 31). In postcolonial studies, hybridity refers to the mixing of races and cultures so that new forms of culture are produced. Back in the 19th century, hybridity was a condition that scared the Europeans. The colonials therefore advertised against miscegenation – an alternative name for hybridity – because they saw the conflation of races as a threat to their superior race. In other words, hybridity occurs when colonial invaders aim at dispossessing indigenous peoples and force them to take in new social patterns. These patterns usually derive from the colonizer’s cultural, social, linguistic, and discursive forces and grounds. Thus, these fields intermingle to generate what Bhabha calls the “assimilation of contraries” (Ashcroft et al., 2007, p. 3).

By doing so, the colonial power preserves its purity and at the same time, alienates the local people from their cultural and historical heritage. As a result, this postcolonial concept is associated with “the revaluation of the assumption of colonial identity through the repetition of discriminatory identity effects” (Bhabha, 1995, p. 34).

Homi Bhabha is credited as the critic who has elaborated on the concept of hybridity and turned it into a key part of the postcolonial studies. Innes contends that “drawing on psychoanalytical theory with particular reference to Sigmund Freud and Lacan, Bhabha has elaborated the key concepts of mimicry and hybridity” (2007, p. 12). Bhabha’s analysis of the relations between the colonizer and the colonized “stresses their interdependence and the mutual construction of their subjectivities” (2007, p. 108). The last decade of the 20th century “saw the rise in popularity of concepts of fusion, hybridity and syncretism as explanatory tools for the analysis of cultural formation” (Chrisman, 2003, p. 73). It is in this context that pays due attention to the role of colonialism in cultural formation that

the bulk of work since the late 1990s can be subsumed under the label of cultural history. The paradigm shift of the discipline as a whole thus translated, in the field of colonialism, into an interest in issues of hybridity, memory and representation. (Poddar et al., 2008, p. 239)

These concepts highlight the role of postcolonialism in and contribution to cultural elements.

Whether this mutual construction is in favor of the colonizer or the colonized is not unanimously decided. In other words, that the silent repression of the indigenous people as the result of the colonial command is the product of hybridization is open to contention. But the creation of the third space, another term

by which Bhabha is known, paves the way for the production of resisting discourses. Tariq Jazeel states that “rather than just the binaries between ‘us’ and ‘them’, self and other, postcolonialism has brought into focus a myriad of interconnected spatialities and subjectivities produced through the joined-up spaces and ideologies that were empire’s stock-in-trade” (Jazeel, 2012, p. 60). However, most postcolonial scholars agree that defining hybridity as an innocuous cross-cultural exchange between cultures and societies is, in fact, the neglecting of the inequality of power relations to which it refers. Such inequality is so conspicuous in the relation between the colonizer and the colonized that it is almost impossible to regard it as common social and cultural exchange. The mere intention of the colonizer to invade a territory disturbs this balance and equality. Discarding the neutral use of hybridity, Young states that the term is deeply rooted in the racist assumptions, maintaining that it “became, particularly at the turn of the century, part of a colonialist discourse of racism” (Ashcroft et al., 2007, p. 110).

The other concept which forms the theoretical framework of this study is the uncanny. As theorized by the Austrian Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), the uncanny deals with

the human “sense” of house and home. It is a perception of a space where the perceiver finds herself simultaneously “at home” and “not at home.” The uncanny is the name of this experience of double perception of any space which is at once familiar and strange, safe and threatening, “mine” and “not mine”. (Nayar, 2010, p. 89)

Homi Bhabha was one of the first literary critics who moved the uncanny out of the pure psycho-sexual realm. In Bhabha’s worldly definition of the term, the “sight of a particular place or event invokes uncanny dread because the perceiver hesitates to classify, define and identify the ambiguity in the place or event” (Nayar, 2010, p. 89).

### **Mukherjee and the Postcolonial Novel**

Mukherjee’s account of personal life which led to her “awareness of different cultures” (Carchidi, 1995, p. 92) is significant in our discussion of hybrid identity in her novel. Srivastava (2018) contends that in this novel Mukherjee “focuses on the global identity that the Indian woman is fast acquiring” (p. 59)<sup>1</sup>. What appears in the novel can be taken as the reflection of the novelist’s multicultural life. Mukherjee was born to an upper-class family in India but later in her life settled in the United States. It can therefore be said she, similar to her protagonists, is an individual between cultures. The fact that her family constantly used to return to India every summer indicates that upholding traditions meant a lot for the Mukherjees. And the high status she earned in the western community (as a university professor) well depicts that she was on good terms with the environment of the colonized. Such a person can be called a hybrid identity as she had access to both cultures equally and appeared as a successful member of both. She informs us that her novels “seem to grow out of a personal energy, an energy unleashed by a combination of traumatizing and inspiring experiences and histories I have lived through” (Interview with Lavigilante, 2014, p. 179). This multicultural, hybrid situation helps

the author develop an awareness of the opposing discourses and the way the rejection of the dominant, linear colonial discourse can be achieved.

For a person who kept oscillating between cultures and “faced racist attacks and discrimination” (Sharma & Gupta, 2014, p. 2)<sup>2</sup>, the process of identity formation was thwarted and, in some cases, postponed endlessly. This dualistic feeling of being lost between different homes, as we will see with respect to *The Tree Bride*, does not necessarily suggest hostility toward either of them. It can create the uncertainty for the colonial discourse and pave the way for a resisting discourse, the situation that Bhabha terms third space. The colonized subject can be received well by the cultures that surround her, as was the case with Bharati Mukherjee. Nevertheless, the plurality of the axes around which her life was defined resulted in fragmentation, a state that can help colonial negotiation appear. During an interview, Mukherjee discussed the importance of violence in the transformation of character, both in her own life and in the lives of her characters:

I can see that in my own life it's been psychic violence. In my character Jasmine's case it's been physical violence because she's from a poor farming family. Plus terrorism is a virus of the 80s, so there is the initial violence of the village, where her husband dies in a fire bombing. (Connell et al., 1990, p. 8)

Violence is a turning point in the life of a marginal figure clinging on to a culture and environment. As Mukherjee asserts, this violence does not have to be a physical one, but can be any force that has the power to make the individual see to what extent she has been pushed to the edges. “Psychic violence” is the uncanny which will be discussed in the following. The “physical violence” that serves as a trigger in Mukherjee's novels results in “unrest” in the life of the colonized individual and throws into confusion the order and peace of her life. On the one hand, there is this violence (with its manifold aspects) that renders the life of the marginalized, colonized figure insecure and disordered. On the other hand, there are numerous other experiences that constantly remind the subject of her position. Mukherjee's account of her school days is suggestive:

During the schooldays we were taught to devalue – I was going to say sneer at, but that's putting it a little too strongly – Bengali plays, Bengali literature, Bengali music, Bengali anything. And then we went home – I came from a very orthodox, very traditional family – so we had to negotiate in both languages. But, as I'm sure happens with minority children who are being channeled into fancy prep schools and all, it created complications within the Hindi community, within the Indian upper-class community of my generation. (Connell et al., 1990, p. 9)

Mukherjee's experience as a school student shows the contrast between the two communities she experienced during her life-time. She was asked to devalue her background and traditional beliefs. Such a contrast between personal values and environmental demands is precisely what marks a central conflict that Mukherjee's characters encounter. The fact that she was always forced to negotiate in two languages is another factor that contributes to this inner fragmentation. Unlike the

colonizer, the colonized *has to* interpret the world twice, each time through a new language system that suggests different sets of values. This double-ness cannot help but be resolved in favor of one part of the binary opposition sooner or later. It is often either the more powerful culture, or the more readily accessible one, that manages to exert influence and control over the individual and marginalize the other culture. As for Mukherjee, and her protagonist, the British culture is both more powerful and more easily accessible. The only reason Mukherjee decided to learn Indian culture and language was her need for a university degree.

Regarding the stylistic changes during her writing career, Mukherjee pointed to the role of her nationalities in shaping her style: “My style has changed because I am becoming more Americanized with each passing year. American fiction has a kind of energy that fiction from other cultures seems to lack right now” (Carb, 1988, p. 649). Elsewhere, however, she explicitly underlined that “as an immigrant I don’t have models here in America” (Interview with Desai & Barnstone, 1998, p. 136). The two opposing comments reveal both the advantages and disadvantages of hybridity. The novelist, however, proves to be smart enough to appropriate the hybridity in question to her own advantage.

Both generic and the stylistic transformations that appear in Mukherjee’s writing are highly influenced by her changing national affiliations. She found a more exuberant style when she identified herself with the American fiction, while the omniscient irony of her former fiction was influenced by the British literature. The trilogy that includes *Desirable Daughters*, *The Tree Bride*, and *Miss New India* – with which her writing career came to an end – is the result of a hybrid of British, American, and Indian identities Mukherjee experienced during the different phases of her career.

### **From Mimicry to Hybrid Identity**

*The Tree Bride* deals with the story of Tara Chatterjee, the Tree Bride. The five-year-old Tara is widowed and frowned upon by the society when her teenage fiancé is killed by a snake bite. As Tara is considered the reason for her fiancé’s death, she is forced by her father “to tie a knot with the tree to avoid further deliberations” (Mukherjee, 2004, p. 34). This story shares affinities with the life of the narrator who is also called Tara. The “modern rootless” (2014, p. 34) Tara Chatterjee, however, comes from a rich family. She immigrates to the United States after marrying Bishwapriya Chatterjee. Unable to adapt to the American community, she divorced her husband and travels back to India for a lost identity. The event that triggers her quest for “root-search” (Babu & Kumar, 2013, p. 41)<sup>3</sup> in the novel is an act of violence: a bombing that awakens within Tara a feeling of insecurity inside the cultural aura of the United States. This means her marginalization is not a political or social one; rather, she has to endure mental and psychic subalternity. It is this very subaltern position that leads the protagonist toward assuming a hybrid identity, the one that makes her think about the discourses that have long formed her consciousness, leading to the appearance of negotiation about colonial discourse.

*The Tree Bride* begins with a short excerpt from *Mahabharata* that is central to our understanding of the entire plot and characterization of the novel: “All kings

must see hell at least once. Hence you have for a little while been subjected to this great sorrow” (Mukherjee, 2018, p. 1). The hell which is mentioned here is a metaphor for the otherness that fragments the colonized individual. Whether she is a westernized Indian subject who has suppressed her eastern identity or vice versa, the protagonist can only have access to heaven by facing this other hellish half. The whole novel is an account of the suppressed aspects of Tara Chatterjee’s identity. She is a respected American citizen who is forced to cast another glance at her past life and at the culture from which she has departed. Therefore, she is situated between two cultures and is in a liminal situation.

The beginning of the novel is characterized by the liminal situation of giving birth:

Bish and I were standing on the back porch of my house in Upper Haight on a warm, November, California night. My daughter must have been the size of a half-corpuscle. I wouldn’t even know of her existence for another two months. (Mukherjee, 2004, p. 3)

The novel opens with birth (or the prospect of giving birth) and ends with death. Therefore, the whole novel can serve as the chronicle of life as experienced by a colonized eastern-western individual. The life of the infant during pregnancy is an in-between life. Similar to the colonized subject living in a colonizing civilization, the infant exists in a neither-nor situation. It is neither alive nor dead. The colonized subject here is also neither eastern, nor western, but occupies an in-between hybrid condition and is closely similar to the soul the wanders between worlds:

When I was a very small child back in Kolkata, my paternal great-grandmother told me a very strange, very moving story about life-before-birth. Call it the Hindu version of the stork legend. Between incarnations, she said, the individual soul wanders in a dreamless state, like a seed between plantings [...] the bodies it has previously inhabited have perished, but the soul persists. Fire cannot burn it, nor does water drown it. It dreams of its past tenancies. It remembers the terrors and triumphs of its many lives on earth and links them together with the logic of dreams. (Connell et al., 1990, p. 4)

If we take the soul to be a metaphor of the hybrid, colonial subject, “the bodies” that were formerly occupied by it are equal to the historical, social, and cultural background from which it has been detached. The soul “wanders” rather than settles in a specific, fixed spot. This indicates the confused, lost situation of the subaltern living in a western world. The past to this in-between creature is neither all terror nor a complete triumph. That is precisely why it can never completely break with the past and assume a completely new form. Similarly, Tara, who is forced by the violence of the explosion to reconsider her past, cannot completely dispense with it and move on.

Tara is a westernized Indian from a traditional family who is tempted by the lure of the western civilization. Tara’s description of her husband, Bish, certifies to this claim:

When we were married, Bish stood six feet tall and walked with a manly stiffness my sisters called Calcutta cowboy and I called Clint Eastwood. An imaginary saddle creaked whenever he walked. Now I stand behind him and look down on his thinning hair, at the gray roots he can't dye out. (Mukherjee, 2004, p. 14)

Bish's tallness makes him look particularly western, similar to a "cowboy ... Clint Eastwood," which can be synonymous with the whole western civilization. His posture reminds Tara of western cowboys whose images were promoted through Hollywood movies. Therefore, he resembles one of the most prominent emblems of western civilization.

Bish has been able to mimic the image of the perfect western man (a cowboy) so well that "an imaginary saddle" creaks whenever he walks. He had been able to fashion a hybrid identity for himself before the bombing incident deprived him of his mimicking power. At this point, this superficial appearance is pitted against Bish's situation and "thinning hair" which cannot be dyed. This second image of Bish gives him a specifically eastern, Indian appearance that makes him undesirable to Tara, who goes on to remember other things about her husband:

He had been a good off-spin bowler on his college cricket team and he played – used to play, that is – killer tennis with anyone who'd learned his game on private courts in tropical clubs. When America started looking for unthreatening, non-European success stories, there was always the "Atherton Communications Guru," "the Swami of Stanford," Bish Chatterjee. (Mukherjee, 2004, p. 15)

Bish's mimicry was so precise that he could serve as an example of the "European success" story or the American dream whenever the story was needed. The incident of the bombing that shattered Bish's, and Tara's, hybrid identity, makes Tara realize that she has lost touch with half of her identity. She looks back on her past and sees that a whole world (which she sometimes remembers as an uncanny world) has been suppressed unconsciously so that she can mimic her new environment more readily:

I felt for the first time how recent my family's Calcutta identity was, just two generations, how shallow those urban roots were, not much deeper than Rabi's in California. I saw my life on a broad spectrum, with Calcutta not at the center, but just another station on the dial. (Mukherjee, 2004, p. 20)

Reflecting on her past, Tara realizes that her Indian identity is much closer to her than she might have imagined before. Having realized this, she understands the superficiality of her mimicry and her newly developed urban, hybrid identity. Tara realizes that pretending to be what she is not cannot be the solution as she can never just erase the past that has shaped her. When her physician reminds her of professor Khanna, she surprisingly exclaims "how stupid of me, it sometimes seems so long ago" (Mukherjee, 2004, p. 22). She claims that her forgetfulness is due to stupidity, but this is not the case. She has unconsciously suppressed anything related to her Indian heritage in her mind in a bid to better fashion a new identity.

Elsewhere in the novel, Tara stresses that Calcutta is not “the center” but one “station” (Mukherjee, 2004, p. 28) that must be visited. She does not see her past in Indian culture as a destination to which she must return; rather, she views it as one among many points in time and space that have worked hand in hand to turn her into what she is. As Bish says, and as Tara begins to discover for herself, “nothing in the universe is ever lost” (2004, p. 36).

When Tara begins to realize the significance of her background in India and the centrality of Indian history and culture to her present situation, she begins to see to what extent she has changed. She admits that she knowingly adopted western ways of life in order to mimic western individuals, fashion a hybrid identity, and distance herself more and more from her past:

I come from a highly religious, orthodox Hindu Brahmin family, but to know me in California, you'd never guess. My sisters and I received a typical upper-middle-class Calcutta convent-school English-language education, but we were not of that cultural persuasion. We left school and returned to a world of tales, prayers, and a shadow universe of myth and legend. Our family, whatever its outward signs of Westernization (and they were plentiful), had never joined forces with the truly Westernized, progressive traditions of nineteenth-century Bengal [...] our family, beginning with Jai Krishna Gangooly, father of the tree bride, became anti-secular, and the traditions of piety remain. (Mukherjee, 2004, p. 43)

In the above paragraph, the narrator wavers between eastern tradition and western progress several times. The very fact that she reconsiders the past and present, leads to a space in which the character can objectively consider and discuss the discourses that have long created her personality. First of all, she acknowledges that she comes from a traditional and religious family. Then, she asserts that she has changed and adapted herself to a western lifestyle so much that one cannot recognize her from other Americans. Then, she changes her stance and states that she and her sisters received an English education. However, they did not like it and escaped to the world of Indian tradition that brimmed with tales and legends of the lore. Her family has numerous signs of Westernization that turn it into a progressive, westernized community. Yet, it has never been so westernized as to completely dispense with its pious Indian traditions. Tara concludes by distinguishing between “the truly Westernized,” and her own “anti-secular” family. One can see that Tara’s existence only occurs through in-between spaces and moments, not within extremes.

As Tara delves deeper and deeper into her past, she begins to realize that the epistemic violence inflicted upon her has prevented her from both having a voice (speaking as a subaltern) and knowing the truth. Therefore, she leans more and more toward her Indian heritage. In a part of the narrative when she revises the history of her original country and recapitulates the stories they were told, Tara asserts that the British and not Muslims were responsible for their relocation. The protagonist, then, argues that “it is easy for an English-educated, middle-class Indian (or Pakistani or Bangladeshi) to fall in line with colonial prejudice” (Mukherjee, 2004, p. 44). Formerly, she was the product of slavish imitation of the colonizers. But now she

begins to mimic them more and more and to fashion a more hybrid identity that transcends the lies and fabrications of “colonial prejudice”. Although her western upbringing has taught her to be inclined toward the future, she chooses, from this point on, to focus her attention on the past: “When Victorians dreamed, they dreamed of the future. I dream of the past” (2004, p. 51).

Mukherjee’s protagonist, then, offers a series of nostalgic, dreamy, romanticized image of India in the past. Her intention, however, is not to fall into the trap of nostalgic mourning and self-indulgence. She aims to show the reader how the British saw India in those days. Her hybrid identity prevents her from eulogizing the land that has limiting traditions:

I was a nineteen-year-old girl from a good Calcutta family, which meant I’d never been on intimate terms with any hidden part of my body. One day a virgin who’d never even looked in the mirror, three months later, vomiting twenty times a day. (Mukherjee, 2004, p. 155)

The prudish tendencies of the traditional culture of “a good Calcutta family” (as Tara ironically tells the audience) prevents her from knowing her very own body. To read a little more between the lines, the bounds and limitations of the tradition deprive her of any self-knowledge and keep her ignorant. Her ignorance is only shattered later through some sort of violence that tears her away from traditional illusions and shows her the reality about life and womanhood.

Having thus highlighted the positive aspects of the progressive, western culture that offers her self-knowledge, she turns to the process of mimicry adopted by most colonized subjects in an attempt to become English. She stresses the fact that mere imitation falls short of bestowing upon the individual an air of genuine Englishness.

English-speaking peoples: There’s a jab there. Welsh and Irish and Australians and Americans are all fundamentally English. *There a huge difference between speaking it and actually being it.* Jamaicans, Trinidadians, and the bloody Bengalis mimic a decent English, even Chinese out of Singapore and Hong Kong can do a fair job of copying a standard accent, if only to use our language against us, like bloody Naseer Ahmed of the Honours List. There were quite a number of things he might have done differently, had he occupied Churchill’s position, but the faults, like the differences between them, were small and of little consequence. (Mukherjee, 2004, pp. 199-200; italics added)

The long list of different nationalities who strive to become more and more English can do their best. But no matter how hard they try, they cannot turn into full-on English subjects, because “there is a huge difference between speaking it and actually being it.” The best that such an individual can do is to fashion a hybrid identity that has traces of both the native culture and the target culture and does not attempt to control or tame any of them. The hybrid identity is not the result of siding with either of the two extremes blindly. Rather, it is the product of accepting the double-ness and the fragmentation of one’s identity. The hybrid identity collects the



positive aspects of both cultures and turns into a combination of the two minus their shortcomings. The narrator seems to have arrived at the same solution when, at the end of the novel, she offers us the perfect hybrid character through Rabi.

At the end of the novel, we get a hint of the peaceful coexistence of tradition and the modern way of living through reading about how Rabi takes part in a tradition about which he might know very little. When the priest asks “who will touch flaming torch to skill?” Rabi knows that he is the only one that is allowed by tradition to do the rite. Therefore, “Rabi hands me his video-cam. It is his duty as the only living male blood relative present, the tree bride being a mother’s side connection” (Mukherjee, 2004, p. 292). By participating in the traditional rite, he has acknowledged, silently, that both the western culture in which he is brought up, and the Indian culture that serves as his original background, are equally valid and worthy of taking notice.

### **The Uncanny Condition**

As mentioned earlier, in Home Bhabha’s version of the uncanny, a particular place or event may evoke fear in the perceiver, because they are not able to identify or categorize the vagueness in that location or incident. It can thus be another situation that paves the way for reconsideration of and resistance to the linearity and hegemony of colonial discourse. The uncanny is most fittingly shown at the beginning of the novel through the big explosion that disrupts the peace and stasis: “And that’s all I remember, until I found myself in the backyard under a shower of glowing splinters and balls of flaming tar that had been my home. My hair was singed off, my face and arms pitted by embers” (Mukherjee, 2004, pp. 3-4). The scene illustrates the uncanny as it is “the coming together of strangeness and intimacy, the disturbing overlaps between terror and comfort” (Johnson, 2010, p. 215).

This chaotic condition represents all that Tara has sought to suppress through years. As Mukherjee said above, psychic as well as physical violence has the capability to disrupt the façade that divides cultures and creates boundaries. The veil of forgetfulness that covers the past is shattered through this explosion. Further on into the novel, we encounter a Tara who is beginning to realize how much she has suppressed and left behind. Answering the physician who asks her whether she believes in destiny or not she thinks to herself “who doesn’t in my family? Some cultural habits never die” (Mukherjee, 2004, p. 11). The word “die” here, is highly significant. It shows some sort of expectation for the death of cultural habits, or even willing attempts at killing it. Tara remembers, perhaps a little guiltily, that some of her cultural habits have not yet perished despite her attempts at killing them.

This awakening is not limited to Tara. Bish, too, is awakened by the violent bombing incident and is made aware of the past that he had attempted to render invisible. He sees the series of disastrous events as signs that intend to open his eyes to the illusory nature of the world. To be more precise, the physical and actual violence of the bombing has removed the epistemic violence that made Tara, Bish and several other colonized minds to the truth behind their colonization:

For Bish, the divorce, the bombing, the handicap, had all been signs. We come from a long line of amateur yogis and sadhus. He who had walked with statesmen, movie stars, and corporate gods, and soared above the world, now shuffled along its surface, pushed by his wife. Instant communication, possessions, wealth, were Maya, he said, illusions. (Mukherjee, 2004, p. 18)

The uncanny is that which has been suppressed, but has managed to resurface and work its way through to Bish's consciousness. It is only through this violent incident that the mind can be directed toward the past.

The uncanny is not limited merely to the personal experiences of Bish and Tara. Tara casts a critical glance upon the colonizing British and castigates them for the crimes they committed in India by reconsidering and re-interpreting past history. The narrator's highly ironic tone is of note here: "Then came the time when a serious-minded bureaucrat said, 'All right, enough with the silks and spices – where do you keep the gold?'" (Mukherjee, 2004, p. 48). The trade, represented through "silks and spices" is only a pretext for the bureaucrat to have access to gold and financial gain. And his pretentious interest in native traditions (gods you worship) is replaced by better gods of the capitalist: money and profit. All the pages of history are reduced, through this revisionary attitude, to the struggles of the western man to make more profits. Thus, the novel does present an uncanny condition where "the signs and norms of the colonizer's culture arrive belatedly and repeat at a spatiotemporal remove" (Gopal, 2015, p. 198).

The western man, too, cannot escape the critical eye of the hybrid subject that has been re-opened through violence:

I can imagine the sort of men they were, outcasts of the British Isles. Second and third sons cut off from inheritance. Cornish seafarers, Manxmen, Scotch, Welsh and Irish, theirs were the names on charge sheets; the escapees from debtors' prison, the common criminals and mutineers. Others had absconded from contracts of indentured or other binding agreements. (Mukherjee, 2004, p. 55)

The gentlemen that rode horses in Hellenic landscapes have turned, here, to escapes, debtors, prisoners, criminals and mutineers who communicate with other Europeans through eastern men as proxies out of the fear that they might be caught and deported back to their own countries. The pages of history abound with chaotic incidents that have been curtailed, refashioned, and embroidered to appear like comprehensible, linear accounts of the battle between the good and the bad. Tara's re-reading of history, however, shows that this simplistic outlook upon history cannot be trusted.

### **Conclusion**

The investigation of the hybrid and uncanny identity in the characterization of Tara Chatterjee in the present paper reveals that there are remarkable affinities between Mukherjee's personal experiences as an Indian-American person and Tara's story. Tara's hybrid identity hinders her sense of belonging to both her Indian and American cultural communities. In other words, this results in some sort of double

banishment, being in a place and being out of a place simultaneously. The hybrid situation in which the protagonist is involved paves the way for colonial negotiation. It creates a third space which enables the character to decide on her position in the conflicting discourses, embracing one while resisting the other. Along the way, the protagonist assumes a judging stance, revisiting the past and the present with the consideration of what the British colonial discourse has done to the native values. The hybridity that happens in *The Tree Bride* is thus an opportunity for reconsideration, estrangement, resistance, and change, the very objective and mission that Bhabha assumes for the notion.

An investigation of the novel in terms of the uncanny with a focus on the way confusion causes the state of being at home and out of home at the same time reveals that Mukherjee's novel does depict and seek to find a remedy for such bewilderment in the life of the protagonist who has lost her sense of belonging to a particular location as her homeland. Like hybridity, the uncanny serves as a strategy to create a third space in which resistance to and rejection of the ruling colonial discourse take place. Through this third space, the certainty assigned to the colonial history is shattered and thus incredulity towards the past, the one that has long been taken for granted results. The incredulity and resistance in question pave the way for the appearance of negotiation and reconsideration of the forgotten history, namely the one belonging to the colonized culture.

It is noteworthy that Mukherjee's attempt to illustrate "the potential synthesis of Indian and American culture in the context of globalization" (Gamal, 2013, p. 4) is not limited to *The Tree Bride*. In *Jasmine* (1989), she "mangers--in a tale filled with tough raw experience--a smooth synthesis of Hindu religious imagery and concepts and American frontier mythology" (Kain, 1993, p. 157). The results of this research as well other studies conducted on Mukherjee's other novels reveal that the Indian-American novelist was concerned with the concept of hybrid identity throughout her career. What is conspicuous about her version of hybridity is that Mukherjee rarely takes side – or is able to take side – with either of the cultural communities her female protagonists come to encounter.

## Notes

1. Srivastava concludes that all Bharati Mukherjee's heroines go through a transformation in their personality; they are not what we know them to be at the beginning of the novel, we are simply amazed what they have turned themselves into when the novel ends. People can internally transform at only when they are not quite satisfied with their identity, in some corner of their heart they yearn for change. This dissatisfaction leads to a quest for identity in ambitions and curiously adventurous people for their actual self and eventually, to an affirmation of their newly found identity.

2. Sharma & Gupta maintain Mukherjee's diasporic concerns of an immigrant are portrayed in her novels - *The Tiger's Daughter* (1971), *Wife* (1975), *Jasmine* (1989), *The Holder of The World* (1993), *Leave it to Me* (1997), *Desirable Daughters* (2002), *The Tree Bride* (2004), *Miss New India* (2011). She also has to

her credit two collections of short stories - *Darkness* (1985) and *The Middleman and Other Stories* (1988), for which she won National Book Circle Critics Award.

3. Babu & Kumar state that like her contemporary feminist writers she upholds the cause of women, but she differs from them because her basic concern is to delineate the problems of cross cultural conflicts faced by Indian women immigrants.

### References

- Ashcroft, B., Griffiths, G., & Tiffin, H. (Eds.) (2007). *The Postcolonial studies reader*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/978023777855>
- Babu, T. R., & Kumar, A. P. (2013). Feminist perspectives in Bharati Mukherjee's novels. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention*, 2 (3), 40-42. www.ijhssi.org Volume 2 Issue 3 || March. 2013|| PP.40-42
- Bhabha, H. K. (1995). Sign taken for wonders. In B. Ashcroft, G. Griffiths, & H. Tiffin (Eds.), *The post-colonial studies reader* (pp. 29-35). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0950236X.2020.1839952>
- Carb, A. B. (1988). An interview with Bharati Mukherjee. *The Massachusetts Review*, 29 (4), 645-654. DOI: 10.25115/riem.v0i1.365
- Carchidi, V. (1995). Orbiting: Bharati Mukherjee's kaleidoscope vision. *MELUS*, 20 (4), 91-101. <https://doi.org/10.2307/467892>
- Chrisman, L. (2003). *Postcolonial contraventions: Cultural readings of race, imperialism and transnationalism*. Manchester University Press. DOI: 10.7228/manchester/9780719058271.001.0001
- Connell, M., Grearson, J., & Grimes, T. (1990). An interview with Bharati Mukherjee. *The Iowa Review*, 20 (3), 7-32. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20153024>
- Desai, S. & Barnstone, T. (1998). A usable past: An interview with Bharati Mukherjee. *Mānoa*, 10 (2), 130-147. <https://doi.org/10.2307/4229687>
- Drake, J. (1999). Looting American culture: Bharati Mukherjee's immigrant narratives. *Contemporary Literature*, 40 (1), 60-84. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1208819>
- Gamal, A. (2013). Postcolonial recycling of the oriental Vampire in Habiby's Saraya, the Ghoul's daughter and Mukherjee's Jasmine. *Arab Studies Quarterly*, 35 (1), 4-19. DOI:10.13169/arabstudquar.35.1.0004
- Gopal, S. (2015). Some brief reflections on technology, cinema, and the postcolonial uncanny. *Pacific Coast Philology*, 50 (2), 198-208. <https://doi.org/10.5325/pacicoasphil.50.2.0198>

- Innes, C. L. (2007). *The Cambridge introduction to postcolonial literatures in English*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511611339>
- Jazeel, T. (2012). Postcolonial spaces and identities. *Geography*, 97 (2), 60–67. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00167487.2012.12094340>
- Johnson, E. L. (2010). Provincializing Europe: The postcolonial urban uncanny in V. S. Naipaul's *A bend in the river*. *Journal of Narrative Theory*, 40 (2), 209–230. URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41427228>
- Kain, G. (1993). Suspended between two worlds: Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine* and the fusion of Hindu and American myth. *Journal of South Asian Literature*, 28 (2), 151–158. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40873337>
- Lavigilante, N. (2014). Globalization and change in India: The rise of an Indian dream in *Miss New India: An interview with Bharati Mukherjee*. *MELUS*, 39 (3), 178–194. <https://doi.org/10.1093/melus/mlu023>
- Mukherjee, B. (2004). *The tree bride*. Hyperion.
- Mukherjee, S. (2018). *A home away from home: A study in the fiction of Bharati Mukherjee, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and Jhumpa Lahiri*. Laxmi Book Publication.
- Nayar, P. K. (2010). The postcolonial uncanny: The politics of dispossession in Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide*. *College Literature*, 37 (4), 88–119. <https://doi.org/10.1353/lit.2010.0011>
- Nayar, P. K. (2015). *The postcolonial studies dictionary*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Poddar, P., Patke, R. S., & Jensen, L. (Eds.). (2008). *A historical companion to postcolonial literatures: Continental Europe and its Empires*. Edinburgh University Press. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3366>
- Sharma, A. & Gupta, T. (2014). A father and fathering by Bharati Mukherjee: A comparative study. *Global Journal of Arts Humanities and Social Science*, 2 (10), 1–15. <https://www.eajournals.org/wp-content/uploads/A-Father-and-Fathering-by-Bharati-Mukherjee-A-comparative-study1.pdf>
- Srivastava, S. (2018). Transformation of self in the works of Bharati Mukherjee. *International Journal of Research and Scientific Innovation*, 5 (5), 54–60. <http://www.rsisinternational.org/journals/ijrsi/digital-library/volume-5-issue-5/54-60.pdf>

## Author's Biography

---



**Masoume Bae** has received her B.A. in English Literature from Gonbad University and was graduated in M.A. from Golestan University in February 2019. She has a keen interest in exploring Postcolonial works of literature. Her thesis applies the Postcolonial theorist Bha-bha's notions of hybridity, uncanny, and mimicry to two novels by Indian-American author, Mukherjee. She mainly tends to depict the aftermath of Colonization and the side-effects it has left on societies, people's personalities, and their insights into life, so as to raise a public awareness of these issues. Currently, she works as an English instructor in language institutes and high school.



**Dr Behzad Pourgharib** (Corresponding Author) is an Assistant Professor of English Language and Literature at Golestan University in Iran. He has published various articles in national and international journals. He has also presented papers at many national and international conferences and written a book entitled *Virginia Woolf and Consciousness*. His research interests include 20th century English and American Literature, Literary Theory, and Criticism and English Fiction.



**Abdolbaghy Rezaei Talarposhty** is an Assistant Professor of English Language and Literature at Golestan University, Iran. He has published various articles in national and international journals. His research interests include 20th century English and American Literature, Literary Theory and Criticism, and Cultural Studies.

---



**Book Review: Anthony Green, *Exploring Language Assessment and Testing: Language in action* (2nd edition), London: Routledge. 2021, 290 pages.  
ISBN: 978-1-138-38878-9 (Paperback)**

**Rajab Esfandiari** (corresponding author)

Associate professor of English Language Teaching, Department of English Language, Faculty of Humanities, Imam Khomeini International University, Qazvin, Iran, ORCID: 0000-0002-2305-762X  
Email: [esfandiari@hum.ikiu.ac.ir](mailto:esfandiari@hum.ikiu.ac.ir)

When language testing began as a formal activity in the early 1960s, it was primarily concerned with large-scale, standardised tests such as test of English as a foreign language (TOEFL), heavily influenced by the then two dominant schools of thought: structural linguistics and behavioristic psychology. However, since then, much has changed, and language testing has developed fully into a legitimate subfield onto itself in applied linguistics, with its own academic national and international journals, conferences, handbooks, and forums and websites. As Alderson and Banerjee (2001) aptly noted, “the field has become so large and so active that it is virtually impossible to do justice to it ... [,] changing so rapidly that any prediction of trends is likely to be outdated before it is printed” (p. 213). One major paradigm shift which language testing and assessment has witnessed in recent years is classroom-based assessment, which primarily focuses on the assessment of the learning processes and objectives, the practical dimensions of L2 assessment, and integration of testing, teaching, and learning than probing into the psychometric properties of language tests. Such a change is best reflected in language assessment textbooks commercially produced and incorporated into educational programmes.

*Exploring language assessment and testing: Language in action* reflects a classroom-based view of assessment, following a “practice to theory” approach, with a “back-to-front” structure. The book is an accessible introduction to L2 assessment structured into three main parts, each with interdependent chapters. In part I, Green describes the practical aspects of language assessment, explaining the relationship between testing and teaching, outlining the purposes of language assessment, pinpointing the assessment cycle, and finally ending this part with four

ARTICLE INFO

Book Review

Received: Monday, March 21 2022

Accepted: Friday, April 15, 2022

Published: Sunday, May 1, 2022

Available Online: Friday, April 15, 2022

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.22049/jalda.2022.27797.1419>

Online ISSN: 2821-0204; Print ISSN: 2820-8986



© The Author(s)

Major qualities of classroom-based assessment. Part II presents the techniques and procedures of how to assess receptive and productive skills, with primary focus on applying those principles discussed in part I. Theoretical in nature, Part III delves into the historical accounts and theoretical perspectives which have influenced the practice of language testing over the years. A full discussion of the contents of the textbook is presented in the following paragraphs.

The first chapter in part I lays the foundations of assessment and situates testing in its broader context. At the opening of the chapter, Green uses the opportunity to argue that the ultimate goal of assessment is to provide evidence for decision-making purposes. It is in line with this argumentation that he defines language assessment simply as “obtaining evidence to inform inferences about a person’s language-related knowledge, skills or abilities” (p. 5). Green draws on this simple definition to frame the rest of the textbook and comments that language assessment is inseparable from teaching and learning. The rest of the chapter deals with a clear distinction between testing and assessment and integrates assessment, teaching, and learning.

In chapter 2, the author focuses on the purposes assessments are used for. Such purposes include selection, placement, achievement, diagnosis, proficiency, aptitude, and prognosis. A distinction is made between educational and proficiency purposes, with the former based on the learning processes and course outcomes and the latter concerned with the ability to accomplish certain tasks, irrespective of how the ability is reached. Throughout the chapter, clear examples are given to help readers better understand the assessment functions.

Chapter 3 examines the stages of test development—the most practical dimension of language assessment in general and in this part in particular. This is the second longest chapter in the book, possibly because of the significance attached to test construction. The author depicts an assessment cycle in which eight interconnected stages should be followed to develop a careful test—whether it is classroom-based or standardised. The assessment cycle includes roles, responsibilities, and documentation, and consists of design, organisation, production, administration, assessment, scoring, score using, and validation. Through schematic representation and use of several analogies and examples, Green painstakingly clarifies the stages, establishes the relationships between the stages, distinguishes between teacher-made and standardised tests when the stages need to be applied, and uses his own experience to present practical advice to trainee teachers how best the stages may be implemented in real-life situations. It should be noted that, as Green himself emphasises, such stages are not monolithic, assessments should be viewed as “continuous and repeating cycles of activities” (p. 26), and the completion of the assessment cycle does not imply the process ends.

Chapter 4 describes the salient features of an effective assessment—the qualities that result in useful assessments. Four major characteristics are listed and explained, including practicality, reliability, validity, and beneficial consequences. These qualities, as Green remarks, act as quality control indicators which help users to choose assessments or educators to evaluate an assessment system. Green has



intentionally decided to focus on the traditional features of a good language test, because he notes that other characteristics such as authenticity are accounted for in his four-quality control. Such a justification seems reasonable, given the very fact that close attention is paid to classroom-based tests in this textbook. He is also at pains to successfully show these characteristics map onto the stages of test design fully explained in chapter 3. In closing the chapter, the author advises readers to bear in mind that “no assessment can fully satisfy all four essential qualities” (p. 97) and suggests that the utility of effective systems depend on the ability of their users to use them correctly and appropriately.

Chapter 5 analyses the techniques and procedures for assessing receptive knowledge, skills, and abilities—listening and reading. In this chapter, and the following one, a socio-cognitive approach is adopted to explain language skills because it is the social expectations and conventions that shape the way language is used, and it is the psychological insights into mental processes that help us to convey a message, organise an idea, and make sense of the sounds we hear and the language we produce (Weir, 2005). Vocabulary and grammar are treated in chapter 5, and pronunciation in chapter 6, because Green believes that these components are not separable from written and spoken language. This chapter covers conceptual underpinnings of listening and reading, describes the processes, skills, and strategies readers and listeners follow to make sense of what they hear and read, discusses types of reading and listening, and deals with different scoring methods.

In chapter 6, Green turns to productive and interactive skills—speaking and writing, with pronunciation included. Some space is first devoted to distinguishing between production and interaction, because Green believes production involves “planned and rehearsed monologues” (p. 135) such as classroom lectures, while interaction “implies the kind of spontaneous exchange found in conversation” (p. 135). Green is quick to admit that production and interaction are two extremes of a continuum because almost all spontaneous conversations include some sort of planning, and all planned speeches and texts contribute to interaction. In the rest of the chapter, features of spoken and written language are presented, various task types are listed for assessing speaking and writing, different assessment instruments such as rating scales are introduced for recording performance, and well-known scoring procedures, including holistic scales, are used to score performance on speaking and writing. The chapter ends with rater training and the use of computers for scoring productive and interactive performance. In both chapter 5 and chapter 6, a number of examples from internationally recognised tests and frameworks such as CEFR (common European framework of reference) are cited to help readers digest the points.

Chapter 7 in part III is theoretical in nature. This chapter extends our understanding of the points raised and explained in the first six chapters, on the one hand, and serves to explore more theoretical concepts in language assessment, on the other hand. The chapter begins with a succinct introduction of the sixty-year-old history of language testing and is followed by the growth of the professionalisation of the field, with the primary focus on the early years. Next, six phases (or tendencies, to use Green’s terminology) in language assessment over the years are

outlined, including pre-scientific/traditional, psychometric/structuralist, psycholinguistic-sociolinguistic, communicative, formative testing, and assessment for learning, with the first four stages reflecting the earlier developments in the field and the last two ones the more recent trends. Green also lists the most influential testing figures such as Robert Lado and the testing textbooks which contributed to the development of the field. The rest of the chapter, one way or the other, focuses on the full treatment of the stages in the history of language testing, and the author pinpoints how the early skills and components theory in language testing in the early years has been replaced by communicative language testing in recent years. Green is very careful to describe the test methods such as discrete-point tests, the influential testing figures, the major commercial tests, the groundbreaking testing textbooks, and testing models and frameworks during each stage to present a more objective view of paradigm shifts over the years, although he personally comments on the developments and shares with readers his own personal experiences.

In addition to the points discussed in the foregoing paragraph, chapter 7 also touches on some concepts which play a more prominent role in the current status quo. Concepts such as fairness, bias, ethics, critical language testing, quality standards, self-reflection and self-regulation reflect the view that the field is growing much faster than ever before and becoming more autonomous and professionalised—a subfield in applied linguistics once looked down on is now appreciated for the major breakthroughs and its interaction with neighbouring disciplines such as measurement theory, sociology, language education, and language teaching. The chapter closes with some emerging trends in language assessment (e.g., computer adaptive tests, internet-based testing, automated scoring, continuous assessment, more sophisticated statistical tests and models, and the role of corpora in language tests) which reflect the growing prominence of technology types, the complexification of educational goals, and the sophistication of learner variables. Just to give readers an example of the fast-spreading nature of the field, in passing, I need to cite Aryadoust and Raquel (2019, 2020), who edited a two-volume handbook specifically devoted to data analysis in language assessment.

Chapter 8, as the concluding chapter of the book, provides answers to the tasks the author has added to each chapter to set readers thinking about the points raised in each chapter and to help them relate these points to the boarder context in real-life contexts. Green's detailed, lucid explanations in this chapter provide another opportunity for readers to learn new points about language assessment.

*Exploring language assessment and testing: Language in action* is an updated version of its 2014 predecessor. Although this second edition remains intact in its structure and organisation, it is a welcome and timely addition to the field of language assessment, because thematically it reflects the most recent developments in the field. In addition to much new content information, Green has also updated the glossary in which the terminology used in the book is briefly explained, more recent references are added to Further Reading section, and more new references are included in the reference list to reflect the new changes in the field. Green has adopted a pragmatic approach in writing this textbook and presenting the information in that the real-world problems and experiences are introduced first,

followed by practical examples to steer readers towards the discussion of language assessment points, before the readers relate the experiences, problems, and points to theoretical perspectives. Although the textbook is primarily written to be “an indispensable introduction for postgraduate and advanced undergraduate students”, in language education and applied linguistics, I highly recommend it to all the members of community of practice in language assessment (and more specifically language teachers) because of the advantages it offers in classroom-based assessment, highly accessible presentation of the assessment points, and the author’s lucid, user-friendly style.

### References

- Alderson, J. C., & Banerjee, J. (2001). Language testing and assessment (part 1). *Language Teaching*, 34(4), 213-236. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444800014464>
- Aryadoust, V., & Raquel, M. (Eds.). (2019). *Quantitative data Analysis for language assessment Volume I: Fundamental techniques*. Routledge.
- Aryadoust, V., & Raquel, M. (Eds.). (2020). *Quantitative data analysis for language assessment Volume II: Advanced methods*. Routledge.
- Green, A. (2021). *Exploring language assessment and testing: Language in action* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition). Routledge.
- Weir, C. J. (2005). *Language testing and validation: An evidence-based approach*. Palgrave Macmillan.

### Author’s Biography

---



**Rajab Esfandiari** is an associate professor of English Language teaching at Imam Khomeini International University in Qazvin, Iran. His areas of interest and specialty include teaching and assessing L2 writing, multifaceted Rasch measurement, L2 classroom assessment, and EAP teaching and testing. He can be reached via his e-mail address: [esfandiari@hum.ikiu.ac.ir](mailto:esfandiari@hum.ikiu.ac.ir)

---





## Persian Abstracts:

### آیا صلاحیت حرفه‌ای معلمان زبان انگلیسی ایرانی با عملکرد شغلی آن‌ها ارتباط معنا داری دارد؟ اگر بله، چقدر و چگونه؟

افشین رضایی (نویسنده مسئول)

استادیار گروه زبان انگلیسی، دانشگاه آیت الله عظمی بروجردی، لرستان، ایران

Email: [afsheen.rezai@abru.ac.ir](mailto:afsheen.rezai@abru.ac.ir)

زینب عزیزی

استادیار گروه زبان انگلیسی، دانشگاه آیت الله عظمی بروجردی، لرستان، ایران

Email: [zeinab.azizi@abru.ac.ir](mailto:zeinab.azizi@abru.ac.ir)

احسان نمازیان دوست

مدرس دانشگاه علمی کاربردی خوزستان، اهواز، ایران مؤسسه آموزش عالی مهرانوند، آبادان، ایران

Email: [e.namazi75@yahoo.com](mailto:e.namazi75@yahoo.com)

#### چکیده

آیا صلاحیت حرفه‌ای معلمان زبان انگلیسی ایرانی با عملکرد شغلی آن‌ها ارتباط معنا داری دارد؟ اگر بله، چقدر و چگونه؟ چکیده مطالعه حاضر قصد دارد رابطه بین صلاحیت حرفه‌ای معلمان زبان انگلیسی با عملکرد شغلی آن‌ها را به صورت کمی و کیفی در ایران بررسی کند. برای این هدف، در مجموع ۳۳۰ معلم زبان انگلیسی شامل مرد (۱۸۵ نفر) و زن (۱۴۵ نفر) برای بخش کمی و نمونه‌ای متشکل از ۲۵ معلم زبان انگلیسی شامل مرد (۱۱ نفر) و زن (۱۴ نفر) برای بخش کیفی با استفاده از روش نمونه گیری تصادفی در شهرهای خرم آباد و بروجرد انتخاب شدند. شرکت کنندگان به یک پرسشنامه عملکرد شغلی معلمان زبان انگلیسی، یک پرسشنامه شایستگی حرفه‌ای معلمان زبان انگلیسی و یک گزارش کتبی منعکس کننده پاسخ دادند. داده‌های جمع آوری شده از طریق تحلیل همبستگی پیرسون، تحلیل رگرسیون چندگانه و تحلیل کدگذاری موضوعی استاندارد مورد تجزیه و تحلیل قرار گرفتند. یافته‌ها نشان داد که بین شایستگی حرفه‌ای شرکت کنندگان و عملکرد شغلی آنها همبستگی مثبت و معناداری وجود دارد. علاوه بر این، نتایج نشان داد که عملکرد شغلی شرکت کنندگان عمدتاً تحت تأثیر عوامل مهارت‌ها، دانش، و نگرش‌ها است. یافته‌های کیفی چهار موضوع کلی را نشان داد: «افزایش اثربخشی شغلی»، «بهبود خودکارآمدی تدریس»، «افزایش انگیزه تدریس»، و «ارتقای پذیرش سازمانی». مطالعه با ارایه کاربردهایی و پیشنهادهایی برای مطالعه بیشتر به پایان می‌رسد.

**واژگان کلیدی:** صلاحیت حرفه‌ای، عملکرد شغلی، تجزیه و تحلیل کدگذاری موضوعی، معلمان زبان انگلیسی

اطلاعات مقاله

مقاله پژوهشی

تاریخ دریافت: چهارشنبه، ۱۴ آبان ۱۴۰۰

تاریخ تصویب: جمعه، ۱۹ فروردین ۱۴۰۱

تاریخ انتشار: دوشنبه، ۹ خرداد ۱۴۰۱

تاریخ آنلاین: جمعه، ۱۹ فروردین ۱۴۰۱

شناسه دیجیتال مقاله: [HTTP://DX.DOI.ORG/10.22049/JALDA.2022.27481.1368](http://dx.doi.org/10.22049/JALDA.2022.27481.1368)

شاپای الکترونیکی: ۲۰۴-۲۸۲۱-۸۹۸۶ شاپای چاپی: ۲۸۲۰-۸۹۸۶

## تهیه و اعتبار سنجی پرسشنامه سبک یادگیری کلب ورژن ۴

شکوه رشوند سمیاری (نویسنده مسئول)

استادیار گروه آموزش زبان انگلیسی، دانشکده علوم انسانی، دانشگاه آزاد اسلامی، واحد تهران شرق، تهران، ایران  
Email: Sh\_Rashvand@yahoo.com, Sh.Rashvand@iauet.ac.ir

مه ناز آزاد

استادیار گروه آموزش زبان انگلیسی، دانشکده علوم انسانی، دانشگاه آزاد اسلامی واحد تهران شرق، تهران، ایران  
Email: mahnaz.azad@yahoo.com, mahazad@iauet.ac.ir

### چکیده

بسیاری از تفاوت‌های فردی مرتبط با عقاید، افکار، و رفتار فراگیران بر حسب سبک یادگیری که آنها در طی فرآیند یادگیری انتخاب می‌کنند، قابل تعبیر است. این سبک‌های یادگیری طبق نظر کلب و کلب (۲۰۱۳) عبارتند از شروع کننده، تجربه کننده، مبتکر / خلاق، متفکر، تحلیل گر، تامل کننده، تصمیم گیرنده، عمل گرا، و متعادل. این تحقیق به منظور تهیه و اعتبار سنجی ساختار چند بعدی پرسشنامه سبک یادگیری کلب ورژن ۴ در کشور ایران انجام شده است. پرسشنامه فوق به نظریه یادگیری تجربی منوط شده و توسط رویکردهای اعتبار سنجی تهیه و ارزیابی گردیده است. ۸۳۳ دانشجو که زبان انگلیسی را بعنوان زبان خارجی فرا می‌گیرند و در دانشگاه آزاد اسلامی واحد تهران شرق درس می‌خوانند، در این تحقیق مشارکت داشته اند. تحلیل عاملی تاییدی با استفاده از الگوی معادلات ساختاری جهت اعتبار سنجی پرسشنامه فوق (شامل ۹ سبک یادگیری) استفاده گردیده است. نتایج بررسی اولیه پرسشنامه کلب ورژن ۴ برازش قابل قبولی را نشان نداد، چرا که همبستگی بالایی بین سبک‌های یادگیری وجود داشت. بمنظور حل مشکل فوق، ۳ سبک یادگیری که بالاترین مقدار همبستگی را نشان می‌دادند با یکدیگر تلفیق گردیده و مدل دیگری برای پرسشنامه جدید که حالا شامل ۶ سبک یادگیری بود، ترسیم گردید. نتایج نشان داد که پرسشنامه جدید قابل قبول بوده و از برازش مناسبی برخوردار بوده است. پایایی و روایی مدل نیز رضایتبخش بود. در حقیقت پرسشنامه سبک یادگیری کلب ورژن ۴ شامل ۶ سبک یادگیری برازش مناسبی را نشان داد. کاربرد آموزشی و پیشنهاداتی به منظور تحقیقات آتی نیز ارائه گردید.

**واژگان کلیدی:** سبک یادگیری، مراحل اعتبار سنجی، تحلیل عاملی تاییدی، الگوی معادلات ساختاری

اطلاعات مقاله

مقاله پژوهشی

تاریخ دریافت: جمعه، ۲۴ اردیبهشت ۱۴۰۰

تاریخ تصویب: جمعه، ۱۹ فروردین ۱۴۰۱

تاریخ انتشار: دوشنبه ۹ خرداد ۱۴۰۱

تاریخ آنلاین: جمعه، ۱۹ فروردین ۱۴۰۱

شناسه دیجیتال مقاله: [HTTP://DX.DOI.ORG/10.22049/JALDA.2022.27097.1254](http://dx.doi.org/10.22049/JALDA.2022.27097.1254)

شاپای الکترونیکی: ۲۸۲۱-۰۲۰۴ شاپای چاپی: ۲۸۲۰-۸۹۸۶

## افزایش به یادسپاری لغات انگلیسی معلمان کارآموز ایرانی با استفاده از فعالیت‌های تعاملی ادبیات محور مبتنی بر چرخه ورودی-خروجی

سارا صالح‌پور

دانشجوی دکتری آموزش زبان انگلیسی، دانشگاه آزاد اسلامی واحد تبریز، تبریز، ایران  
Email: s.salehpour2017@yahoo.com

بیوک بهنام (نویسنده مسئول)

دانشیار آموزش زبان انگلیسی، گروه زبان انگلیسی، دانشکده ادبیات و زبانهای خارجه،  
دانشگاه آزاد اسلامی واحد تبریز، تبریز، ایران  
Email: behnam\_biook@yahoo.com ORCID: 0000-0002-8936-0701

زهره سیفوری

دانشیار آموزش زبان انگلیسی، گروه زبان انگلیسی، دانشکده ادبیات و زبانهای خارجه،  
دانشگاه آزاد اسلامی واحد علوم و تحقیقات، تهران، ایران  
Email: zseifoori2005@yahoo.com ORCID: 0000-0002-4296-8226

### چکیده

برای غلبه بر موانعی که بازبایی واژگان تولیدی بر سر راه معلمان زبان انگلیسی قرار می‌دهد، مطالعه حاضر به بررسی تاثیر استفاده از فعالیت‌های تعاملی چرخه ورودی-خروجی بر افزایش توانایی به یادسپاری واژگان انگلیسی می‌پردازد. برای این منظور، ۴۹ معلم کارآموز ایرانی برای شرکت در یک مطالعه شبه‌آزمون پیش‌آزمون-پس‌آزمون انتخاب شدند. پس از قرار گرفتن در سه گروه مقایسه‌ای، شرکت‌کنندگان توسط متون ادبی یکسان تحت سه نوع آموزش تعاملی (انفرادی، همکاری بین معلم و شاگرد، همکاری گروهی شاگردان و معلم) و دو نوع پردازش ورودی-خروجی (متقابل-غیرمتقابل) قرار گرفتند. تجزیه و تحلیل داده‌های تحقیق نشان داد که دو گروهی که تحت آموزش تعاملی ادبیات محور (همکاری بین معلم و شاگرد، همکاری گروهی شاگردان و معلم) مبتنی بر چرخه متقابل ورودی-خروجی قرار گرفتند در مقایسه با گروهی که در معرض فعالیت‌های ادبیات محور انفرادی مبتنی بر چرخه غیر متقابل ورودی-خروجی قرار گرفتند سطح بالاتری از به یادسپاری واژه‌گان را نشان دادند. علاوه بر این، نتایج نشان دهنده این است که همکاری گروهی بین شاگردان و معلم، در مقایسه با همکاری شاگرد و معلم در به یادسپاری واژگان روش موثرتری به شمار می‌آید. یافته‌ها نیاز به گنجاندن فعالیت‌های تعاملی ادبیات محور مبتنی بر چرخه ورودی-خروجی را در برنامه درسی تربیت معلمان زبان انگلیسی تایید کرد.

**واژگان کلیدی:** فعالیت‌های مبتنی بر چرخه ورودی-خروجی، یادگیری تعاملی لغت، رویکرد ادبیات محور، دوره تربیت معلم، به یادسپاری لغات.

اطلاعات مقاله

مقاله پژوهشی

تاریخ دریافت: یکشنبه، ۲۶ اردیبهشت ۱۴۰۰

تاریخ تصویب: سه شنبه، ۳۰ فروردین ۱۴۰۱

تاریخ انتشار: دوشنبه، ۹ خرداد ۱۴۰۱

تاریخ آنلاین: سه شنبه، ۳۰ فروردین ۱۴۰۱

شناسه دیجیتال مقاله: [HTTP://DX.DOI.ORG/10.22049/JALDA.2022.27233.1315](http://dx.doi.org/10.22049/JALDA.2022.27233.1315)

شاپای الکترونیکی: ۲۰۴-۲۸۲۱-شاپای چاپی: ۸۹۸۶-۲۸۲۰

## بررسی ارتباط معلمان زبان انگلیسی با پژوهش

مهدی مهرانی راد (نویسنده مسئول)

دانشیار زبان‌شناسی کاربردی، گروه زبان انگلیسی، دانشکده ادبیات و علوم انسانی، دانشگاه نیشابور، نیشابور، ایران

Email: mehrani@neyshabur.ac.ir

### فؤاد بهزادپور

استادیار زبان‌شناسی کاربردی، گروه زبان انگلیسی، دانشکده ادبیات و علوم انسانی،

دانشگاه شهید مدنی آذربایجان، تبریز، ایران

Email: fouad.behzadpour@gmail.com

### چکیده

ارزش پژوهش و قابلیت تاثیرگذاری آن بر فعالیت‌های آموزشی معلمان در سال‌های اخیر مورد توجه بسیاری از پژوهشگران در رشته آموزش زبان بوده است. در این رابطه، تحقیقات مختلفی با هدف بهبود ارتباط بین پژوهش و عملکرد آموزشی صورت گرفته است. لیکن بررسی‌ها نشان می‌دهد که در این پژوهش‌ها دیدگاه معلمان به عنوان مهم‌ترین کنشگران آموزشی چندان مورد توجه نبوده است. پژوهش پیش رو با هدف بررسی دیدگاه معلمان نسبت به بکارگیری یافته‌های پژوهشی در آموزش زبان انجام شده است. بدین منظور، نخست پرسشنامه‌ای برای تعیین میزان ارتباط معلمان با پژوهش و نیز بررسی موانع موجود در این راه تهیه شد. پس از مشخص شدن روایی و پایایی، به منظور گردآوری داده‌ها، پرسشنامه در بین بیش از پانصد معلم زبان انگلیسی توزیع شد. تحلیل پاسخ‌های معلمان نشان داد که ارتباط ایشان با پژوهش‌های دانشگاهی به میزان متوسط هست، اما معلمان که دارای مدارک دانشگاهی بالاتر و تجربه آموزشی کمتری هستند، تمایل بیشتری به انجام فعالیت‌های پژوهشی دارند. علاوه بر این یافته‌های این پژوهش مویده اینست که موانع بکارگیری پژوهش در آموزش زبان را می‌توان به چهار گروه تقسیم کرد: موانع مرتبط با ماهیت و کیفیت پژوهش‌ها، موانع مرتبط با سیاست‌های آموزشی، موانع مربوط به عدم ارتباط سازنده بین محققان و معلمان، و موانع مرتبط با اجرایی شدن یافته‌های پژوهشی در کلاس‌های آموزش زبان. تحلیل آماری وزنی هر یک از موانع نیز نشان داد که عدم حمایت‌های فکری و مالی، نبود سامانه جامع پژوهشی، و نداشتن دانش کافی معلمان برای درک محتوای پژوهش‌های دانشگاهی از مهمترین دلایل عدم کاربست پژوهش در نظام آموزش زبان به شمار می‌رود.

**واژگان کلیدی:** موانع، کاربست پژوهش‌های دانشگاهی، دیدگاه معلمان، عملکرد آموزشی

اطلاعات مقاله

مقاله پژوهشی

تاریخ دریافت: شنبه، ۲۹ آبان ۱۴۰۰

تاریخ تصویب: شنبه، ۳ اردیبهشت ۱۴۰۱

تاریخ انتشار: دوشنبه، ۹ خرداد ۱۴۰۱

تاریخ آنلاین: شنبه، ۳ اردیبهشت ۱۴۰۱

شناسه دیجیتال مقاله: [HTTP://DX.DOI.ORG/10.22049/JALDA.2022.27469.1365](http://dx.doi.org/10.22049/JALDA.2022.27469.1365)

شایای الکترونیکی: ۲۰۴-۲۸۲۱-۰۸۹۸۶-۲۸۲۰



## «ما ارتباط را بررسی می‌کنیم...» تحلیل بین رشته‌ای نقش گفتمانی فاعل در

### چکیده مقالات علمی-پژوهشی

سید فؤاد ابراهیمی (نویسنده مسئول)

استادیار زبانشناسی کاربردی، گروه زبان انگلیسی، دانشگاه آزاد اسلامی واحد شادگان، شادگان، ایران

Email: Seyedfoade@gmail.com

مریم فرنیا

استادیار زبانشناسی کاربردی، گروه زبان و ادبیات انگلیسی، دانشگاه پیام نور، ایران

Email: mfarnia@pnu.ac.ir

#### چکیده

چکیده مقالات علمی-پژوهشی به عنوان ابزاری مهم جهت مدیریت اطلاعات و کمک به خواننده جهت تصمیم‌گیری مطالعه مقاله است. در این مطالعه برآنیم تا تعداد و نقش گفتمانی انواع فاعل گرامری استفاده شده در چکیده مقالات علمی-پژوهشی از چهار رشته دانشگاهی را بررسی کنیم. به همین منظور، ۳۰۰ چکیده مقالات علمی-پژوهشی به طور تصادفی (۷۵ چکیده از هر رشته) از مجلات معتبر و از چهار رشته تحصیلی زبان شناسی کاربردی، اقتصاد، کشاورزی، و فیزیک کاربردی انتخاب شدند. چکیده‌های انتخابی بر اساس مدل گاسدن (۱۹۹۳) که شامل ۱۶ نوع فاعل گرامری می‌باشد، تحلیل شدند. نتایج نشان دادند که تنها شش نوع فاعل گرامری در چکیده‌های تحلیل شده به کار رفتند که در رشته‌های مختلف هم به تعداد متفاوتی استفاده شدند. نتایج همچنان نشان دادند که نقش گفتمانی انجام شده توسط انواع فاعل گرامری در این مطالعه تا حد زیادی در رشته‌های مختلف یکسان بودند. در نتیجه، انتخاب و نقش گفتمانی فاعل گرامری تحت تاثیر قواعد و نحوه نگارش چکیده مقالات علمی-پژوهشی قرار می‌گیرند. نتایج همچنان می‌توانند در افزایش دانش نویسندگان چکیده‌های مقالات علمی-پژوهشی در زمینه استفاده از انواع فاعل گرامری و نقش گفتمانی آنها در رشته‌های مختلف کمک کنند.

**واژگان کلیدی:** مطالعه بین رشته‌ای، تحلیل گفتمانی، فاعل گرامری، چکیده مقالات علمی-پژوهشی

#### اطلاعات مقاله

##### مقاله پژوهشی

تاریخ دریافت: چهارشنبه، ۵ خرداد ۱۴۰۰

تاریخ تصویب: یکشنبه، ۲۵ اردیبهشت ۱۴۰۱

تاریخ انتشار: دوشنبه، ۹ خرداد ۱۴۰۱

تاریخ آنلاین: یکشنبه، ۲۵ اردیبهشت ۱۴۰۱

شناسه دیجیتال مقاله: [HTTP://DX.DOI.ORG/10.22049/JALDA.2022.27278.1321](http://dx.doi.org/10.22049/JALDA.2022.27278.1321)

شابای الکترونیکی: ۲۰۲۴-۲۸۲۱-شابای چاپی: ۸۹۸۶-۲۸۲۰

## بررسی میان رشته‌ای و پیکره-بنیاد مظاهر «بی طرفی علمی» در متون پژوهش‌های دانشگاهی

محمد صابر خاقانی نژاد (نویسنده مسئول)

دانشیار آموزش زبان انگلیسی، گروه زبانشناسی و زبانهای خارجی، دانشگاه شیراز، شیراز، ایران  
Email: [mshaghani@shirazu.ac.ir](mailto:mshaghani@shirazu.ac.ir), [Saber.khaghani@yahoo.com](mailto:Saber.khaghani@yahoo.com)

مریم آذریان

دانشیار آموزش زبان انگلیسی، گروه زبانشناسی و زبانهای خارجی، دانشگاه شیراز، شیراز، ایران  
Email: [mazarian68@yahoo.com](mailto:mazarian68@yahoo.com)

فاطمه جوانمردی

دانشجوی دکتری آموزش زبان انگلیسی، دانشگاه شیراز، شیراز، ایران  
[javanmardi.fatemeh@yahoo.com](mailto:javanmardi.fatemeh@yahoo.com)

### چکیده

این مطالعه با هدف بررسی نمودهای «بی طرفی علمی» در متون پژوهش‌های دانشگاهی در رشته‌های مختلف و در بازه‌های زمانی مختلف انجام شده است. به همین منظور، متون دانشگاهی پیکره COCA (پیکره انگلیسی معاصر آمریکایی) از نظر فراوانی وقوع چهار شاخص زبانی افعال مجهول، استفاده از زبان غیر شخصی، نشانگرهای بیان نگرش و تلطیف کننده‌های زبانی به عنوان مضامین «بی طرفی علمی» در بازه زمانی ۲۰ سال اخیر مورد بررسی قرار گرفت. نتایج نشان داد که افعال مجهول به طور متفاوتی در نه رشته دانشگاهی به کار گرفته شده اند و استفاده از زبان غیر شخصی در علوم تجربی در مقایسه با علوم انسانی و اجتماعی بسیار متفاوت بوده است. علاوه بر این، یافته‌ها حاکی از آن بود که وقوع افعال مجهول در طول زمان در همه رشته‌های دانشگاهی به صورت چشمگیری کاهش یافته است. همچنین، استفاده از زبان غیر شخصی، نشانگرهای بیان نگرش و تلطیف کننده‌های زبانی در رشته‌های علوم و مهندسی احتمالاً به دلیل تمایل نویسندگان این رشته‌ها به قضاوت عینی‌تر و غیر شخصی‌تر وقوع بیشتری داشته است. به طور کلی نتایج بیانگر آن بودند که «بی طرفی علمی» به صورت پیوسته در متون پژوهش‌های دانشگاهی افزایش یافته و این بدان معناست که اگرچه نویسندگان مقالات دانشگاهی تمایل کمتری به استفاده از افعال مجهول داشته‌اند، آنها از زبان غیر شخصی و تلطیف کننده‌های زبانی در راستای پرهیز از بیان نظرات شخصی در سال‌های اخیر بیشتر بهره برده‌اند.

**واژگان کلیدی:** متون پژوهش‌های دانشگاهی، مظاهر «بی طرفی علمی»، بررسی پیکره-بنیاد، پیکره انگلیسی معاصر آمریکا (COCA)

اطلاعات مقاله

مقاله پژوهشی

تاریخ دریافت: پنجشنبه، ۷ مرداد ۱۴۰۰

تاریخ تصویب: جمعه، ۲ اردیبهشت ۱۴۰۱

تاریخ انتشار: دوشنبه، ۹ خرداد ۱۴۰۱

تاریخ آنلاین: جمعه، ۲ اردیبهشت ۱۴۰۱

شناسه دیجیتال مقاله: [HTTP://DX.DOI.ORG/10.22049/JALDA.2022.27325.1333](http://dx.doi.org/10.22049/JALDA.2022.27325.1333)

شاپای الکترونیکی: ۲۸۲۱-۰۰۲۰۴ ۲۸۲۱-۰۰۸۹۶ شاپای چاپی: ۲۸۲۰-۰۸۹۶

## تحلیل مضامین سرودهای دانشگاه‌های دولتی غنا: مطالعه موردی شش دانشگاه

کازموس رای آمنوروی (نویسنده مسئول)

مدرس گروه زبانشناسی و مطالعات عمومی، دانشگاه انرژری و منابع طبیعی، سونیانی، غنا

Email: [cosmas.amenorvi@uenr.edu.gh](mailto:cosmas.amenorvi@uenr.edu.gh) / [cozyrai@gmail.com](mailto:cozyrai@gmail.com)

ریچارد بافر اوکیه ره

مدرس گروه زبانشناسی و مطالعات عمومی، دانشگاه انرژری و منابع طبیعی، سونیانی، غنا

Email: [richard.okyere@uenr.edu.gh](mailto:richard.okyere@uenr.edu.gh)

### چکیده

مطالعه حاضر به تحلیل محتوایی مضامین بکار رفته در سرودهای سه دانشگاه قدیمی و سه دانشگاه جدید از میان دانشگاه‌های دولتی کشور غنا و نقش عوامل زبانی و ادبی در انتقال این مضامین پرداخته است. به کمک نمونه-گیری هدفدار، دانشگاه غنا، دانشگاه کیپ کوست، و دانشگاه علوم تربیتی وینه‌با به عنوان نمونه دانشگاه‌های قدیمی و دانشگاه انرژری و منابع طبیعی، دانشگاه سلامت و علوم وابسته، و دانشگاه معادن و فناوری به نمایندگی از دانشگاه‌های جوانتر انتخاب شدند. نتایج نشان داد که سه مفهوم «خودستایی»، «دانش»، و «دین» اصلی‌ترین مضامین بکار رفته در سرودهای هر شش دانشگاه هستند. به لحاظ زبانشناختی، مفاهیم مذکور از طریق انتخاب آگاهانه عناصر واژگانی شامل اسامی، افعال، صفات، و قیود قابل دریافت است. از حیث ادبی نیز، مضامین بکار رفته به کمک آرایه‌های ادبی همچون استعاره، مبالغه، حشو، و تشخص انتقال یافته است. در نحوه ارائه مضمون خودستایی، بین دو گروه دانشگاهی تفاوت اساسی وجود دارد. در حالیکه دانشگاه‌های قدیمی با قاطعیت و صلابت به نمایش خودستایی می‌پردازند، دانشگاه‌های جوانتر به شیوه غیرمستقیم و با قاطعیت کمتر عمل می‌کنند که می‌تواند ناشی از تکریم آگاهانه دانشگاه‌های قدیمی‌تر باشد.

واژگان کلیدی: سرود دانشگاهی، زبان ادبی، زبانشناسی، ادبیات، تحلیل مضامین

اطلاعات مقاله

مقاله پژوهشی

تاریخ دریافت: شنبه، ۶ آذر ۱۴۰۰

تاریخ تصویب: چهارشنبه، ۱۴ آریبهشت ۱۴۰۱

تاریخ انتشار: دوشنبه، ۹ خرداد ۱۴۰۱

تاریخ آنلاین: چهارشنبه، ۱۴ آریبهشت ۱۴۰۱

شناسه دیجیتال مقاله:

[HTTP://DX.DOI.ORG/10.22049/JALDA.2022.27539.1375](http://dx.doi.org/10.22049/JALDA.2022.27539.1375)

شاپای الکترونیکی: ۲۰۴-۲۸۲۱-۲۸۲۱ شاپای چاپی: ۸۹۸۶-۲۸۲

## مکالمه اخلاقی با «دیگری» در داستان کوتاه «برف خاموش، برف مرموز» اثر کنراد آیکن: خوانشی لویناسی

محمدرضا توزیده

کارشناس ارشد زبان و ادبیات انگلیسی، دانشگاه شهید مدنی آذربایجان، تبریز، ایران

Email: m.tozideh@azaruniv.ac.ir

فرشید نوروزی روشناوند (نویسنده مسئول)

استادیار زبان و ادبیات انگلیسی، گروه زبان و ادبیات انگلیسی، دانشکده علوم انسانی و اجتماعی،

دانشگاه مازندران، بابل، ایران

Email: f.nowrouzi@umz.ac.ir

### چکیده

رابطه اخلاقی با «دیگری» در گفتمان پسامدرن از اهمیت فراوانی برخوردار است، زیرا این گفتمان تمرکززدایی از سوپژکتیویته را یکی از اهداف اساسی خود برمی‌شمرد. امانوئل لویناس یکی از اولین فلاسفه‌ای بود که به بازتعریف مفهوم اخلاقیات پرداخت. از نگاه او، اخلاقیات آن نقطه عطفی در رابطه سوژه با «دیگری» است که تنها از طریق بکارگیری زبان اخلاقی محقق می‌شود، نوعی ارتباط که ذاتا از هرگونه تمامیت‌خواهی به نفع آگاهی سوژه اجتناب می‌ورزد. این دیدار اخلاقی را در داستان کوتاه «برف خاموش، برف مرموز» اثر کنراد آیکن نیز می‌توان یافت. شخصیت اول این داستان که پسری دوازده ساله است، با صدای رازآلود برف مواجه می‌شود. نتایج این پژوهش نشان می‌دهد که شخصیت اول داستان هنگامی که در معرض چهره سخنگوی «دیگری» قرار می‌گیرد، مکالمه‌ای اخلاقی با آن را آغاز می‌کند و، بدین ترتیب، به تدریج سوپژکتیویته خود را در این مواجهه اخلاقی از دست می‌دهد.

واژگان کلیدی: امانوئل لویناس، اخلاقیات، زبان اخلاقی، سوژه، دیگری، کنراد آیکن

اطلاعات مقاله

مقاله پژوهشی

تاریخ دریافت: پنجشنبه، ۱۱ شهریور ۱۴۰۰

تاریخ تصویب: یکشنبه، ۲۵ اردیبهشت ۱۴۰۱

تاریخ انتشار: دوشنبه، ۹ خرداد ۱۴۰۱

تاریخ آنلاین: یکشنبه، ۲۵ اردیبهشت ۱۴۰۱

شناسه دیجیتال مقاله:

[HTTP://DX.DOI.ORG/10.22049/JALDA.2022.27397.1347](http://dx.doi.org/10.22049/JALDA.2022.27397.1347)

شاپای الکترونیکی: ۲۸۲۱-۰۲۰۴-۲۸۲۱-۰۸۹۸۶

## شلی روحانی: بررسی امر متعالی ایدئولوژیک در چکامه «سرودی برای زیبایی اندیشه» اثر پرسی بیش شلی

مسعود فرهمندفر (نویسنده مسئول)

استادیار ادبیات انگلیسی، گروه زبان انگلیسی، دانشکده ادبیات فارسی و زبانهای خارجه، دانشگاه علامه طباطبائی، تهران، ایران

Email: farahmand@atu.ac.ir; masoudfarahmandfar@yahoo.com

غیاث الدین علیزاده

استادیار ادبیات انگلیسی، گروه زبان انگلیسی، دانشکده ادبیات و علوم انسانی، دانشگاه ملایر، ملایر، ایران

Email: ghiasuddin.alizadeh@gmail.com

### چکیده

چکامه «سرودی برای زیبایی اندیشه» اثر شاعر انگلیسی عصر رمانتیک، پرسی بیش شلی، کمتر موضوع بررسی‌های انتقادی بوده، در حالی که باقی آثار شعری و فلسفی او با اقبال خوبی از سوی ناقدان و پژوهشگران همراه بوده است. شاید یک دلیل مهم برای این مسئله این باشد که چکامه «سرودی برای زیبایی اندیشه» در تقابل با آرای فلسفی و معنوی شلی قرار دارد. این شعر میان دو سرحد و کرانه قرار دارد: نیاز به مدلولی متعالی که به هستی و زندگی انسان معنا ببخشد و این درک و دریافت تراژیک که هیچ ضمانتی برای این مسئله وجود ندارد و این فقدان بنیادین را شاید نتوان هرگز جبران کرد. مقاله حاضر با بهره‌مندی از آرای اسلاوی ژیک می‌کوشد تا خوانشی از این چکامه به دست دهد و امر متعالی ایدئولوژیک را در بستر شعر شلی تشریح کند. شلی معتقد بود که دسترسی تام و تمام به زیبایی، اگر ممکن شود، می‌تواند بی‌یقینی و بی‌ثباتی را از زندگی بشری حذف کند.

**واژگان کلیدی:** شلی، «سرودی برای زیبایی اندیشه»، رمانتیسیسم، ژیک، امر متعالی ایدئولوژیک

اطلاعات مقاله

مقاله پژوهشی

تاریخ دریافت: یکشنبه، 14 شهریور 1400

تاریخ تصویب: یکشنبه، 25 اردیبهشت 1401

تاریخ انتشار: دوشنبه، 9 خرداد 1401

تاریخ آنلاین: یکشنبه، 25 اردیبهشت 1401

شناسه دیجیتال مقاله:

<http://dx.doi.org/10.22049/jalda.2022.27401.1348>

شاپای الکترونیکی: 2821-0204-2820-8986 شاپای چاپی: 2820-8986

## آمبروز گمشده در شهر بازی: تلاقی مکانیک کوانتومی، دازاین و باروک

علی امامی پور (نویسنده مسئول)

دانشجوی دکتری زبان و ادبیات انگلیسی، پردیس بین المللی کیش، دانشگاه تهران، تهران، ایران  
Email: a.emamipour@ut.ac.ir

فریده پورگیو

استاد زبان و ادبیات انگلیسی، گروه زبانشناسی و زبانهای خارجی، دانشکده ادبیات و علوم انسانی،  
دانشگاه شیراز، شیراز، ایران  
Email: fpourgiv@rose.shirazu.ac.ir

### چکیده

با افزایش تبادلات بین رشته‌ای امکان رد و بدل شدن ایده‌ها و مفاهیم بین رشته‌های علوم انسانی و علوم طبیعی مهیا شده است. همواره از جان بارت بعنوان یکی از معروفترین نویسندگان که هم در آثار ادبی و مقالات غیر ادبی خود از مفاهیم بروز سایر رشته‌ها وام گرفته است و در نتیجه باعث جانی دوباره دادن بر پیکر ادبیات شده است یاد می‌شود. علیرغم اینکه نگارش رمان «گمشده در شهر بازی» اثر جان بارت و فراگیر شدن اصول فیزیک کوانتومی در محافل علمی و اجتماعی در بازه زمانی یکسانی بوقوع پیوستند، تاثیر مفاهیم فیزیک مدرن که تصویری دقیق تر درباره حقیقت نمایان می‌سازد در این اثر مورد غفلت قرار گرفته و اکثر پژوهشگران مصرند تا این اثر را در چارچوب پسا ساختارگرایی، که مدت‌هاست فرسوده شده است، مطالعه کنند. این مطالعه برآنست تا با استفاده از مفاهیمی که اساس تفسیر کپنهاگی و تفسیر دنیاهای موازی مکانیک کوانتومی بر آنها بنا شده است، چشم اندازی جدید را در داستان‌های حول شخصیت آمبروز ارائه داده و این اثر جذاب را از آماج تفاسیر کسل کننده فراداستانی حفظ کند.

واژگان کلیدی: باروک، پدیدارشناسی، مکانیک کوانتومی، اصل عدم قطعیت، دوگانگی موج و ذره

اطلاعات مقاله

مقاله پژوهشی

تاریخ دریافت: سه شنبه، ۶ مهر ۱۴۰۰

تاریخ تصویب: یکشنبه، ۲۵ اردیبهشت ۱۴۰۱

تاریخ انتشار: دوشنبه، ۹ خرداد ۱۴۰۱

تاریخ آنلاین: یکشنبه، ۲۵ اردیبهشت ۱۴۰۱

شناسه دیجیتال مقاله:

<http://dx.doi.org/10.22049/jalda.2022.27427.1358>

شابای الکترونیکی: ۲۸۲۱-۰۲۰۴-۲۸۲۱-۰۹۸۶-۲۸۲۰

## اشتیاق به دانستن در رمان «پس از مرگ» اثر پاتریشا کورنول

مه‌ری نورمحمدنژاد بقایی

کارشناس ارشد زبان و ادبیات انگلیسی، دانشگاه شهید مدنی آذربایجان، تبریز، ایران

Email: mehri6413@gmail.com

ابوالفضل رضانی

استادیار زبان و ادبیات انگلیسی، گروه زبان و ادبیات انگلیسی، دانشکده ادبیات و علوم انسانی، دانشگاه

شهید مدنی آذربایجان، تبریز، ایران

Email: a.ramazani@azaruniv.ac.ir (also: ramazani57@yahoo.co.uk)

سارا ساعی دیباور (نویسنده مسئول)

استادیار زبان و ادبیات انگلیسی، گروه زبان و ادبیات انگلیسی، دانشکده علوم انسانی و اجتماعی، دانشگاه

مازندران، بابلسر، ایران

Email: s.saei@umz.ac.ir; saei\_sarah@yahoo.com

### چکیده

«نمی‌توانم از خواندنش دست بکشم» متداول‌ترین گفته خوانندگان داستان‌های کارآگاهی است که با خواندن داستان‌های جنایی کنترل خود را از دست می‌دهند. ساختار بسیار واضح این ژانر مدام تکرار می‌شود؛ جنایتی به وقوع می‌پیوندد و کارآگاهی جستجو و تحقیق برای دستگیری جنایتکار را آغاز می‌کند. چطور داستانی پر از معما و حوادث ناواضح چنین جالب است؟ مهم‌تر از آن، چرا خواننده از خواندن کتابی پر از اعمال بد و غیرانسانی جنایتکار دست برنمی‌دارد؟ عنصر مهمی که این ژانر را به عنوان ادبیات محبوب عام مطرح می‌نماید چیست؟ در این مقاله قصد داریم با تمرکز بر مفهوم «حدس و گمان» امپرتو اِکو به عنوان یکی از اصلی‌ترین خصوصیات شهرت داستان کارآگاهی به سوالات فوق پاسخ دهیم. برای دستیابی به هدف مذکور، از مقاله «داستان‌ها برای سرگرمی هستند: تئوری تأثیر ساختاری داستان‌ها» نوشته ویلیام اف بروور و ادواردای وسیل بهره گرفته‌ایم تا با بررسی سه عامل تحلیل‌گر - شگفتی، شک، و کنجکاوی - که باعث جذابیت داستان می‌شوند از ادعای «دانش» پرده برداریم.

واژگان کلیدی: داستان کارآگاهی، دانش، شک، شگفتی، کنجکاوی

اطلاعات مقاله

مقاله پژوهشی

تاریخ دریافت: پنجشنبه، ۱۴ بهمن ۱۴۰۰

تاریخ تصویب: یکشنبه، ۲۵ اردیبهشت ۱۴۰۱

تاریخ انتشار: دوشنبه، ۹ خرداد ۱۴۰۱

تاریخ آنلاین: یکشنبه، ۲۵ اردیبهشت ۱۴۰۱

شناسه دیجیتال مقاله: <http://dx.doi.org/10.22049/jalda.2022.27649.1393>

شاپای الکترونیکی: ۲۸۲۱-۰۲۰۴ شاپای چاپی: ۲۸۲۰-۸۹۸۶

## دوگانگی، تقلید، و نامأنوس: شخصیت پسااستعماری در رمان «درخت عروس» نوشته بهاراتی موکرجی

معصومه بایی

کارشناسی ارشد زبان و ادبیات انگلیسی، دانشگاه گلستان، گلستان، ایران

Email: masoumebaee@yahoo.com

بهزاد پورقرب (نویسنده مسئول)

استادیار ادبیات انگلیسی، گروه زبان و ادبیات انگلیسی، دانشکده علوم انسانی و اجتماعی، دانشگاه گلستان، گرگان، ایران

Email: b.pourgharib@gu.ac.ir; pourgharib\_lit@yahoo.com

عبدالباقی رضایی تالار پستی

استادیار ادبیات انگلیسی، گروه زبان و ادبیات انگلیسی، دانشکده علوم انسانی و اجتماعی، دانشگاه گلستان، گرگان، ایران

Email: a\_rezaei\_t@yahoo.com

### چکیده

تلاش برای ایجاد سازش بین خواسته‌های دو جامعه فرهنگی متضاد در بسیاری از آثار ادبی به ویژه در ادبیات پسااستعماری دیده می‌شود؛ از جمله در رمان‌های بهاراتی موکرجی و اثر «درخت عروس» این تلاش چشمگیرانه خودنمایی کرده و محوریت اصلی آن در شخصیت‌های داستان قرار گرفته است و در پلان رمان نیز به صورت مشهود دیده می‌شود. حال این مقاله به بررسی نظریه‌های هومی بابا در زمینه شکاف و فاصله بین فرهنگ‌های شرقی و غربی می‌پردازد و یافته‌های پژوهش نشان داده که جامعه این چینی منجر به ازهم‌گسیختگی هویت افراد پسااستعماری می‌گردد و اصطلاح دوگانگی و تقلید دو مفهوم مهم و برجسته‌ای هستند که به عنوان واژگان کلیدی در آثار پسااستعماری هومی بابا جای گرفته اند، بدین شکل که در رمان «درخت عروس»، قهرمان داستان خود را بین دو فرهنگ در تضادی می‌یابد که هر دو فرهنگ سعی بر آن دارند که او را به قلمرو خود بکشانند و در امتداد این موضوع از آنجا که تقلید قهرمان داستان از فرهنگ مبدع (دیگری) پذیرش و رد همزمان را با خود همراه دارد یک امر کنایه آمیز دیده می‌شود با این توصیف که تارا چاترجی قهرمان داستان در حالی که سعی بر تقلید از هنجارها و معیارهای فرهنگ مبدع دارد، اما تحت تأثیر فرهنگ اجدادی و نیاکان خود نیز قرار گرفته است؛ از دستاورد مقاله حاضر اینگونه استدلال می‌شود که چنین شرایط نامناسبی می‌تواند برای فرد فضای روانی و اجتماعی نامطلوبی را بسازد و او را در یک بحران هویتی عمیق قرار دهد.

**واژگان کلیدی:** «درخت عروس»، بهاراتی موکرجی، دوگانگی، تقلید، نامأنوس

اطلاعات مقاله

مقاله پژوهشی

تاریخ دریافت: دوشنبه، ۶ اردیبهشت ۱۴۰۰

تاریخ تصویب: یکشنبه، ۲۵ اردیبهشت ۱۴۰۱

تاریخ انتشار: دوشنبه، ۹ خرداد ۱۴۰۱

تاریخ آنلاین: یکشنبه، ۲۵ اردیبهشت ۱۴۰۱

شناسه دیجیتال مقاله: [HTTP://DX.DOI.ORG/10.22049/JALDA.2022.27229.1305](http://dx.doi.org/10.22049/JALDA.2022.27229.1305)

شاپای الکترونیکی: ۲۸۲۱-۰۲۰۴ تا ۲۸۲۱-۰۸۹۸۶





دانشگاه شهید مدنی آذربایجان

دوفصلنامه زبان‌شناسی کاربردی ادبیات  
کاربردی: پوش‌ها و پیشرفت‌ها

صاحب امتیاز:

دانشگاه شهید مدنی آذربایجان

مدیر مسئول:

دکتر داود امینی

سرمدیر:

دکتر کریم صادقی

مدیر داخلی:

دکتر رضا یل شرز

نشانی:

کیلومتر ۳۵، جاده تبریز- مراغه، دانشگاه شهید مدنی آذربایجان، دانشکده ادبیات و علوم انسانی، دفتر دوفصلنامه.

تلفاکس:

۰۴۱-۳۴۳۲۷۵۵۹

کدپستی:

۵۳۷۵۱۷۱۳۷۹

آدرس سایت نشریه:

URL: <http://jalda.azaruniv.ac.ir>

شماره انتشار:

سال دهم، شماره اول

تاریخ انتشار: یکشنبه، ۱۱ اردیبهشت ۱۴۰۱  
بها: ۵۰۰۰ ریال

شمارگان: ۱۰۰ جلد

این دوفصلنامه با مجوز شماره ثبت ۹۱/۳۴۷۱۵ وزارت فرهنگ و ارشاد اسلامی چاپ و منتشر می‌شود.

شاپای الکترونیکی: ۲۸۲۱-۰۲۰۴

شاپای چاپی: ۲۸۲۰-۸۹۸۶



اعضای هیأت تحریریه بین‌المللی

|  |   |                            |
|--|---|----------------------------|
| دانشگاه آستفولد، نروژ  | استاد ادبیات انگلیسی، ادبیات کانادا و فرهنگ بریتانیا                              | پروفیسور جین ماتیسون اکستم |
| دانشگاه جورج تاون، واشنگتن، ایالات متحده آمریکا                            | استاد زبان‌شناسی کاربردی، دوزبانگی و فراگیری زبان دوم                             | پروفیسور لوردس اورتگا      |
| دانشگاه اوکلند، اوکلند، نیوزیلند   | استاد زبان‌شناسی کاربردی، مطالعات زبان و زبان‌شناسی                               | پروفیسور گری بارکوزن       |
| دانشگاه آگدر، کریستین ساند، نروژ   | استاد زبان‌شناسی کاربردی  | پروفیسور یل جان ثیبالت     |
| دانشگاه سه گی، پتالینگ جایا، سلانگور، مالزی                                | استاد زبان‌شناسی کاربردی و آموزش زبان انگلیسی                                     | پروفیسور شمیم رافیک گالا   |
| دانشگاه اوتاوا، اوتاوا، کانادا   | استاد مطالعات ترجمه   | پروفیسور لوئیس وان فلوئو   |
| دانشگاه ایالتی پنسیلوانیا، استیت کالج، ایالات متحده آمریکا                 | استاد زبان‌شناسی کاربردی، زبان نگلیسی و مطالعات آسیا                              | پروفیسور سورش کاناراجا     |
| دانشگاه کالیفرنیا در برکلی، کالیفرنیا، برکلی، ایالات متحده آمریکا          | استاد بازنشسته زبان‌شناسی کاربردی   | پروفیسور کلیر جین کرمش     |
| دانشکده علوم تربیتی و علوم انسانی، دانشگاه نورد، لوانگر، نروژ              | دانشیار آموزش زبان انگلیسی و زبان‌شناسی کاربردی                                   | دکتر سعید کریمی اقدام      |
| دانشگاه ایالتی پنسیلوانیا، استیت کالج، پنسیلوانیا، ایالات متحده آمریکا     | استاد آموزش زبان و زبان‌شناسی کاربردی   | پروفیسور جیمز پی لانتولف   |
| دانشگاه ایالتی آریزونا، تمپه، آریزونا، ایالات متحده آمریکا                 | استاد زبان انگلیسی و مدیر برنامه مهارت نوشتاری زبان دوم در دانشگاه ایالتی آریزونا | پروفیسور یل کی ماتسودا     |
| گروه زبان و آموزش علوم انسانی، دانشکده مطالعات آموزشی، دانشگاه پوترا مالزی | استاد انگلیسی بعنوان زبان خارجی   | دکتر جایاکارا مواکاندان    |
| مدیر مرکز مطالعات کاربردی زبان، دانشگاه بیواسکیلا، بیواسکیلا، فنلاند       | استاد زبان‌شناسی کاربردی و سنجش زبان  | پروفیسور آری هوتا          |
| دانشگاه کالج لندن، لندن، انگلستان  | استاد زبان‌شناسی کاربردی  | پروفیسور لی وی             |



دانشگاه شهید مدنی آذربایجان

دوفصلنامه زبان‌شناسی کاربردی ادبیات  
کاربردی: پوشش‌ها و پیشرفت‌ها

صاحب امتیاز:

دانشگاه شهید مدنی آذربایجان

مدیر مسئول:

دکتر داود امینی

سردبیر:

دکتر کریم صادقی

مدیر داخلی:

دکتر رضا یل شرز

نشانی:

کیلومتر ۳۵، جاده تبریز- مراغه، دانشگاه  
شهید مدنی آذربایجان، دانشکده ادبیات و علوم  
انسانی، دفتر دو فصلنامه.

تلفاکس:

۰۴۱-۳۴۳۲۷۵۵۹

کد پستی:

۵۳۷۵۱۷۱۳۷۹

آدرس سایت نشریه:

URL: <http://jalda.azaruniv.ac.ir>

شماره انتشار:

سال دهم، شماره اول

تاریخ انتشار: یکشنبه، ۱۱ اردیبهشت ۱۴۰۱

بها: ۵۰۰۰ ریال

شمارگان: ۱۰۰ جلد

این دوفصلنامه با مجوز شماره ثبت ۹۱/۳۴۷۱۵  
وزارت فرهنگ و ارشاد اسلامی چاپ و منتشر  
می‌شود.

شاپای الکترونیکی:

۲۸۲۱-۰۲۰۴

شاپای چاپی:

۲۸۲۰-۸۹۸۶



## اعضای هیأت تحریریه داخلی

|                          |                                     |                             |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| دکتر داود امینی          | دانشیار آموزش زبان انگلیسی          | دانشگاه شهید مدنی آذربایجان |
| دکتر علی اکبر انصارین    | استاد آموزش زبان انگلیسی            | دانشگاه تبریز               |
| دکتر بیوک بهنام          | دانشیار بازنشسته آموزش زبان انگلیسی | دانشگاه شهید مدنی آذربایجان |
| دکتر بهرام بهین          | دانشیار آموزش زبان انگلیسی          | دانشگاه شهید مدنی آذربایجان |
| دکتر کریم صادقی          | استاد آموزش زبان انگلیسی            | دانشگاه ارومیه              |
| دکتر فرهنگ فرخی          | استاد آموزش زبان انگلیسی            | دانشگاه تبریز               |
| دکتر پروین قاسمی         | استاد بازنشسته ادبیات انگلیسی       | دانشگاه شیراز               |
| دکتر کاظم لطفی پور ساعدی | استاد بازنشسته زبان‌شناسی کاربردی   | دانشگاه تبریز               |
| دکتر احد مهروند          | دانشیار ادبیات انگلیسی              | دانشگاه شهید مدنی آذربایجان |

## اعضای مشاور هیأت تحریریه

|                      |                                      |                                    |
|----------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| دکتر فریده پورگیو    | استاد بازنشسته زبان و ادبیات انگلیسی | دانشگاه شیراز                      |
| دکتر علیرضا جلیلی‌فر | استاد زبان‌شناسی کاربردی             | دانشگاه شهید چمران اهواز           |
| دکتر ثلاثیه چلا      | استاد زبان‌شناسی کاربردی             | دانشگاه USM مالزی                  |
| دکتر مهناز سعیدی     | دانشیار آموزش زبان انگلیسی           | دانشگاه آزاد اسلامی واحد تبریز     |
| دکتر مینو عالمی      | دانشیار آموزش زبان انگلیسی           | دانشگاه آزاد اسلامی واحد تهران غرب |
| دکتر رضا عبدی        | دانشیار آموزش زبان انگلیسی           | دانشگاه محقق اردبیلی               |
| دکتر سید محمد علوی   | استاد زبان‌شناسی کاربردی             | دانشگاه تهران                      |
| دکتر بهروز عزیدفتری  | استاد بازنشسته زبان‌شناسی کاربردی    | دانشگاه تبریز                      |
| دکتر جواد غلامی      | دانشیار آموزش زبان انگلیسی           | دانشگاه ارومیه                     |
| دکتر سعید کتابی      | دانشیار زبان‌شناسی کاربردی           | دانشگاه اصفهان                     |

ویراستاران انگلیسی: دکتر ابوالفضل رضانی و دکتر فواد بهزادپور

کارشناس نشریات: مهسا مهرانگیز

صفحه‌آرا و حروف‌چین: مؤسسه آیشن کامپیوتر