بسم الله الرحمن الرحیم

قابل توجه نویسندگان و مترجمان:
● مجلهٔ رشد آموزش زبان حاصل تحقیقات پژوهشگران و متخصصان تعلیم و تربیت، به ویژه دبیران و مدرسان را، در صورتی که در سایر نشریات درج نشده و مرتبط با موضوع مجله باشد، می‌پذیرد. ● مطالب باید حروف‌چینی شده باشند. ● شکل قرار گرفتن جدول‌ها، نمودارها و تصاویر ضمیمه باید در حاشیهٔ مطلب نیز مشخص شود. ● نثر مقاله باید روان و از نظر دستور زبان فارسی درست باشد و در انتخاب واژه‌های علمی و فنی دقت لازم به‌کار رفته باشد. ● مقاله‌های ترجمه‌شده باید با متن اصلی همخوانی داشته باشند و متن اصلی نیز ضمیمهٔ مقاله باشد. ● در متن‌های ارسالی به‌جای واژه‌ها و اصطلاحات بیگانه باید تا حد امکان از معادل‌های فارسی استفاده شده باشد. ● فهرست منابع هر مقاله باید کامل و شامل نام نویسنده، نام اثر، نام مترجم، محل نشر، ناشر و سال انتشار اثر باشد. ● مجله در رد، قبول، ویرایش و تلخیص مقاله‌های رسیده مختار است. ● آرای مندرج در مقاله‌ها، ضرورتاً مبین نظر دفتر انتشارات و تکنولوژی نیست و مسئولیت پاسخ‌گویی به پرسش‌های خوانندگان، با خود نویسنده یا مترجم است. ● مجله از بازگرداندن مطالبی که برای چاپ مناسب تشخیص داده نمی‌شوند، معذور است.

کتاب درسی و نوآوری آموزشی

با شادباش دههٔ فجر انقلاب اسلامی، موفقیت دست‌اندرکاران تعلیم‌وتربیت را در تحقق اهداف سند تحول و سند برنامهٔ درسی آرزومندیم. در این میان، بی‌مناسبت نیست که نقش کتاب درسی را در تحول نظام آموزشی مورد توجه قرار دهیم.

تغییر در برنامهٔ درسی با ایجاد نوآوری آموزشی در کتاب درسی نمود عینی پیدا می‌کند. به عبارت دیگر، کلیهٔ تصمیمات و برنامه‌ریزی‌های مربوط به تغییر در چارچوب کتاب درسی به اجرا در می‌آیند. با توجه به محوری بودن کتاب درسی، معمولاً در روند تغییر هزینه و وقت زیادی صرف تولید آن می‌شود و در کلیهٔ مراحل تولید، توزیع تا استفاده تا حد امکان مورد توجه و حمایت قرار می‌گیرد. ظاهراً همهٔ دست‌اندرکاران

آموزش با آگاهی از نقش و جایگاه کتاب درسی انتظار دارند نوآوری آموزشی در درجۀ اول از این طریق معرفی شود و به‌تدریج نهادینه گردد. می‌توان استدلال کرد که چنین انتظاری بی‌پایه نیست؛ چرا که کتاب درسی بیش از هر عامل دیگری شرایط لازم برای نهادینه کردن تغییرات آموزشی را دارد. معمولاً هر تغییری در فرهنگ آموزشی موجود اختلال ایجاد می‌کند و لذا قبول تغییرات مستلزم ایجاد ساختاری است که بتواند این اختلال را در حد قابل تحملی کاهش دهد، سمت‌وسوی تغییر را با نتایج ملموس نشان دهد و شرایط لازم را برای اتخاذ تصمیمات جمعی و پشتیبانی عمومی فراهم کند. کتاب درسی با مشخص کردن محتوا و فعالیت‌های آموزشی به معلمان این امکان را می‌دهد که بر نوآوری‌های برنامه تمرکز و آموزش را در آن جهت مدیریت کنند. به‌علاوه، با ورود کتاب درسی به محیط‌های آموزشی فعالیت‌های انفرادی مورد پشتیبانی جمعی قرار می‌گیرند و لذا روند تغییر تسهیل می‌شود.

در عین حال، تحقق چنین انتظاری منوط به پیش‌زمینه‌هایی است که امکان ایفای نقش مثبت و سازندۀ کتاب درسی را فراهم می‌کنند. یکی از مهم‌ترین این پیش‌زمینه‌ها طراحی مواد آموزشی به‌گونه‌ای است که مدیریت یادگیری را برای معلم تسهیل کند. لازم به یادآوری است که محتوای آموزشی کتاب درسی به‌تنهایی تعیین‌کنندۀ اهداف آموزشی و چگونگی تحقق این اهداف در کلاس درس نیست. اهداف آموزشی و طراحی نقشۀ یادگیری تا حد زیادی به برداشت معلم از نیازهای یادگیری زبان‌آموزان و آشنایی با پیش‌زمینه‌های یادگیری آن‌ها بستگی دارد. به‌علاوه، در کلاس درس طرح درس معلم ـ که براساس محتوای کتاب درسی و برداشت‌های معلم از پیش‌زمینه و شرایط یادگیری تهیه شده است ـ در تعامل با دانش‌آموزان تعدیل می‌شود. توجه به تمایز بین طراحی محتوا ـ که توسط مؤلفان کتاب درسی قبلاً انجام گرفته ـ و مدیریت یادگیری ـ که توسط معلم انجام می‌گیرد ـ این نکته را روشن می‌سازد که باید بین این دو تناسبی وجود داشته باشد؛ به این معنی که محتوای کتاب باید تا حد زیادی منطبق با نیازهای یادگیری طراحی شود و معلم نیز به محتوا و نیازهای یادگیری آگاهی کافی داشته باشد و بتواند شکاف بین این دو را با اضافه کردن، کم کردن، تعدیل یا تغییر ترتیب فعالیت‌ها و محتوای یادگیری پر کند. شاید کسانی که باور دارند کتاب درسی به ایجاد فرهنگ می‌انجامد که وابستگی به کتاب و ضعف در نوآوری و ابتکار از مشخصات آن به‌شمار می‌آید، می‌خواهند بر این نکته تأکید کنند که سازماندهی تدریس براساس محتوای

از پیش تعیین شده بدون توجه به نیازهای یادگیری، معلم را از نقشی مدیریتی خود در روند یادگیری محروم می‌سازد و این خود عاملی بازدارنده در رشد معلم است و علاوه بر این، کارایی آموزش، میزان یادگیری و انگیزۀ زبان‌آموزان را کاهش می‌دهد. با این پیش‌زمینه می‌توانیم نتیجه بگیریم که توفیق کتاب درسی در ایفای نقشی سازنده در نوآوری آموزشی مستلزم آن است که علاوه بر انتخاب درست و منطبق با نیازهای یادگیری محتوا، در کتاب معلم آگاهی‌های لازم در مورد اهداف و چگونگی آموزش محتوا با توجه به شرایط گوناگون یادگیری به معلمان ارائه شود. در اینجا باید نقش آموزش معلمان و مشارکتشان در طراحی فعالیت‌های یادگیری و چگونگی مدیریت یادگیری را نیز یادآوری کنیم.

پیش‌زمینۀ مهم دیگری که به کتاب درسی در ایفای نقش سازندۀ خویش کمک می‌کند، رویکرد برنامه‌ریزان در اشاعۀ نوآوری است. رویکرد تجویزی اشاعه ـ که قدرت انتخاب را از معلمان سلب می‌کند ـ به کاهش میزان پذیرش نوآوری می‌انجامد. این بدان معنی است که معلمان، آموزش محتوای جدید را با روش‌های گذشته دنبال خواهند کرد و اگر هم تغییری در آن‌ها ایجاد کنند، برایند تغییرات همگرایی لازم برای نهادینه‌شدن نوآوری را نخواهد داشت. به‌همین دلیل، توصیه می‌شود در اشاعه از رویکرد مشارکتی اقناعی استفاده شود تا معلمان از طریق مشارکت در فرایند تغییر، نتایج مثبتِ آن را خود تجربه کنند. لازمۀ اجرای این رویکرد، واقعی کردن مشارکت از طریق ایجاد سازکاری است که در آن بازخورد مشارکتی در بهبود تغییرات نقش ایفا کند. در شرایطی که امکان اعمال نظرات مشارکتی وجود نداشته باشد، نمی‌توان انتظار داشت که مشارکت جدی و واقعی شکل بگیرد.

نکتۀ آخر اینکه گرچه کتاب درسی در منظومۀ برنامۀ درسی عنصری محوری محسوب می‌شود، ایفای نقش محوری مستلزم توجه به سایر مؤلفه‌های برنامۀ درسی است که در ایفای این نقش سهیم‌اند. برای مثال، می‌توانیم به مقولۀ سنجش و ارزشیابی اشاره کنیم که سازماندهی آن باید به‌گونه‌ای باشد که اهداف برنامه را بدون کم و کاست پوشش دهد و نقش تکوینی و مجموعی آن به بهبود روند آموزش و یادگیری کمک کند. در شمارۀ حاضر بحث سنجش کلاسی در گفت‌وگو با دکتر عبدالمهدی ریاضی به تفصیل مورد بحث قرار گرفته است. به‌همین دلیل، از پرداختن به جزئیات نقش سنجش و ارزشیابی در برنامۀ درسی در گفتار این شماره خودداری می‌کنیم. امید است این گفت‌وگو مورد توجه خوانندگان مجله قرار گیرد.

تاریخـچـه و کارکـردهـای پژوهشــکدهٔ زبـــان ملل در گفت‌وگو با دکتر نادر حـقانی

محمدرضا عنانی‌سراب
عضو هیئت علمی دانشگاه شهید بهشتی
Email: reza_ananisarab@yahoo.uk

اشاره

مراکز آموزشی و پژوهشی داخل کشور نقش بسیار مهمی در پیشبرد اهداف آموزش زبان‌های خارجی ایفا می‌کنند. پژوهشکده زبان ملل که به همت دکتر نادر حقانی عضو هیئت علمی دانشکده زبان‌های خارجی دانشگاه تهران و عضو هیئت تحریریه رشد زبان خارجی تأسیس شده در نوع خود منحصر به فرد است و با توجه به پتانسیل بالای پژوهشی خود می‌تواند در حل معضلات آموزشی زبان در کشور نقش مهمی ایفا کند. جهت آشنایی خوانندگان محترم مجله که خود دست‌اندرکار آموزش زبان می‌باشند گفت‌وگویی را به‌منظور تشریح تاریخچه، نقش و جایگاه پژوهشکده با دکتر نادر حقانی که مدیریت پژوهشکده را برعهده دارند ترتیب داده‌ایم که مشروح آن در زیر آمده است. از دکتر حقانی به‌خاطر قبول شرکت در گفت‌وگو سپاسگزاریم.

در این فرصت، ابتدا تلاش می‌کنم فلسفهٔ فکری مؤسسان این مرکز پژوهشی را در سال ٨٤ -١٣٨٣ در مورد تأسیس چنین مرکزی به اطلاع شـما برسانم و سـپس دربارهٔ موضوع تغییر مرکز پژوهشــی به پژوهشـکدهٔ زبان ملل در فروردین سـال جاری نیز مطالبی را عرض کنـم. همه می‌دانیم که زبان نقطـهٔ کانونی تعاملات انسـان اسـت. تفکرات انسـان در زبان شـکل می‌گیرد که البته از نظر ابزاری به شدت ساده اما از نظر محتوایی پیچیده‌ترین وسـیلهٔ ارتباطی است. بر این اساس، از نظـر ابزاری، محتوایی و عملکردی لازم اسـت زبان، چه ملی و چه فراملی، مورد تحقیق قرار گیرد. کلید ورود به هر جامعه‌ای زبان آن جامعه اسـت و ما برای اینکه ابعاد مختلف این کلید را بشناسـیم، باید جنبه‌های مختلف آن را مـورد تحقیق قرار دهیم. همان‌طور که عرض کردم، اولین ارتباط عاطفی انسان با جامعهٔ غیر خودش از طریق زبان برقرار می‌شود. تسلط بر زبان نوعی ابراز علاقه به فرهنگ اسـت؛ زیرا زبان در فرهنگ، ادبیات و تاریخ ملت‌ها مسـتقر است و بر این اسـاس، یادگیری آن به شـکل‌گیری ارتباط بین انسـان‌ها کمک می‌کند. امروزه قدرت کشورها در حوزه‌های مختلف صنعتی، تجاری، علمی، کشاورزی و غیره، در زبان متجلی می‌شود. نمونه‌های عملی این تجلی در حوزهٔ فلسفی زبان آلمانی و در حوزهٔ حقوق، زبان فرانسه است. زمانی‌که زبان فرانسـه وارد ایران می‌شود، در کشور ما محتوای فکـری حقوقی از زبـان عربی اخذ می‌شــده اما در مراودات و تنظیم قراردادهـا بسـتر زبانی زبان فرانسـه اسـت. زبان خود ما یکی از زیباتریـن زبان‌های دنیـا از منظـر ادبی اسـت

و طـی قرن‌ها هم این‌گونه بوده اسـت. ما اگر به جهان اسـلام نگاه کنیم، می‌بینیم که در طول قرن‌ها سـه کشور با سه حوزهٔ متفاوت وجود داشـته‌اند که به نوعی در دنیای اسلام حرف اول را می‌زده‌اند. دولت عثمانی، کشـورهای عربـی، و ایران. دولت عثمانی و به تبع آن زبان ترکی از جنبهٔ سیاسی فوق‌العاده رشد می‌کنند؛ چون عثمانـی یکی از قدرت‌هایی بوده که طی قرون متمادی در حوزهٔ وسـیعی از جهان سـیطره داشته است و لذا بخش سیاسی این زبان خیلی قوی می‌شود.

زبان عربی از منظر دینی عامل تمامی محتوای دینی است و لذا از این منظر این زبان فوق‌العاده قوی است. زبان فارسی، زبان ادبی اسـت. البته جنبه‌های مختلفی دارد ولی در حوزهٔ ادبیات از منظر کلی بسیار غنی است. در واقع، در زمینهٔ تولیدات ادبی خیلیِ کار کـرده و حتی به دربارهای خـارج از قلمرو خویش، مثلاً هند، نیز راه یافته اسـت. در آن دربارها زبان رسـمی زبان فارسی بوده و این به‌خاطر جنبهٔ ادبی این زبان است. لازم است تحقیق شود که چرا یک زبان، مثلاً به زبان فنی تبدیل می‌شود. اگـر در حوزهٔ فنی به زبان‌های مختلف نگاه کنیم، می‌بینیم که زبان فارسـی آن‌قدر برد علمی ندارد که تمامی تحولات علم و دانش به این زبان نوشـته و نگاشته شوند. در دوره‌های مختلف می‌بینیم که زبان علم تغییر کرده است؛ زمانی زبان فرانسه بوده و بعـد زبان آلمانی مطرح شـده و الان هم که در مجموع، این حوزه در سیطرهٔ زبان انگلیسی است. در روابط بین‌المللی نیز از این زبان استفاده می‌شود. از سویی، در حوزهٔ علم و فناوری هم این زبان توانسته است توانایی‌های خود را به‌شدت افزایش دهد. بر این اساس، نیاز است که این زبان مورد تحقیق قرار گیرد. این عوامل باعث شـدند که در دانشگاه‌های کشور زبان‌هـای خارجی تدریـس شـود. در مجمـوع، زبان‌های خارجـی اکنون در

سه مقطع ارائه می‌شوند. منظور از زبان خارجی زبان ملل است و در مقابل آن، زبان فارسی وجود دارد.

ما احسـاس کردیم که زبان فارسی از این زاویه هم باید مورد تحقیق قرار گیرد تا ببینیم این زبان در مقابل سایر زبان‌ها مثلاً زبان فرانسـه، عربی و غیره چه مخاطبانـی دارد و در چه حوزه‌ای می‌خواهند دانشـجویان را تربیت کنند. حاصل چنین تحقیقی مشخص می‌کند که این زبان و سایر زبان‌ها قرار است در زمینهٔ ارتباطات علمـی، ارتباطات دینی یا ارتباطات ادبی و غیـره چه باری را تحمل کنند. اینکه افراد این یا آن زبان را یاد می‌گیرنـد، چه اهمیتی در حیطهٔ شـغلی آن‌ها دارد؟ مجموعهٔ این‌ها باعث شـد که جمعی از متخصصان سـه زبان انگلیسی، فرانسه و آلمانی جمع شویم و با هم‌فکری یک طرح توجیهی را تنظیم کنیم. این طرح را به دانشـگاه تهران فرستادیم و گفتیم که بنا داریم یک مرکز پژوهشی زبان خارجی تأسیس کنیم. در مردادماه ۱۳۸۴ دانشگاه تهران موافقت اولیهٔ خود را با تأسیس این مرکز اعلام کرد. براسـاس مقرراتی که هم در دانشگاه و هم در وزارت‌خانه وجود دارد، می‌بایست در یک بازهٔ زمانی دو ساله کلیهٔ فعالیت‌های تحقیقاتی و پژوهشی که مؤسسه یا این مرکز پژوهشـی انجام داده بود، جمع‌آوری و به دانشگاه منتقل شود. بعد برای اخذ موافقت‌های اصولی و قطعی، اقدامات لازم صورت گیرد. این مسـیر را از سال ۱۳۸۴ تا سال ۱۳۹۳ ادامه دادیم و به ترتیب، موافقت اولیهٔ، اصولی و قطعی را گرفتیم. ما در زمان تأسـیس، کار خود را با سـه گروه پژوهشی آغاز کردیم و طبق روال قانونی هم این‌گونه اسـت که ابتدا بایستی گروه پژوهشی شـکل گیرد. هنگامی که دو گروه پژوهشی شکل بگیرند، مرکز پژوهشـی تشکیل می‌شـود و هر مرکزی هم که دست‌کم سه گروه پژوهشی داشته باشد، می‌تواند به پژوهشکده تبدیل شود. باتوجه به اینکه مرکز پژوهشی ما از همان ابتدا سه گروه پژوهشی داشت، درخواسـت تبدیل مرکز به پژوهشکده را مطرح کردیم و در نهایت، وزارت‌خانـه در فروردین‌ماه ۱۳۹۳ با ارتقای مرکز پژوهشی به پژوهشکده موافقت کرد. در طول زمان نگاهمان به پژوهش‌های زبانی تغییر کرد و تصمیم گرفتیم کرسی‌های سه زبان را تأسـیس کنیم؛ یعنی سه کرسی برای زبان‌های آلمانی، فرانسه و انگلیسی. فکر تشکیل کرسی فعلاً در وزارت‌خانه وجود ندارد. آنچه مطرح است گروه‌های پژوهشی هستند اما ما تصمیم گرفتیم قلمرو زبان‌ها را مشخص کنیم و فارغ از حوزهٔ سیاسی هر زبان، کلیهٔ پژوهش‌های مربوط به آن زبان را در کرسی تجمیع کنیم. با تأسیس کرسی‌ها لازم بود در ساختار و ماهیت پژوهشی گروه‌ها تجدید نظر شـود. در این راسـتا، محیط‌های چهارگانهٔ زبانی تعریف شـدند؛ یعنی محیط خانواده به‌عنوان محیط اول زبانـی، کـه در آن زبان مادری بدون آموزش شـکل می‌گیرد. سپس محیط آموزشـگاه، از مدرسه تا دانشگاه، که در آن زبان به شکل کلاسیک آموخته می‌شود. محیط سوم، محیط جامعه

است کـه در آن حوزه‌هـای کاربـردی زبان‌هـای مختلـف را داریم که یادگیـری را تقویت می‌کننـد، و بالاخره محیط چهارم یا محیط مجازی که یادگیری زبان در آن بر بسـتری مجازی صورت می‌گیرد. بنابراین، دو گروه پژوهشی کلاسیک و مجازی براساس تقسیم‌بندی در پژوهشکده وجود دارد.

سومین گروه پژوهشی ما گروه ادبیات زبان است. منظور از ادبیات کلیهٔ تولیدات زبانی است. به عبارت دیگر، هر آنچه یک فرهنگ در قالب جغرافیا و زبان خود تولید کرده اسـت، ادبیات آن محسـوب می‌شود. هنگامی که شما آموزش زبان می‌دهید، در واقع، ادبیات تولید شـده با آن زبان اسـت که آموزش داده می‌شـود. در گروه پژوهشی ادبیات هدف آن است که ویژگی‌ها و ظرافت‌های زبان در حوزه‌های مختلف کاربرد زبان مشـخص شـود. گروه دیگر ما گروه زبان فنی است. جهان‌بینی سه حوزهٔ دانشـی دارد که عبارت‌اند از: حوزهٔ علم، حوزهٔ اندیشه، و حوزهٔ هنر. همهٔ این‌ها از زبان مشـترکی اسـتفاده می‌کنند. در حوزهٔ علـم زبان علمی اسـت و حتی این زبان علمـی در درون هر رشـته‌ای زبان خاص خود را دارد. ایـن زبان‌ها بار ویژه‌ای پیدا می‌کننـد که در قالـب واژگان تخصصی تجلی می‌یابد. مثلا در رشته‌های کامپیوتر، انرژی‌های نو، محیط‌زیست، و حتی فلسفه؛ در همهٔ این حوزه‌ها بار فنی زبان به‌شدت افزایش پیدا می‌کند. در زبـان فنی، هدف پیدا کردن ویژگی‌های زبان فنی اسـت و اینکـه باتوجه به ویژگی‌های آموزشـی، زبان فنی چگونه باید آموزش داده شـود. آخرین گروه هم گروه زبان مدیریتی است. در جامعه، سـازمان‌های اداری وظیفهٔ دسته‌بندی افراد را دارند. در سـازمان‌های دولتی و غیردولتی مراوده‌های زبانی به نوعی بازتاب‌دهندهٔ تفکرات مدیریتی و هدایتی هستند. لذا ممکن است در مواردی بار تحکمی داشـته باشند؛ چون رابطه از نوع رئیس و مرئوسی است. به‌هر حال، در جوامع مختلف زبانی با توجه به نوع روابط سازمانی بار تحکمی ممکن است کمتر یا بیشتر باشد. در مراودات سـازمانی هر دو زبان کتبی و شفاهی مورد استفاده قرار می‌گیرند. ما برای اینکه زبان سازمانی را بشناسیم، باید به زبان مورد استفادهٔ آن سازمان رجوع کنیم. یک سازمان مشابه با دو زبان مختلف ممکن اسـت ویژگی‌های متفاوتی داشـته باشند؛ مثلاً سـازمانی که براسـاس زبان آلمانی بنا شده، نوع نگاهش کاملاً متفاوت با سـازمانی است که براساس زبان فرانسه شکل گرفته اسـت؛ چرا که زبان دربردارندهٔ روابط افرادی هسـت که

مورد زبان فارسی و آموزش سایر زبان‌ها در درون نظام آموزشی کشور، بخشی از تحقیقات ما را تشکیل می‌دهد. حالا که زبان انتخاب شده، سؤال بعدی این است که با توجه به اینکه گران‌بهاترین گوهر انسانی زبان است و انسان باید از زبان حداکثر استفاده را بکند، چگونه می‌توان در کمترین زمان ممکن بیشترین میزان یادگیری را در یک زبان استحصال کرد؟ پس، بهینه‌سازی آموزش زبان از منظر زبانی و حتی محتوایی- یعنی محتوایی که به آن زبان باید آموزش داده شود- اهمیت پیدا می‌کند. بعد دیگری که مطرح می‌شود، ویژگی‌های افرادی است که این زبان را از طریق آموزش یاد می‌گیرند. ما درون نظام آموزشی خود آموزش زبان داریم. یعنی دانش‌آموز بالاجبار باید زبان یاد بگیرد. این تکلیف است اما می‌بینیم که او گاهی‌اوقات در خارج از محیط رسمی آموزشی هم به یادگیری زبان می‌پردازد. چرا این کار را می‌کند؟ انگیزهٔ او چیست؟ آیا انگیزه‌اش ابزاری است؟ صرفاً فکر می‌کند که یادگیری یک زبان وسیلهٔ بهتری برای تأمین آیندهٔ شغلی‌اش است یا انگیزهٔ او سازگاری است؟ وقتی در کشور ما تعداد زبان‌آموزان انگلیسی یا آلمانی یا فرانسه یا هر زبان دیگری بالا می‌رود، آیا تغییری در انگیزه‌ها ایجاد شده است؟ آیا از منظر این دو نوع انگیزه، زبان‌آموزی بهینه صورت می‌گیرد و اگر بهینه نیست چه دلایلی وجود دارد؟ قسمت سوم بحث دانشگاه‌های ماست که به یک زبان خاص گرایش بیشتری دارند. اگر ما رشته‌های دانشگاهی موجود را تقسیم کنیم، با توجه به موضوع آن‌ها می‌بینیم که یک زبان نمود بیشتری دارد. اکنون رشته‌های متنوعی در دانشگاه‌ها وجود دارد و اگر صرف‌نظر از دسته‌بندی موضوعی و فنی یک دسته‌بندی زبانی هم انجام بدهیم، می‌بینیم که مثلاً برای گروه رشته‌های فنی آموزش زبان را باز هم باید ریزتر کنیم. این بدان معنی است که فکر کنیم گروه فنی یا گروه علوم پایه یا رشتهٔ کامپیوتر بیشتر به چه زبانی گرایش دارند، محیط‌زیست به کدام زبان بیشتر گرایش دارد، در حوزهٔ مکانیک کدام زبان حرف اول را می‌زند، در حوزهٔ علوم انسانی مثلاً حوزهٔ حقوق چه زبانی، در حوزهٔ فلسفه چه زبانی، در حوزهٔ هنر چه زبانی و الی آخر. بعضی از کشورها، خود و زبانشان در یک رشتهٔ خاص نمود عینی زیادی دارند. برای نظام دانشگاهی ما هم مهارت خواندن، به‌عنوان یکی از اساسی‌ترین مهارت‌های هر انسان، چه در زبان مادری و چه در زبان خارجی، بسیار مهم است. فردی که وارد دانشگاه می‌شود، باید بتواند از متون تخصصی و ادبیات تخصصی رشتهٔ تحصیلی‌اش بهتر استفاده کند و این، تسلط ویژهٔ او را بر زبان خاص آن رشته می‌طلبد. ما افراد زیادی را داریم که از منظر مهارت تکلمی نمی‌توانند به زبان بیگانه صحبت کنند ولی در درک و فهم متون بسیار توانا هستند. حالا ما چگونه می‌توانیم نظام آموزشی خود را هدایت کنیم که از این زاویه به زبان

سازمان را شکل می‌دهند. این خلاصهٔ فلسفهٔ تشکیل پژوهشکدهٔ زبان ملل بود.

تسلط بر زبان نوعی ابراز علاقه به فرهنگ است؛ زیرا زبان در فرهنگ، ادبیات و تاریخ ملت‌ها مستقر است و بر این اساس، یادگیری آن به شکل‌گیری ارتباط بین انسان‌ها کمک می‌کند

● با عنایت به نگاه مجموعی به زبان، که بر این پژوهشکده حاکم است و سعی می‌کند به هر حال به جنبه‌های مختلف زبان اهمیت دهد، این سؤال مطرح می‌شود که با توجه به ابعاد گوناگون و پیچیدگی‌های هریک، در حال حاضر اولویت‌های شما در این گروه‌های پژوهشی و کرسی‌ها چیست؟

این سؤال به این دلیل مطرح می‌شود که شاید نتوان در یک برههٔ زمانی همهٔ آن‌ها را مطرح کرد. به عبارت دیگر، با توجه به برنامه‌های کوتاه‌مدت، میان‌مدت و بلندمدت، پژوهشکده چه چشم‌انداز پژوهشی‌ای را برای خود ترسیم کرده است و اولویت‌های پژوهشی‌اش در حال حاضر کدام‌اند؟

من پاسخ این سؤال را در سه بعد عرض می‌کنم؛ اول اینکه مأموریت‌ها باید هم‌زمان پیش برود. وقتی می‌گوییم اولویت منظور این نیست که فقط یک اولویت وجود دارد که باید انجام شود تا به اولویت دوم برسیم. یک بحث اصلی بحث سیاست‌های زبانی یک کشور است. اصلاً یک کشور در مورد ترویج، تبدیل و آموزش زبان خود در درون و بیرون مرزهایش چه خط‌مشی‌ای را دنبال می‌کند. تقریباً می‌توانم بگویم در همهٔ دنیا زبان خارجی وجود دارد. سؤال این است که زبان خارجی از بین چه زبان‌هایی انتخاب شده و اینکه چرا آن زبان خاص انتخاب شده است. آیا این با توجه به سیاست‌های حاکم بر جهان است؟با توجه به میزان مراوداتی است که این زبان دارد؟ با توجه به قدرت زبانی از منظر تولیدات علمی و غیره است؟ چرا انتخاب می‌شود و چرا دولت‌ها در نظام آموزشی خود یک زبان را به زبان دیگر ترجیح می‌دهند و به آن می‌پردازند؟ این هم یکی از محورهای تحقیقاتی ماست. در مجموع، سیاست‌های زبانی کشور ما در

چیزی اضافـه کنیم و امیدواریم کـه این هدف پژوهشـکده در آینده محقق شود.

● آیا پژوهشکده در برنامه‌های خود دوره‌های آموزشی هم دارد؟

آموزش کلید درک بهتر جهان اسـت. بدون آموزش مجبوریم از راه تجربه وارد شـویم و راه تجربه بسیار مستحکم اما طولانی و پرزحمت اسـت. برای اینکه بتوانیـم از زندگی و زبانی که در اختیار ماست بهتر استفاده کنیم، باید سریع‌تر از قبل دوره‌های آموزشی را طی کنیم. به همین دلیل، افراد علاوه‌بر تحصیل در دوره‌های رسمی نظام آموزشی خود، به آموزش‌های غیررسمی روی می‌آورند؛ چون جامعه در حال تحول است و در طول زندگی فرد، آموزش‌های رسـمی به‌تنهایی کافی نیسـتند. پژوهشکده عمدتاً رویکرد پژوهشـی دارد و سعی می‌کند برای پژوهشگران دوره‌هـای کوتاه‌مـدت برگزار کنـد اما آموزش جـزء لاینفک پژوهش است. در عین حال، زبان پایۀ تفکر است و یادگیری آن تعطیلی‌بردار نیسـت. یادگیری زبان از بدو تولد شروع می‌شود

خارجی نگاه کند. این‌ها سـه محور اصلی تحقیقات پژوهشکده را شـکل می‌دهند. همان‌طور که جناب‌عالـی هم فرمودید، در برنامه‌های دوساله و پنج‌ساله و درازمدت طبعاً لایۀ بعدی مطرح می‌شود که با توجه به آن سه محور اصلی بایستی مورد تحقیق قرار گیرند.

● سـؤال دیگـری که مـن می‌خواسـتم مطـرح کنمِ، این اسـت که بـه هر حال در بعضی زمینه‌هـا احتمالاً ما پژوهش‌های داخلی داریم و آن گفتمان پژوهشی که باید شـکل بگیرد، تا حدودی شکل گرفته است ولی در بعضی زمینه‌ها هنوز این کار انجام نشده و شاید لازم که از نقاط‌قوت پژوهشی کشورهای دیگر هم استفاده شود. برنامۀ پژوهشـکده در ارتباط با استفاده از ظرفیت‌های پژوهشی داخلی و خارجی چیست؟

من مقدمه‌ای را هم عرض می‌کنم. یکی از کارهایی که ما باید انجـام بدهیم، پژوهش در مورد آخرین یافته‌های آموزش زبان، به‌طور عام چه در داخل کشـور و چه در خارج کشـور است. ما باید به این سـؤال پاسـخ دهیم که آیا در داخل کشـور ما نگاه تحقیقاتی بر زبان حاکم است یا نگاه انتشاری و ترویجی. در حال حاضر، در کشور ما در مقوله زبان سه حوزۀ بزرگ شکل گرفته که شـامل آموزش زبان، ترجمه و ادبیات اسـت. اگر به این سه حوزه نگاه دقیقی بیندازیم، می‌بینیم که هر سه از نظر پژوهشی در جایـگاه ضعیفی قرار دارند. ما باید بتوانیم نگاه عمیق‌تری به وضع خود در این سـه حوزه داشـته باشیم و به کمک تجربه و تخصص پژوهشگران پژوهشـکده ببینیم که در خارج از کشور آخرین یافته‌های تحقیقاتی درخصوص سه زبان چیست، آن‌ها زبان را از چه منظری مورد تحقیق قرار می‌دهند و ما در درون کشـور چه وضعیتی داریم. در آن صورت، نقاط مشترکی شکل می‌گیرد و ما می‌توانیم بیـن حوزه‌های تحقیقاتی خودمان، در هر وضعیتی که هسـتیم، و حوزه‌های تحقیقاتی خارج از کشور ارتبـاط برقرار کنیم. امیدمان این اسـت که از جرقه‌ای که بین این دو حاصل می‌شـود، جایگاه تحقیقاتی زبان کشور را در منظومۀ تحقیقاتی زبان در دنیا پیدا کنیم. هدف نهایی ما این اسـت که بتوانیم به مجموعـۀ تحقیقاتی جها نـی

و تقویــت و تکمیل آن تا انتهای زندگی فـرد ادامه می‌یابد. در واقع، یادگیری زبان بی‌وقفه صورت می‌گیرد. زبان دیگری که در دوران تحصیل فرا گرفته می‌شود، زبان ریاضی است که پایۀ درک ریاضی و محاسبات ما از این جهان اسـت. آموختن این زبان نیز به دوران تحصیل محدود نمی‌شـود و در طول زندگی ادامــه می‌یابد. در حوزۀ علوم طبیعی نیز زبان طبیعی را داریم. بسیاری از مشـکلاتی که افراد در ریاضی و علوم دارند الزاماً به هوش ارتباطی ندارد. مشکل زبان طبیعی و ریاضی این است که از آن‌ها بد استفاده می‌شود. دانش‌آموز به‌دلیل اینکه این زبان‌ها را یاد نگرفته اسـت، در این دروس موفق نیست. در حقیقت، هر سه بعد زبان، یعنی بعد ریاضی، بعد طبیعی و بعد ادبی آن، باید رشـد پیدا کنند تا ما بتوانیم موفق باشیم. وقتی می‌گوییم آموزش زبان، فکر می‌کنیم که منظور فقط زبان مادری است که کاربرد روزمره دارد و معمولاً فکر می‌کنیم به آموزش نیاز ندارد؛ در حالی که همۀ ابعاد زبان نیازمند آموزش‌اند. ما متأسـفانه در هر سه بعد زبان مشکل داریم.

● برگردیــم بــه مجلۀ رشــد آموزش زبان خارجــی و وزارت آمــوزش‌وپـرورش، کــه در حقیقت دسـت‌اندرکار آمــوزش زبان است. ما بحث برنامۀ درسی و تربیت معلم را در وزارت آموزش‌وپرورش برای آن‌ها در سطوح مختلف برنامه‌ریزی می‌شود. یعنی ما در سـطح وزارت‌خانه سـازمان پژوهـش و برنامه‌ریزی آموزشی، دفتر برنامه‌ریزی و تألیف و دفتر انتشارات و تکنولوژی آموزشی را داریم که مجلۀ رشد در آنجا تهیه و منتشر می‌شود. در سطوح پایین‌تر سازمان‌های آموزش‌وپرورش استانی را داریم که در کنار کارهای آموزشـی کارهای پژوهشـی انجام می‌دهند. بعد، گروه‌های آموزشـی را در این سـازمان‌ها داریم که درگیر مسائل مربوط به هر رشته در برنامۀ درسی هستند. در کنار آن‌ها مجامع علمی دبیران را داریم و همۀ این‌ها به‌نوعی دست‌اندرکار آموزش زبان‌اند. به‌نظر شــما، پژوهشـکده به برنامۀ آموزش زبان وزارت آموزش‌وپرورش در سطوح مختلف چه کمکی می‌تواند کند؟
در سازوکار آموزش زبان، اگر از پایین شروع کنیم، در مدارس حداقـل یک نفر متولی آموزش زبان وجود دارد که معلم زبان اسـت. بعد در ادارات تا سـطوح وزارت‌خانه واحدهای مختلفی وجود دارند که به‌نوعی درگیر آموزش زبان‌اند و هر واحدی هم فکـر می‌کند کـه کار خودش را به نحو احسـن انجام می‌دهد. حال که سـازمان‌ها و نهادها و دفاتر مختلفی در زمینۀ آموزش زبـان وجـود دارند و همه هم مدعی‌اند کـه کار خود را به نحو احسن انجام می‌دهند، پس چرا آن اتفاقی که می‌بایست بیفتد، نمی‌افتد؟ اینجاسـت که پژوهشکده می‌تواند وارد شود؛ چون مستقیماً درگیر آموزش نیست. علاوه‌بر این، وابستگی اداری به

این سازمان‌ها و دفاتر ندارد و می‌تواند از سطحی که سیاست‌ها و خط‌مشـی‌های کلی وزارت‌خانه و شاید نظام آموزشی کشور تعیین می‌شود تا پایین‌ترین نقطه که آموزش در درون مدارس اتفاق می‌افتد، همه را مورد بررسـی قرار دهد. با بررسـی کمی و کیفـی برنامه‌ها و آنچه اتفاق می‌افتـد، می‌توانیم بفهمیم که آیا برنامه آن‌گونه که دیده شـده اسـت، اجرا می‌شـود و اینکه به‌رغم ادعاهای مطرح‌شده آیا این سـازمان‌ها و نهادها و دفاتر کاملاً واگرا حرکت می‌کنند و به‌نوعی خودگردان هسـتند یا نه. پژوهشـکده با متخصصانی که در اختیار دارد و زیرساخت‌هایی که ایجاد کرده اسـت، می‌تواند این روند را به‌طور کامل بررسی کند و از نتایج این بررسی برای اصلاح امور استفاده شود. وقتی از نظام آموزشی صحبت می‌کنیم، منظورمان نظامی همگراست که با تکیه بر همین همگرایی می‌تواند به اهدافش برسد.
درصورتی که میزان تحقق اهداف کم یا زیاد باشـد، با نگاهی به نتایـج تحقیق که به رسـم اطلس زبانی کشـور منجر خواهد شد، می‌توانیم ببینیم کدام خطوط پررنگ‌تر رسم شده‌اند و در هرجـا فعالیت‌ها خوب انجام می‌شـوند یا نه برعکس در کجاها نتایج ضعیف است.

با تشــکر از جنابعالی که وقت خود را در اختیار مجله قـرار دادید امیدواریم با ایجاد نگاه پژوهشـی در برنامه‌ریزی و اجـرای برنامه‌های آموزشـی، پژوهشکده زبان ملل بتواند در آینـده نقش خـود را در تحــولات نظام آموزشــی کشور به خوبی ایفا کند.

تألیف کتاب پایه هشتم با رویکرد ارتباطی فعــال

سید بهنام علوی‌مقدم
عضو هیئت علمی و مدیر گروه زبان‌های خارجی سازمان پژوهش
و برنامه‌ریزی آموزشی
Email: eng-dept@talif.sch.ir

رضا خیرآبادی
کارشناس گروه زبان خارجی سازمان پژوهش و برنامه‌ریزی آموزشی

در ادامهٔ روند تحول آموزشی زبان انگلیسی در نظام آموزش رسمی کشور، از پاییز سال جاری آموزش کتاب prospect2 برای پایهٔ هشتم تحصیلی به عنوان دومین کتاب از مجموعه کتاب‌های English for schools آغاز شد. این کتاب هم مانند کتاب سال هفتم در قالب بستهٔ آموزشی تدوین گردیده و دارای اجزائی چون کتاب دانش‌آموز، کتاب کار، کتاب راهنمای معلم، لوح فشردهٔ آموزشی و فلش‌کارت معلم است. تمامی اجزاء این بسته پیش از آغاز سال تحصیلی آماده‌سازی و نهایی شدند تا از ابتدای سال تحصیلی ۹۴- ۹۳ دانش‌آموزان میهن عزیزمان در ادامهٔ یادگیری زبان انگلیسی در قالب رویکرد ارتباطی فعال و خودباورانه با مجموعه‌ای منسجم و کامل روبه‌رو باشند. همچنین به‌منظور آموزش دبیران زبان انگلیسی، در تابستان دو دورهٔ تربیت مدرسان میانی در «مرکز تربیت معلم نسیبه» تهران برگزار شد و بیش از پیش دویست نفر از دبیران برگزیدهٔ کشوری با شرکت در این دوره‌ها با نحوهٔ تدریس این بستهٔ آموزشی آشنا گردیدند تا در سراسر کشور دوره‌های آموزشی ضمن خدمت را برگزار کنند. گزارش‌های رسیده از استان‌های مختلف کشور نیز حاکی از آن است که دوره‌های ضمن خدمت کتاب زبان سال هشتم، امسال با نظم و انسجام مناسبی در حال برگزاری است و دبیران سراسر کشور با ابعاد مختلف تدریس این بستهٔ تازه تألیف به‌طور مناسبی آشنا شده‌اند. همچنین برای اشاعهٔ کتاب prospect2 فیلم آموزشی «برفراز آسمان‌ها» نیز در تابستان سال جاری تهیه و تدوین شد. این فیلم شیوهٔ تدریس بستهٔ جدید را به‌طور کامل آموزش می‌دهد و تا حد زیادی به پرسش‌ها و ابهامات احتمالی دبیران و حتی والدین دانش‌آموزان پاسخ می‌گوید. فیلم مورد نظر علاوه‌بر آنکه به ادارات کل آموزش‌وپرورش در سراسر کشور ارسال گردیده، از سایت roshd.ir و همچنین سایت گروه زبان‌های خارجی دفتر تألیف کتاب‌های درسی نیز قابل دسترسی و پیاده‌سازی است.

هم‌اکنون تألیف بستهٔ آموزشی prospect3 در حال انجام است. با توجه به بازخوردهای دریافت شده از صاحب‌نظران در ارتباط با کتاب‌های پایه هفتم و هشتم این امیدواری وجود دارد که کتاب پایهٔ نهم نیز به نحوی مطلوب و در زمان مقرر منتشر گردد.

ذکر این نکته ضروری است که با توجه به‌وجود کتاب راهنمای معلم و فیلم آموزشی «برفراز آسمان‌ها» نیازی به برگزاری کارگاه‌های متفرقه در ارتباط با کتاب‌های پایهٔ هفتم و هشتم نیست و شما دبیران گران‌قدر زبان انگلیسی در سراسر کشور می‌توانید با مراجعه به کتاب راهنمای معلم و تماشای فیلم آموزشی «برفراز آسمان‌ها» با شیوهٔ مطلوب و مؤثر آموزش بسته‌های زبان انگلیسی هفتم و هشتم آشنا شوید. همچنین می‌توانید موارد ابهام و پرسش‌هایتان را با سرگروه‌های آموزشی خود و در صورت لزوم از طریق وب‌گاه گروه زبان‌های خارجی با ما در میان بگذارید.

In The Know

UNDERSTANDING AND USING IDIOMS

Shahla Zarei Neyestanak
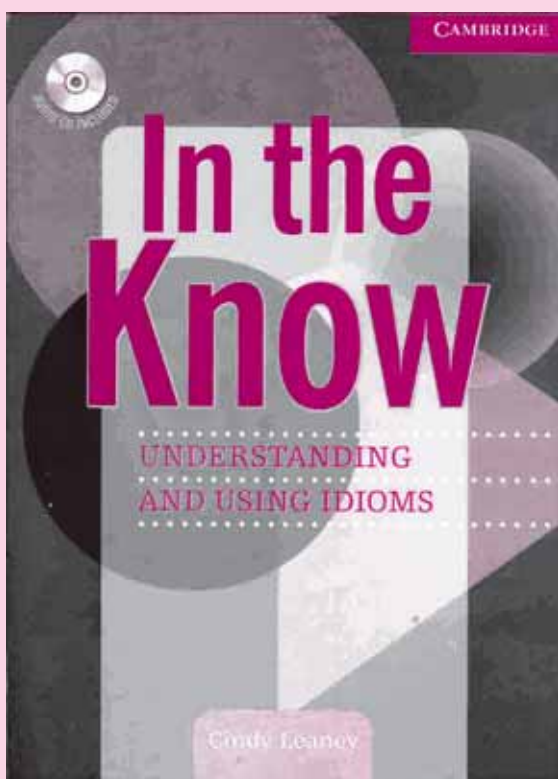
In the Know teachers intermediate-level students and above the idioms they need to know in order to understand everyday idiomatic English. The idioms are presented in 40 four-page units and are grouped by context, by concept, or by key words. Each four-page unit starts out with a presentation page, which is followed by three sections: Focus on Meaning, Focus on Form, and Focus on Use.

Techniques & Principles in Language Teaching

Shahla Zarei Neyestanak
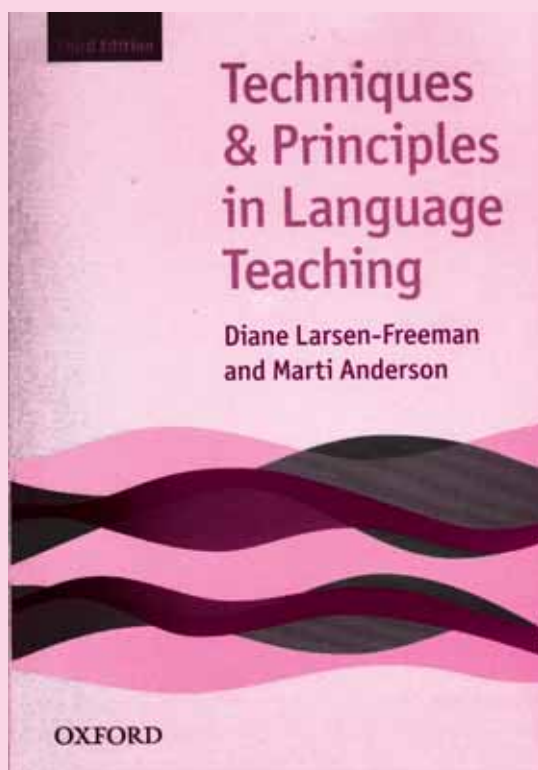
Techniques and Principles in Language Teaching has influenced the way thousands of teachers have taught languages. This classic guide to developing the way you teach has been an essential resource to new and experienced teachers worldwide, and is now in its third edition. Each chapter focuses on a different teaching approach, describing it being used in the classroom, analyzing what happened, and helping you think how you could apply it to your own teaching.

New for the Third Edition
NEW discussion on the political dimensions of language teaching NEW digital technology chapter
NEW extended coverage of content-based and task-based approaches

Diane Larsen-Freeman is a Professor of Education, Professor of Linguistics, and a Research Scientist at the English Language Institute at the University of Michigan. She is also a Distinguished Senior Faculty Fellow at the School for International Training in Brattleboro, Vermont, USA. A teacher educator for over 30 years, Professor Larsen-Freeman has published numerous books and articles about second Language acquisition research, English grammar, and language teaching methods.
Marti Anderson is an education and teacher-training consultant currently based in Bangkok, Thailand. She was on the faculty at the School for International Training in Brattleboro, Vermont, USA for 20 years.
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'Larsen-Freeman's style of presenting the material is easy to read and speaks directly to "you";
TESOL JOURNAL

■ **How can a journal like ROSHD contribute to the establishment of curriculum change in Iran?**

❑ Given I suggested a change in the discourse of testing system, journals like ROSHD are very good outlets to initiate discussion among different stakeholders about our testing system and how it could be improved to benefit all. I am in favour of graphics, and so I suggest the following figure to organise the discussion around the change.

side by side with the experts' analysis of the system and suggestions for change in the system. After all, the testing system is one of the most influential and controversial academic issues with huge impact on different stakeholders and social institutions. We therefore need to bring in a variety of opinions and look at it from different perspectives to move toward a more comprehensive and meaningful system.

Conceptual
- evaluating the current system
- identifying the drawbacks

Design
- designing new assessment tasks
- doing feasibility studies

Implementation
- preparing infrastructures for the new system
- implementing the new assessment tasks

Evaluation
- assessing the efficeincy and effectiveness of the new system
- providing feedback for the improvement of the new system

ROSHD can therefore encourage different stakeholders to discuss different levels of the current and desired assessment systems as presented in the above graph using a variety of data and reflections. For example, it will be very useful to publish students' and parents' reflections on the current testing system

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to reflect on my experiences and observations and I think it is great to see ROSHD has initiated consulting people in this field. I hope we see these discussions result in beneficial modifications in our educational and testing system so that our children can benefit from and make a better future.

and go through another round of action research, or continue with the same instructional activities. Fortunately, our teachers are educated people who have done their bachelors or masters and are therefore familiar with systematic thinking and research in addition to teaching methodology. They can therefore invest on their expertise to move beyond routine and repetitive teaching and instruction and to follow a research-based teaching. This will benefit all stakeholders.

■ What are the management issues and how can these issues be tackled in the short and long run?
❑ I think the key to management issues is "dialogue". Teachers need to learn to engage in effective dialogues and communicate well with different stakeholders. After all, one of the purposes of communicative language teaching is to help students learn how to communicate different messages appropriately in different contexts. As such, teachers need to be good communicators themselves. Even if their voices are not heard immediately, they should not be disappointed. They should remember that they are arguing for a good cause and so be reasonably persistent. Indeed teachers need to be open-minded too. That is, they should be ready to hear counterarguments too and accept them or use them to modify their own points. The essence of "dialogue" is to make a point, and to hear counterarguments too so that the two parties can reach a mediocre solution.

The change in the system is therefore imperative and unavoidable if we aspire to achieve defined visions for our country. Nevertheless, it should be pointed out that the changes need to be gradual and incremental rather than overnight
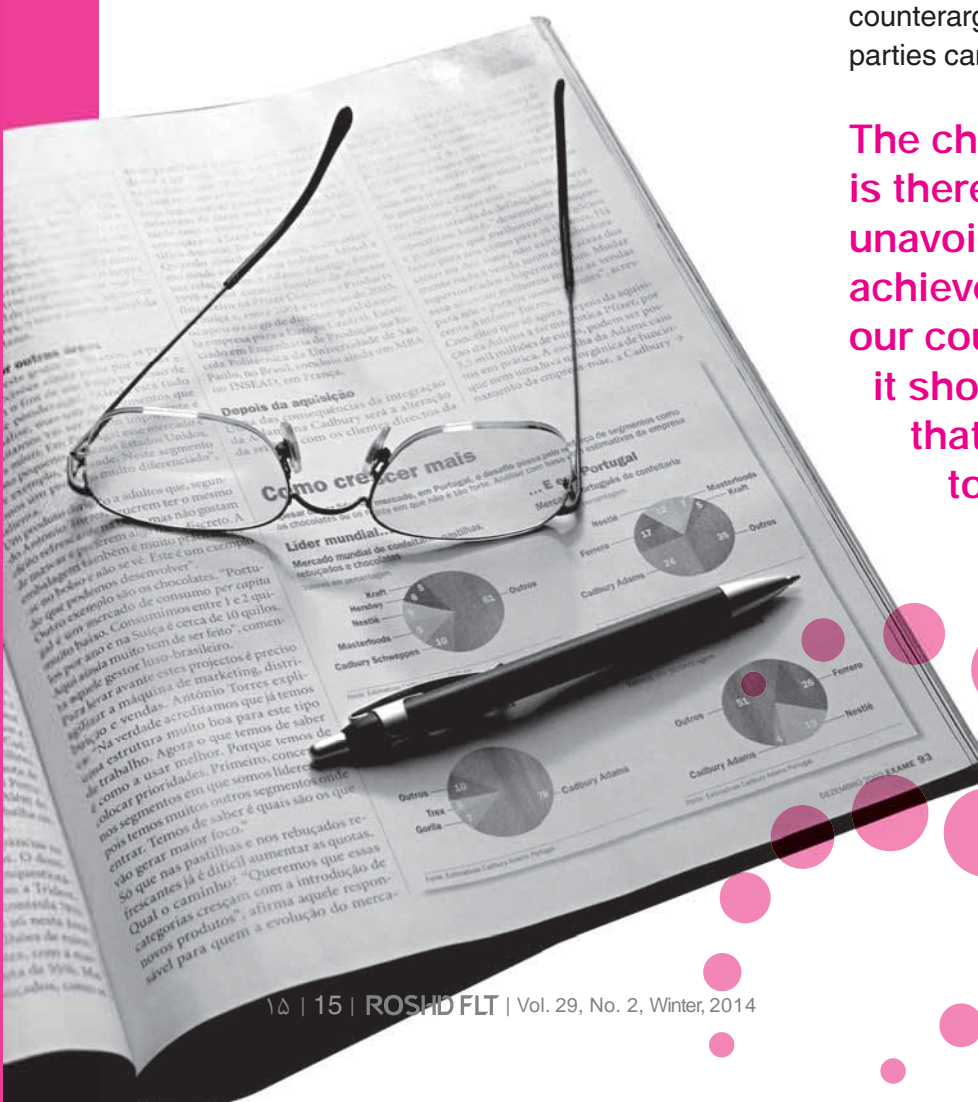
in a passive and decontextualized way. Teachers can design similar classroom assessment tasks with appropriate assessment criteria to assess students' language learning and progress.

■ **Thanks to your experiences with the curriculum in Iran, you are aware of the impediments of curriculum change. What changes do you think are feasible?**

❑ It is the characteristic feature of centralised systems that making even small changes in the curriculum will be a difficult task. On the other hand, teachers can certainly be agents of change by formulating their ideas for change and communicating them with curriculum developers in appropriate ways. For example, ROSHD journal and similar journals are good outlets where teachers can publish their reflections on all aspects of the English language curriculum and make useful suggestions for change. Teachers also have their own organisations in which they could discuss their reflections and suggestions and prepare documented reports to be sent to those in charge of curriculum development.

Parallel to this, I would suggest teachers become "action researchers". Classrooms are teachers' educational territories and so they should rule over in the best possible way to ensure their teaching and learning activities are efficient and benefit students. Through "action research", teachers can improve their teaching in an ongoing way. They can even collect data as they do action research and write reports and share them with other teachers across the country. It is worth to briefly explain "action research" here. Action research has 5-6 related stages as shown in the following diagram.
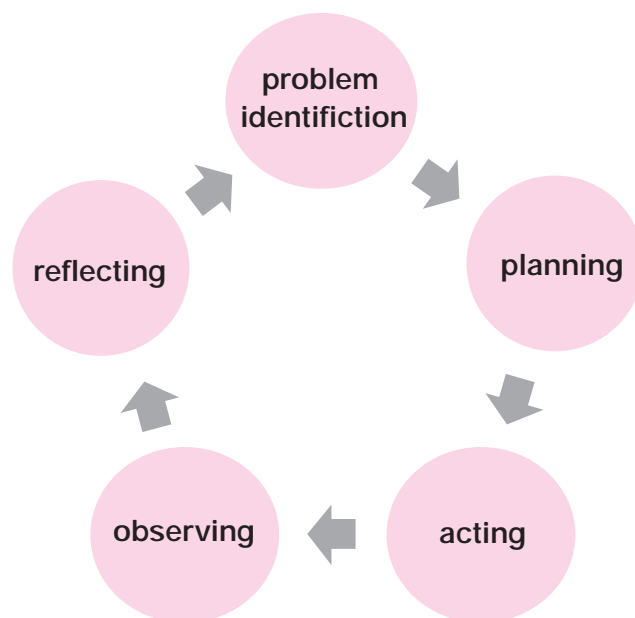
It would be very interesting to see our teachers are action researchers. The first stage in the process of action research is to identify a problem or an issue teachers are concerned about in their classes. They may in fact identify more than one issue, however, each need to be addressed at a time. The second stage of action research is to plan. Planning has a wide scope, from consulting literature (to find out if there is a background on the issue and how others have tackled it) to preparing a workable plan of instructional activities. The next steps would be to implement the plan in the class and observing (may be done through systematic data collection) how the planned instructional activities work. It is very important for the teachers to reflect on their observations (look at their collected data carefully) and make decisions for the next steps; either make some changes in their instructional plan

❏ I think teachers can think of making changes in their teaching and assessment tasks within the constraints of the context in which they work. Here some creativity on the part of the teachers will be in order so that they can make a compromise between the summative assessment on the one hand and communicative assessment tasks on the other. The summative assessment in our educational context tend to focus on assessing students' knowledge of the language mostly through reading comprehension, grammar and vocabulary test items, and less on students' actual use of the language for communication.

Assessment regimes may have a positive effect on teachers' teaching and learners' learning by motivating and encouraging them to move toward more authentic and genuine types of teaching and learning activities, or they may have a negative effect pushing teachers to teach to the test and learners to prepare for the test

On the other hand, teachers aspire to engage their students in real acts of communication by involving them in assessment tasks which will require students to use the language for oral or written communication. Knowing that some of the stakeholders (students, parents and school management) expect teachers to prepare students for the summative assessment so that students get good scores on end of year tests, teachers can design their classroom assessment with this point in mind. In other words, teachers can think of designing classroom assessment tasks which while meaningful to themselves and students and enhancing students' command of communication, they can also draw students' attention to the lexical and syntactic points which will presumably appear in summative tests. A simple example would be to ask students to read through the already taught lessons and to extract 15-20 words they think they know the meanings. Students could be asked to write a short story or essay using their chosen words using a process approach of planning, writing, and reviewing. Students can receive help from their peers or teacher at different stages in the process of their writing and even do the task collaboratively in groups. The teacher can allow each student or group of students to read their short story or essay to the class and encourage the other students to ask questions about the story or essay using appropriate interrogative questions. This simple task will help students to make the words become part of their active lexicon, practice sentence writing and using appropriate structures, become familiar with the process of writing, practice their writing short pieces, participate in oral discussion of listening to and answering questions, and collaborating with their peers. Methodologically, students will be active and collaborative learners who will be practicing language learning in a contextualized way, rather than just memorising the meaning of the words

Level	Listening/Speaking	Reading	Writing
A2	CAN express simple opinions or requirements in a familiar context.	CAN understand straightforward information within a known area, such as on products and signs and simple textbooks or reports on familiar matters.	CAN complete forms and write short simple letters or postcards related to personal information.
A1	CAN understand basic instructions or take part in a basic factual conversation on a predictable topic.	CAN understand basic notices, instructions or information.	CAN complete basic forms, and write notes including times, dates and places.

Classroom-based, teacher-made assessment tasks, if they are designed properly, will engage both teachers and students in more meaningful and authentic type of assessment tasks. Such assessment tasks, and I reiterate and emphasise IF designed properly, have the potential of having a positive backwash effect

We can therefore use similar frameworks to define "can do statements" for language learning at different school levels in our educational system and develop curriculum and assessment tasks accordingly.

■ **What are teachers supposed to do to make their classroom assessment consistent with performance summative assessment?**

the world? If this is possible now, why shouldn't we be able to do so to assess language in more communicative ways using the technology of the day? Where there is a will there is a win. We just need to be serious in making changes in our testing system. The problem is that we just need to prepare strategic plans with good visions, appropriate goals, and achievable strategies. If others have done it and they've been successful, why shouldn't us?

So, my answer to your question is, yes there are feasible alternatives. By forming working groups in the ministries of education and higher education, it is possible to develop strategic plans for substituting the decontextualized testing system with more communicative and meaningful assessment tasks that could be implemented using the facilities and technology of the time.

■ **How can we introduce performance assessment in schools? Based on the valuable experiences gained in Australia through experimentation with band scales, what are your recommendations with regard to the use of band scales in performance assessment in Iran?**

❑ My observation of the Australian educational system is that they've been trying to use task-based criterion-referenced approaches to design educational curricula and assessment tasks. Such an approach starts with an analysis of the particular communication domains and the type of communication events that take place in such domains with the goal of specifying the

characteristics of the language used in these domains. Once these characteristics are identified then it is possible to design instructional materials which emulate the real-life tasks and engage students in related teaching and learning tasks. For assessment purposes, a list of "can do statements" are developed so that students' performance on different tasks could be mapped against the can do descriptors and assess students' performance. It is also possible to report back to students with details of their performance; where they have been able to perform well and where there are yet skills to be developed. Such a system emphasises more on language skill development through performance-based assessment than on rigid knowledge-based testing systems.

Another example of criterion-referenced approach is the development of Common European Frame of Reference (CEFR). This framework was developed to provide a guideline for different levels of language proficiency from A1 to C2 which could be used both in curriculum development and assessment. Each level includes a set of descriptors which identify what language learners should be able to do at that particular level. For example, the following are examples of descriptors (can do statements) at levels A1 and A2 as related to "listening and speaking", "reading", and "writing".
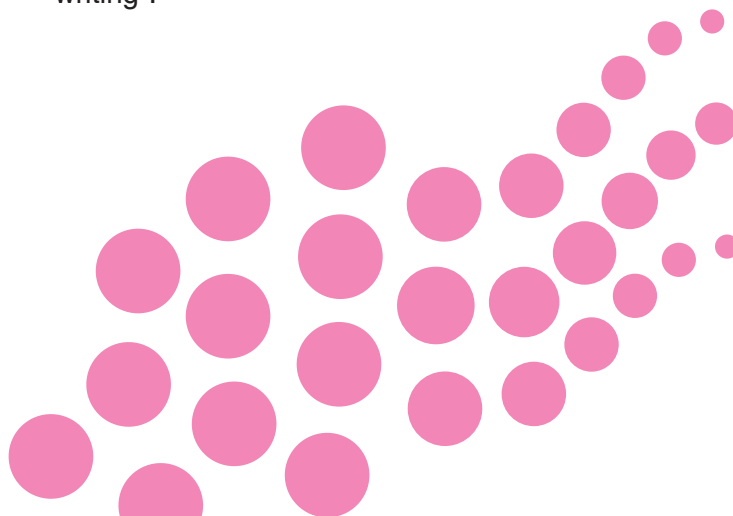
imperative and unavoidable if we aspire to achieve defined visions for our country. Nevertheless, it should be pointed out that the changes need to be gradual and incremental rather than overnight. It should be remembered that we need to make a change in the discourse of the current testing system. Such a change in the discourse is undoubtedly gradual and longitudinal. The important thing is to start it. We should therefore use any opportunity to challenge the current testing system and offer a change in any aspect of it we can however small the change may be. Teachers, for example, can challenge "the testing to the test" trend by involving students in more meaningful teaching and learning activities.

■ **The English language section of the university entrance exam covers only reading comprehension, vocabulary and grammar. The implication is that listening comprehension as the major source of input for language learning along with performance skills of writing and speaking are to a large extent ignored. The high school end-of-the-year exams follow the same syllabus. With the shift to CLT, what changes need to be made in the current arrangements? What are the alternatives?**

❑ I think the end of the year exams in high schools is a good example of the negative backwash effect of the university entrance exam on our schooling system. Restricting language as a means of communication to knowledge of words and grammar and assessing it by multiple-choice items is just disadvantaging

students and teachers. The outcome is that our high school graduates, even our university graduates, are not able to use language (either L1 or L2) to communicate effectively and to use language for communication purposes. To engage students in communicative tasks, we need to have an assessment system which encourages these types of assessment tasks.

Given I suggested a change in the discourse of testing system, journals like ROSHD are very good outlets to initiate discussion among different stakeholders about our testing system and how it could be improved to benefit all

I perfectly understand that one of the main reasons of excluding listening, speaking and writing from our testing system is that of practicality. It is certainly more challenging to include assessment tasks which aim at assessing language more communicatively in terms of design, administration, and scoring. However, we sometimes forget that issues related to practicality could have been thought for in light of new advancements in technology. Have we thought, for example, that currently a test like TOEFL-iBT, which is developed and based in Educational Testing Service in Princeton, New Jersy in the US, is administered online and taken by many test takers in different parts of

of our national entrance exam system on our schools.

● The other impact of the current testing system is the level of investment (financially, time-wise, and emotionally) families need to do for their children to take part in these testing competitions. It is a very common experience for all the families with kids who should participate in different types of screening tests from choosing their schools, to go for gifted schools, to compete for university seats and so forth. The testing industry and business is huge in our country and not any family can afford full access to it for their children. The system may therefore serve the affluent and disadvantage the non-affluent but potentially proficient students. This I think should be a great cause for concern. On the other hand, every family with one or two schooling kids have to sacrifice their personal and social lives by just managing private classes for their kids. The other important issue is the level of emotional involvement of families in the whole process of preparing their children for the testing competitions. All of these are great causes of concern.

● With all the drawbacks of our testing system, we notice that our university graduates are among the successful students in the international arenas. This implies that if we make necessary changes in our testing system so that more genuine schooling takes place what a marvellous outcome we will have. Put it differently, currently our testing system constrains full self-actualisation of the students' abilities, so eliminating the restricting aspects of this system can lead to great achievements. Such achievements will not only result in more capable graduates who will be able to contribute more efficiently to the development of the country, they will even promote our country's pioneering moves in frontiers of research.

The above points are just a snapshot of the impact our large-scale high-stakes testing system have on our social institutions such as families and schools as well as different stakeholders. The change in the system is therefore

may turn into its opposite with harmful consequences. Let us point out some of the current drawbacks of the large-scale high-stakes multiple-choice testing system which is used to screen applicants for the university education. We can then think how it is possible to make some structural changes to eliminate these drawbacks and move toward a more meaningful and beneficial system.

● Perhaps the most important issue is the negative "backwash" effect the current system has on teaching and learning. This negative backwash has, knowingly or unknowingly, affected our schooling and our teaching and learning activities. It is now a strong belief among all the stakeholders (students, teachers, parents, etc.) that good schools and good teachers are those which can teach students to the test in the best possible way. This

Traditionally, assessment of students' learning is usually done through end of semester or end of year tests or other assessment tasks. This will leave both teachers and students with no opportunity to look back at students' performance and with no possibility for both parties to plan for filling the gaps

phenomenon is not indeed unique in our country; there are many other countries which share this plague. It is too bad that the whole impetus of our schools is to prepare students for the big competition. Obviously, the authentic goal of teaching and learning will get lost in such a strong mandate of our educational system. We absolutely need to re-think this and give back our teachers and students what we have taken away from them: The opportunity to engage in an authentic act of teaching and learning to discover themselves and the world around them. This will be achieved by eliminating the strong negative backwash effect

Language Learning
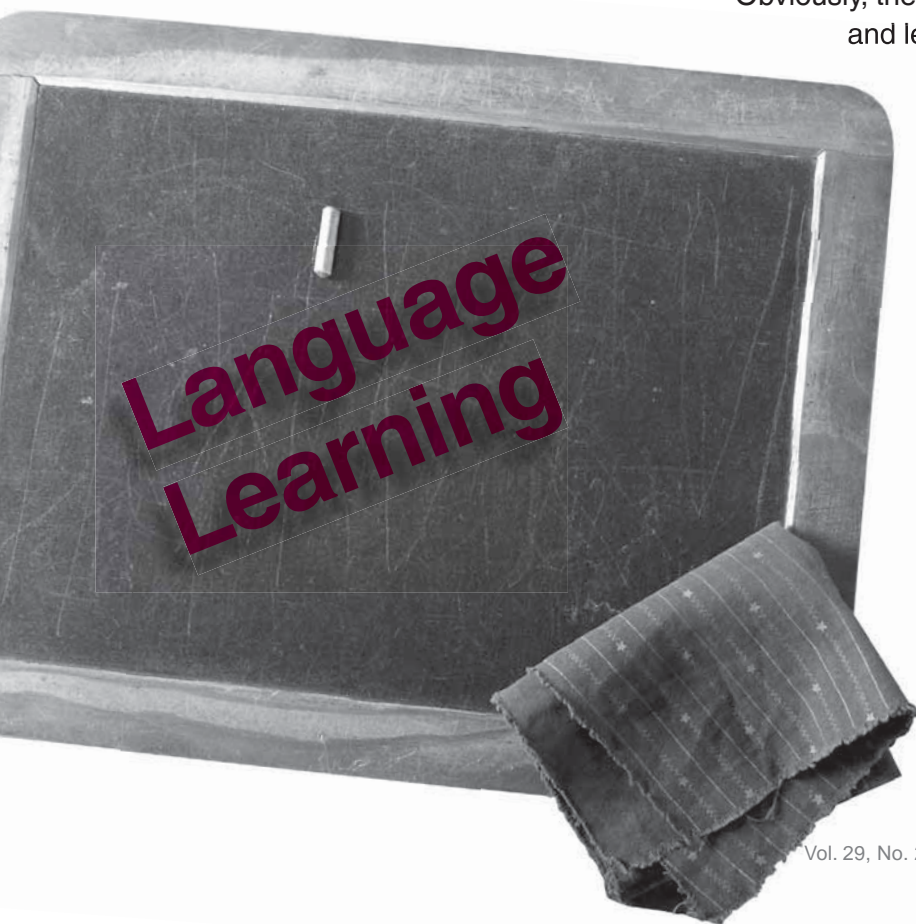
courses of instruction students improve their learning and skills and achieve the learning outcomes of the course. The following diagram presents the idea of using assessment as an integral part of the teaching and learning activities graphically.
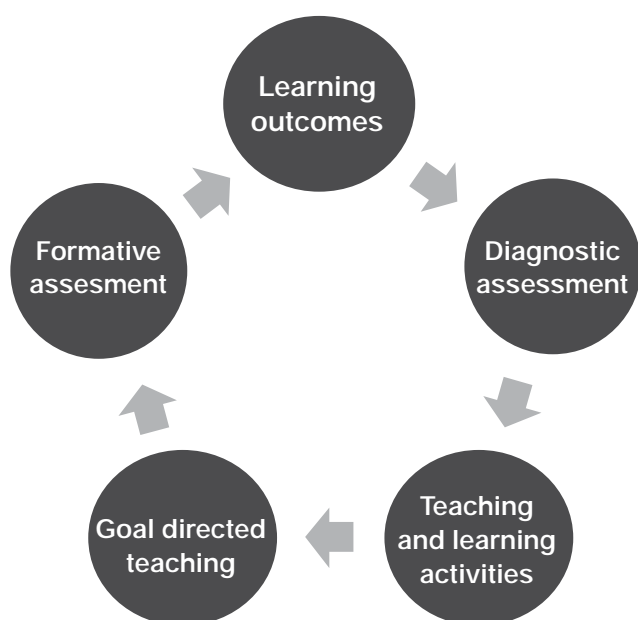
We are now living at an age with numerous ideas for the improvement of teaching and learning. The above diagram may, for example, connote action research too in which teachers initiate a plan, implement the practice, evaluate the effectiveness of their instruction, and revise their learning outcomes. Teachers may therefore approach their teaching by coherently linking different ideas and designing a dynamic curriculum which can be evaluated at different stages and modified accordingly.

■ **Considering the fact that the majority of high stakes tests in Iran are of the multiple choice format**

and empirical evidence has clearly shown that language instruction in high schools has largely been limited to teaching for testing, the shift to assessment for learning poses serious challenges that may require structural changes as well as changes in attitude. What structural changes might be necessary and what kind of support should be provided to teachers and high schools?

❑ I think this is a crucial question. Any change in the curriculum must be supported by a change in the socio-cultural assumptions and decision-makers' attitudes and mindsets. Testing is a double-edged sword which can benefit or harm different stakeholders. Let us see what has been the underlying philosophy for the large-scale high-stakes multiple-choice testing system which is pervasive in our country. The original underlying assumption has been a good one with presumably beneficial consequences, however, gradually and in practice this testing system has, perhaps unintentionally, caused some harmful consequences.

Given the limited seats at universities and institutes of higher education, the original idea has been to select applicants based on their merits and not other criteria, which is indeed a good idea. In other words, the testing system followed a "meritocracy" philosophy which is an integral value in a democratic society. However, if this valuable philosophy is not carefully designed and implemented through appropriate assessment tasks, administration and scoring procedures, and transparent decisions, then it

the areas where they need more practice. In other words, the assessment tasks can be used to diagnose where students need to concentrate more, and prepare appropriate instructional materials for students' intentional learning. The goal-directed instruction and intentional learning are two motivating strategies for teachers and students which can engage them meaningfully in teaching and learning activities when assessment tasks are integrated into the curricula.

I think the end of the year exams in high schools is a good example of the negative backwash effect of the university entrance exam on our schooling system. Restricting language as a means of communication to knowledge of words and grammar and assessing it by multiple-choice items is just disadvantaging students and teachers

Based on the underlying assumption of "assessment for learning", teachers can design appropriate assessment tasks for any communication skill to direct their instruction and help students' improvement in that particular skill. For example, given that "reading comprehension" is the main skill in our English language teaching curriculum, teachers can design appropriate assessment tasks to find out if students are good at outlining the

major and minor ideas in a text. The warrant here is that if students are able to summarise the major and minor ideas of a text in the form of an outline, this will help them to better understand the text. The teacher can then build up on students' outlines to teach them how writers structure information in their texts and how readers can understand the texts by deconstructing its organisation. Interestingly enough, teachers can use this as a reverse engineering act for teaching students how to compose and produce organised texts in their L2.

Going some steps back, teachers or other curriculum developers could have identified the "learning objectives" or "learning outcomes" of an English language course. For example:

- Identify the main ideas of the texts
- Prepare outlines of the reading texts and for their own writing
- Evaluate the information structure of the reading texts and their own writing
- Synthesise their outlines into coherent texts
- Search for proper words which can best express ideas
- Identify how different sentences are connected with each other in reading texts and in their own writings

Teachers could have then designed appropriate assessment tasks to check students' strengths and weaknesses in any of the stated learning outcomes. They could then design appropriate teaching and learning tasks for the students to practice those areas they have showed some weaknesses so that by certain

both parties to plan for filling the gaps. By contrast, "formative assessment" is meant to be installed all through the course of instruction to (a) provide students with necessary feedback about their strengths and weaknesses, and (b) give them the chance to improve their learning and develop their skills. Accordingly, the first change in the dynamics of assessment will be to emphasise more on the "formative" type of assessment with the goal of helping students to improve their mastery of the learning objectives.

The second underlying assumption of "assessment for learning" is aligning the assessment tasks with the learning outcomes of the course; let it be language teaching or any other subject matter. This requires a careful design of the course of instruction so that the three main elements of "learning outcomes", "teaching and learning activities", and "assessment tasks" are clearly stated and dynamically aligned with each other. In other words, the learning outcomes, the teaching and learning activities, and the assessment tasks should be dynamically aligned with each other. Based on this underlying assumption of the assessment for learning, the second change in the dynamics of assessment will be to educate teachers to become professional curriculum developers and syllabus designers so that they can participate in collaborative curriculum development activities which will lead to clear and explicit statements of the learning objectives, teaching and learning activities and assessment task descriptions.

The third underlying assumption of the "assessment for learning" is that it is a good tool for identifying students' strengths and weaknesses to plan instruction and help students improve their learning in
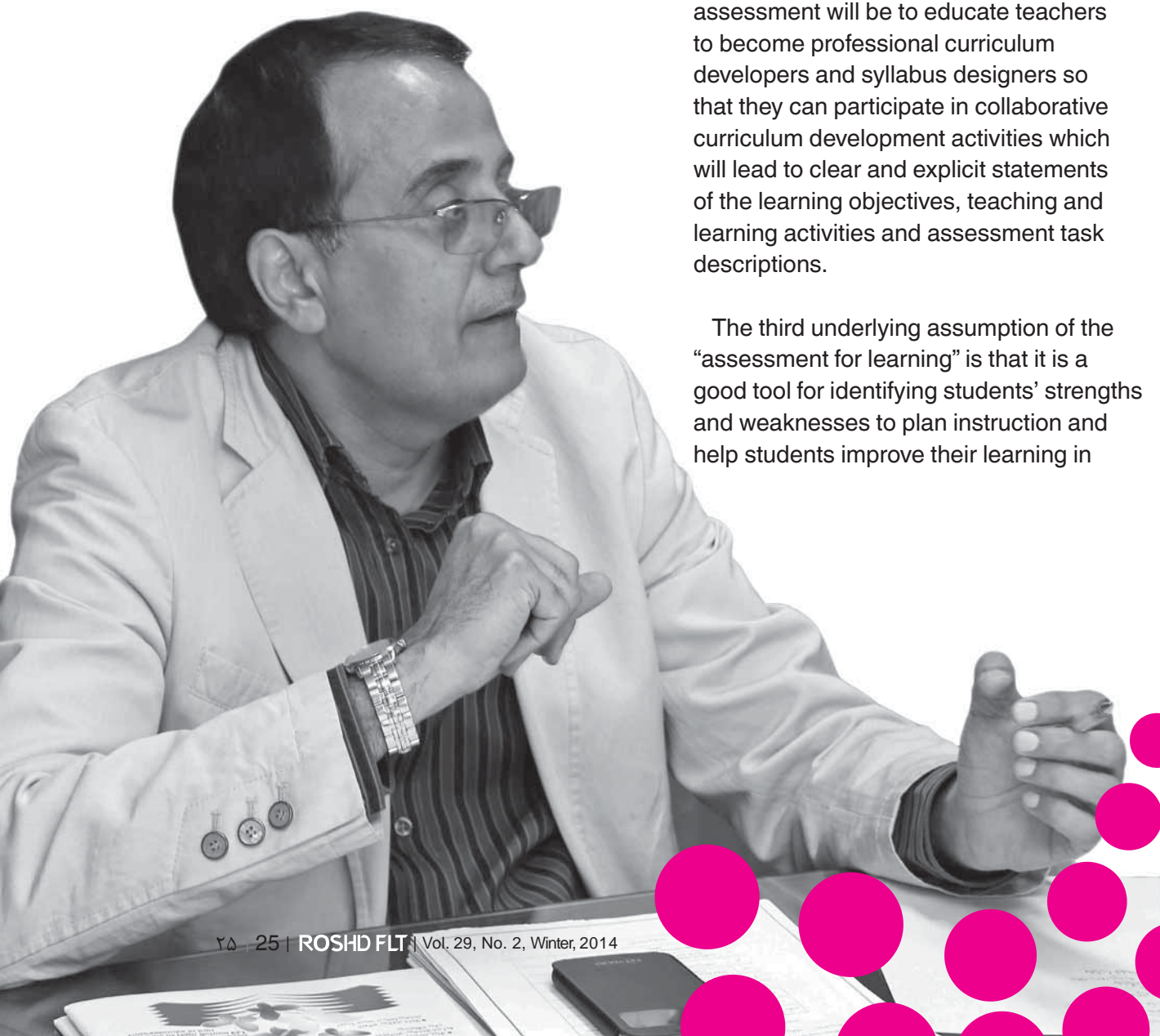
authentic type of assessment tasks. Such assessment tasks, and I reiterate and emphasise IF designed properly, have the potential of having a positive backwash effect. That is, through such assessment tasks, students' knowledge learning and skill development will be enhanced. The issue is not, however, an either or decision—whether to use large-scale standardised tests or classroom-based teacher-made tests and assessment tasks. It is a complex issue in need of substantive dialogues among different stakeholders to create shared background knowledge and to develop assessment frameworks so that the assessment regime could assure beneficial consequences for all those involved. The advantage of progressive dialogues through annual conferences, journal papers, mass media discussion, and other possible occasions will provide the opportunity for a continuous modification of the assessment system at both conceptual and practical levels.

■ **What are the minimum requirements of a change in the dynamics with the aim of establishing assessment for learning as an integral part of language instruction?**

❑ "Assessment for learning" is a recent move and a new look at the role of assessment in education. We can juxtapose it with the traditional "assessment of learning" which is mostly used to measure students' mastery of the subject matter. "Assessment for learning, in contrast, is seen as an integral part of the teaching and learning activities, and is based on several assumptions which I

point to three of them.

The first underlying assumption of "assessment for learning" is to consider "assessment" as part of the whole process of teaching and learning, rather than as a yard stick to merely measure students' learning after a course of instruction. This may lead us to think about "formative" vs. "summative" assessment. Traditionally, assessment of students' learning is usually done through end of semester or end of year tests or other assessment tasks. This will leave both teachers and students with no opportunity to look back at students' performance and with no possibility for

Classroom Assessment

Thank you very much for inviting me to share my perspectives on classroom assessment with your audience, presumably mostly English language teachers. It is my pleasure to communicate my views, as a teacher and researcher, on this topic.

Considering your first question, I should say that this has been a hot debate between different stakeholders and in different contexts and our country is no exception. The whole issue can be narrowed down to the relationship between teaching/learning activities and assessment of students' learning— what has technically been referred to as "backwash" effect. Assessment regimes may have a positive effect on teachers' teaching and learners' learning by motivating and encouraging them to move toward more authentic and genuine types of teaching and learning activities, or they may have a negative effect pushing teachers to teach to the test and learners to prepare for the test.

Usually large-scale testing of students' learning are represented through standardised tests which aim to use the same content, the same test formats, the same administration and scoring procedures so that students' learning outcomes could be compared across the district, city, province or even nation. Such tests are even sometimes used to judge about teachers' or school performance. While there are certainly merits in using large-scale standardised tests, there are absolutely pitfalls. The conceivable pitfall of the large-scale standardised tests is the level of stress and anxiety they usually bring about for the students, teachers, and parents given the inherent competitiveness

of the tests. Such levels of stress and anxiety will intentionally or unintentionally force the teachers and students to restrict their teaching and learning activities to those of preparing for and practicing the tests, what may be considered a negative backwash. In such situations, the whole context of classroom teaching and learning will be reduced to that of instruction of test taking strategies. Even worse is that usually parents do not find formal classroom instructions enough to prepare students for exams, they therefore usually look for additional private lessons for their children to receive as much test preparation as possible. I am not to totally refute large-scale standardised tests, but I would like to draw the readers' attention to some of the potential risks these types of tests may have.

Usually large-scale testing of students' learning are represented through standardised tests which aim to use the same content, the same test formats, the same administration and scoring procedures so that students' learning outcomes could be compared across the district, city, province or even nation

Classroom-based, teacher-made assessment tasks, if they are designed properly, will engage both teachers and students in more meaningful and

دکتر عبدالمهدی ریاضی دورۀ دکتری خود را در رشتۀ زبان‌شناسی کاربردی در دانشگاه تورنتو کانادا به پایان رساند. پس از بازگشت به ایران با سمت استادیاری و سپس دانشیاری در دانشگاه شیراز دانشکدۀ ادبیات و علوم انسانی گروه زبان‌شناسی و زبان‌های خارجی به آموزش و پژوهش پرداخت. ایشان در دانشگاه شیراز دروس روش تدریس، روش تحقیق، ارزشیابی پیشرفته و نگارش پیشرفته را در دوره‌های کارشناسی ارشد و دکتری ارائه می‌داد وبیش از ۴۰ پایان‌نامه کارشناسی ارشد و ۱۴ رسالۀ دکتری را راهنمایی کرد. افزون بر فعالیت‌های علمی، ایشان ریاست دانشکدۀ ادبیات و علوم انسانی را به مدت سه سال و مدیر کلی پژوهش دانشگاه شیراز را به مدت پنج سال عهده‌دار بود. هفتمین کنفرانس سالانۀ TELLSI نیز با دبیری ایشان در سال ۱۳۸۶ در دانشگاه شیراز برگزار گردید. ایشان در طول خدمت در شیراز، کارگاه‌های آموزشی متعددی برای دبیران زبان انگلیسی برگزار نمود.

دکتر ریاضی در سال ۲۰۰۹ به گروه زبان‌شناسی دانشگاه مک‌کوئری استرالیا پیوست و از آن سال تاکنون در زمینه‌های تخصصی سنجش و ارزشیابی و روش‌های تحقیق در دوره‌های تحصیلات تکمیلی به‌ویژه دورۀ دکتری فعال بوده است. در این دانشگاه تاکنون سه دانشجوی دکتری از کشورهای آمریکا، عربستان سعودی و زلاندنو تز دکتری خود را با راهنمایی ایشان به پایان رسانده‌اند. در حال حاضر نیز راهنمایی ۸ دانشجوی دکتری را در این دانشگاه بر عهده دارد. دکتر ریاضی کتاب‌ها و مقالات متعددی را در نشریات معتبر داخلی و خارجی به چاپ رسانده است که از آن جمله می‌توانیم به مقالۀ مشترک ایشان با پروفسور کریستوفر کندلین در خصوص روش‌های تحقیق آمیخته در پژوهش‌های مربوط به آموزش و یادگیری زبان اشاره کنیم که در مجله معتبر Language Teaching در سال جاری میلادی به چاپ رسیده است. از جمله موفقیت‌های چشمگیر دکتر ریاضی جذب بودجه‌های پژوهشی از مؤسسات معتبر سنجش و ارزشیابی نظیر: Educational Testing Service (ETS), Pearson وIELTS می‌باشد که نشانگر درک عمیق ایشان از مسائل و معضلات سنجش و ارزشیابی و حل مسائل کاربردی این حوزه است.

با توجه به اهمیت مقوله سنجش و ارزشیابی درموفقیت برنامه درسی زبان انگلیسی در دورۀ متوسطه از ایشان درخواست کردیم به سؤالاتی درخصوص ارتباط آزمون‌سازی و سنجش کلاسی و اهمیت این دو در یادگیری مؤثر زبان پاسخ دهند. با تشکر از ایشان که دعوت ما را برای شرکت در این گفت‌وگو پذیرفتند توجه خوانندگان محترم را به مشروح گفت‌وگو که در زیر آمده است جلب می‌کنیم. امید است بحث‌های مطرح شده راهگشای تغییراتی باشد که لازم است در سنجش و ارزشیابی زبان صورت گیرد تا آموزش و یادگیری برای موفقیت در آزمون کتبی پایان سال و کنکور ورودی دانشگاه‌ها به یادگیری کاربردی و معنی‌دار زبان با هدف برقراری ارتباط مؤثر زبانی تغییر کند.

   Considering the fact that your were extensively involved in research on English language curriculum issues in the Iranian context when you were at Shiraz University, your current involvement in the same area of research in the international forefront at Macquarie University places you in a unique position to contribute to our better understanding of those issues and the way they can be tackled more effectively. One of the issues that has gained more prominence as a result of the shift to the CLT approach in the secondary school English curriculum is classroom assessment. So I would like to ask you to share your views with ROSHD readers on classroom assessment. It might be helpful to first explain the dynamics between large-scale testing and classroom assessment as they relate to the issues that are normally created when a traditional exam-based curriculum is shifted to CLT.

Interview with Dr Abdolmehdi Riazi on Classroom Assessment and Language Learning

Mohammad Reza Anani Sarab
Shahid Beheshti University
Email: reza_ananisarab@yahoo.co.uk

should decide that what it is they wish to have in their notebooks to make each and every one of them look like a family album which show and record their learning growth. Now a number of suggestions I could make:

The language students use to record what they learn, what problems they have, what they feel about their class, what problems they had in doing the exercises in their textbook, etc. need not be in the language they learn, though depending on their grade they are expected to be able to do them in that language.

Students need to be encouraged not to confine themselves to the verbal language. They need to use drawing and collecting pictures and photos relevant to the subjects of lessons.

They may be encouraged collecting examples of similarities and differences between the languages and cultures.

Cuttings from newspapers and journals with captions and wise sayings could make homework notebooks preciously interesting.

One question:

If you decide to encourage your students substitute the conventional homework notebook with the one outlined here, what serious problems you expect to have.
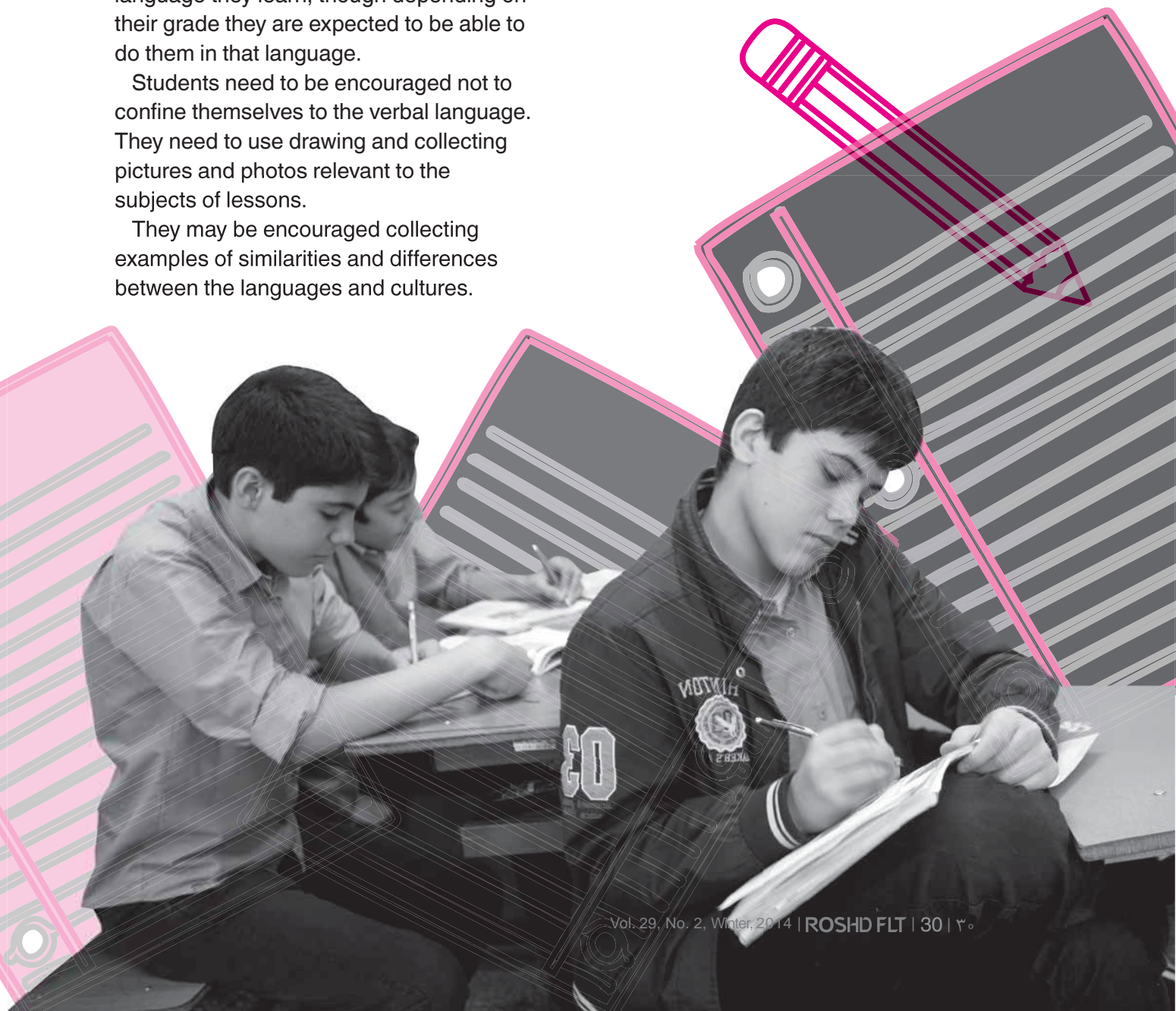
twenty hours stretched throughout a year with many holidays in between?" I could not argue with him much convincingly, but pointed at a bunch of homework notebooks he had under his arm and said: "These could be of some help." I could not explain much but added in haste: "Providing you do not force them to use it solely for copying reading passages or dialogues."

Decades gone, I have documents and reasons to believe: Seldom has a teacher asked himself: "What can I do to make better use of homework notebooks?"

I am NOT the person to straitjacket a teacher with long prescriptions of commandments and consider the problem solved. The target is clear to me: The time available for us to expose our highschool students to the foreign language is not sufficient at all. The demand for students' time by other school subjects is real and forceful. The main question is: With the official time allotted to language teaching in highschool schedule, how can we make optimum use of the means like blackboard, textbooks, homework notebooks, and extend our learners' learning time? With the blackboard we cannot do much. We cannot take it home. The textbook, we cannot do that much. Its form, content, how it should be exploited is often determined by its author. The homework notebook, yes we can do a lot to extend our teaching time and the learners' learning time. It goes with the learner outside the school, to the library, to the park, to the kitchen, even to the bathtub. Of course, we have a younger friend to accompany us: a good old friend, a pencil.

(c) Determining the quality and quantity of learning

They are all sorts of measurement tools: yes and no answers, fill-in the blanks, comprehension questions, Cloze, dictation, translation, essay writing, interviews; validity and reliability. Yes, most of them might have won my mind, but they have not won my heart. They are like surgery tools in the operation hall. I do not take pleasure when my blood pressure is checked. My students' homework notebooks provide me pleasant way of evaluating my students' learning. Each and every student's notebook tells me how much of their learning has taken place in its pages.

(d) The content of a homework notebook

What activities should there be included in these notebooks? This is the question I did not like very much to deal with it here. I did not wish to make the note look like a doctor's prescription, or a Master Cook's recipe. I should make just a few offers. It should be firmly stated here that only the teacher and his students determine the content and form of each and every notebook. They decide what it is that they wish to include in their notebooks to make each and every one of them the story of their learning. What was it they learned in the first session; what was the mistake many made; what a brilliant suggestion did someone make; what drawing or photograph reflected the meaning of a reading passage? To cut the long story short: it is the teacher and class who

my school years, in language classes they were basically used for drawing the shapes of the alphabet, copying reading passages, listing new words of each lesson with their native language equivalents, doing and completing written vocabulary and grammar exercises. These were and still are great useful applications: drawing, copying, exercising. There is, however, nothing personal about them. They are dispensable: Students would get rid of them even before they get to their final pages. In my school days they could be thrown away as wastepaper or exchanged with a few candies in the grocery shop in the neighborhood.

homework notebooks would play three crucial roles in overall management of learners' language learning and use. These three roles are: (a) Their role in learning; (b) Extending their learning time; (c) Their role in determining the quality and quantity of their learning

What functions are they to play?

As I see it, homework notebooks would play three crucial roles in overall management of learners' language learning and use. These three roles are: (a) Their role in learning; (b) Extending their learning time; (c) Their role in determining the quality and quantity of their learning.

(a) Their role in learning

Knowing a language is a composite concept made up of many parts and phases. Properly used homework notebooks can serve most of them effectively. When somebody makes a claim that I know such and such language what he basically means is that: "I can use it for the purposes I have and if somebody uses it for the purposes he/she has I can understand." This is what 'knowing' a language, especially a foreign one, means in a nut-shell. But what is it that the majority of learners need to go through before they make such a claim: "I know such and such language?" The answer to such a question is not as easy as the previous one. There is, however, a common consensus among many involved in the management of language learning that given sufficient time, motivation, meaningful exposure to language, exercise, practice, and use a learner is expected to grow into saying that: "I know such and such language."

A crucial question at this stage is: Can learners' homework notebook serve any of the above phases in the learning process? We provide a positive answer to this question after we briefly explain the other two roles learner homework notebook we claim it plays effectively.

(b) Extending learning time

An excited enthusiastic English teacher once reported to me that his students from the three classes he teaches are exposed to a kind of English less than twenty hours per school year. He was fishing for my sympathy that: "How on earth a teacher can teach a foreign language in

رشــد و تربیت
معلـم زبـان

A friend in need;
a friend indeed

J.B.Sadeghian Ph.D in Applied Linguistics

Email: jbsadeghian@gmail.com

Prelude

A man's best friend, the English say, is his dog. The language teacher's best friend, I intend to argue here, is his **student's homework notebook**. I agree a dictionary, a textbook, and even a blackboard may raise a tough competition for this position. I have, however, enough number of reasons to stick to my gun and prove that a more private and personal use of homework notebooks can bring about a more lasting and creative learning. I hope you will be at my side at the end of the debate.

My main purpose, however, throughout these notes has always been to share with readers those ideas which will bring in practical changes in our teaching.

History

To begin, let me put the cat out of the bag and state that, being retired, I feel I am somehow out of a genuine touch with what goes on inside the language classrooms. Discussing the matter with a number of teachers and their students, and judging from the content of prescribed textbooks I may harmlessly generalize, however, that its place and function in the cycle of language teaching process has not undergone ground-breaking and fundamental changes. If some teachers or researchers have new brilliant ideas about changes in their forms, contents, and exploitations, why look for better places than pages of **Roshd**, the Iranian Foreign Language Teaching Journal, to air, publish, and share them with fellow-teachers? Substituting them with 'Learning Textbooks,' and/or 'Learner Diaries,' will be later discussed here.

Parents would get homework notebooks and a snack into their children's school bags before prescribed textbooks! In

word - from nine letters right down to a single letter. What is the original word, and what are the words that it becomes after removing one letter at a time?

B.
1. What letter of the alphabet is an insect?
2. What letter is a part of the head?
3. What letter is a drink?
4. What letter is a body of water?

(Check below for the answers.)

Crossword: Animal crossword!

→ **Send us the solution and win the award!**

	1		2		3	4		5	
6									
					7		8		
7			10			11			
					12				
		13		14					
15						16		17	
					18				
	19								

CLUES ACROSS
3. Small creatures with no legs; they live in the ground.
6. Animals which produce wool
8. Insect, hard-working, it is said.
10. Marine mammal sometimes killed for its skin.
12. Big cat with stripes.
15. Animal with a trunk.
18. Fairly similar to a rabbit, but with longer legs.

19. The "ship of the desert".

CLUES DOWN
1. African animal with one horn; short form
2. Plural of goose
4. Male of "cow"
5. Humanoid animal
7. Domestic animal that loves milk
9. Synonym of "vipers" in England
14. World's largest animal
11. The king of animals
16. Animal similar to a frog
13. Striped horse
17. Beautiful animal of forest and mountain its meat is called "venison"

References:
Cartoon: http://www.cartoonstock.com
Crossword: http://linguapress.com
Jokes: http://iteslj.org/
Quotable Quotes: http://voxy.com
Riddles: http://www.snopes.com

Answers to the Funny Riddles:
A. The base word is startling, continuing to starting - staring - string - sting - sing - sin - in - I.
B.
1. B. (bee)
2. I. (eye)
3. T. (tea)
4. C. (sea)

Websites / Weblogs

One of the sections we introduced in our No. 109 issue was Website/Weblogs. Remember? We asked you to invite all English teachers of the country to visit your websites/weblogs. Now, we have the first weblog introduced by Mr. Mohammad Ahmadvand. I paid a visit and noticed that although it has recently been created, the admin is quite active and energetic! The links they have provided are specifically interesting! Here is the description:

www.egn4.blogfa.com

This weblog belongs to the English Group of District 4 of Isfahan. You can find plenty of useful materials here, including teaching tips, jokes, poems, riddles, songs, games, etc. We are proud to have a very rich list of useful links which address different people of different ages. The subjects of these links range from free teaching and learning websites, to different dictionaries for PCs and cell phones, to different test samples and lesson plans, to useful Ministry of Education websites for Iranian teachers, and different general knowledge websites for interested people: websites introducing facts about English speaking countries, weather forecasts, downloadable tools for teachers, short stories, downloadable life style books, a 3-D trip to the space, APA formatting, etc. We will be glad to be your host and read your comments.

The Head of the English Group of District 4 in Isfahan, Mr. Mohammad Ahmadvand

Jokes
Patient

A man goes to the doctor and says, "Doctor, wherever I touch, it hurts."

The doctor asks, "What do you mean?" The man says, "When I touch my shoulder, it really hurts. If I touch my knee - OUCH! When I touch my forehead, it really, really hurts." The doctor says, "I know what's wrong with you - you've broken your finger!"

Elephant

A: Why are you crying?
B: The elephant is dead.
A: Was he your pet?
B: No, but I'm the one who must dig his grave.

Dollar

Teacher: Why are you late?
Student: There was a man who lost a hundred dollar bill.
Teacher: That's nice. Were you helping him look for it?
Student: No. I was standing on it.

Teaching Tips: "Teach Communiffectively"

It seems that communiffective teaching has found some advocates! Many of you emailed me and acknowledged! Thank YOU! I'm very proud of your nice words, but it's just the beginning! For this issue, due to space limitations, Teaching Tips will be brief. We'd like to invite you all to send us Your Teaching Tips: Email us your suggestions of teaching communiffectively the new English books. Your suggestions will be published under Teaching Tips section and of course under your own name! Do not hesitate! (azimi.hz@gmail.com) ☺

Funny Riddles

A. There is a common English word that is nine letters long. Each time you remove a letter from it, it still remains an English

Example:

Hannah and Jack are married and have a twelve year old daughter named Nicole. Hannah is trying to help Nicole with her English homework. Nicole doesn't care about school. She just wants to go playing soccer with her friends. Hannah becomes angry and finally lets Nicole go.

"Nicole just doesn't understand how important school is. She just wants to play," Hannah tells Jack.

- "She'll understand someday. But right now, you have to remember that **you can lead a horse to water, but you can't make it drink**. When she wants to do better, she will ask for your help. You can't force her to learn."

- "I guess you're right, but I don't like it."

You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make it drink.

Idiom

"A frog in someone's throat"

Meaning:

If you have **a frog in your throat**, you have a sore throat, or your throat is dry, and have difficulty speaking because you want to cough.

Examples:

1. In a speech contest last year, she suddenly got **a frog in her throat** and had a hard time speaking.

2. A: Why don't you sing with us in our next concert this Friday?
B: I wish I could, but I caught a cold and have **a frog in the throat**.

A frog in the throat

No Comment!

Any idea!? Share with us! (azimi.hz@gmail.com)

HINT: This cartoon illustrates (and of course makes fun of) excessive use of technology by today's students.

Mr. Ahmadvand sent us his comment on our cartoon published in ETFun no. 109. Remember those animals (elephant, monkey, fish, etc.) who had to climb a tree as their test!? Without further explanation, here is his comment:

"First, I want to say that sometimes "laws" or "rules" are two-sided swords; they can cut the bad things or, if used carelessly or if misused, the good things. If rules are not made carefully considering different aspects of an issue, they may change into useless tools to enforce any effect, or even they may prove harmful. Secondly, this cartoon reminds me of the fact that a teacher should consider students' different learning styles and abilities when teaching or testing; every teaching, learning, and testing situation is unique and the teacher must take care of these subtle differences."

Mohammad Ahmadvand, Isfahan, District 4

Proverb

"You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make it drink."

Meaning:

You can give someone the opportunity to learn or to do something, but you can never force him to accept that opportunity.

English through Fun

Hadi Azimi

Assistant Professor in ELT, Schools of Medicine and of Paramedical Sciences,
Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences
Email: azimi.hz@gmail.com

Zahra Kobadi Kerman

MA Student of TEFL, Islamic Azad University, Central Tehran Branch
Email: zahra.kobadi@yahoo.com

The Note

Hello everyone! Nowrooz is on its way! Plenty of cookies, guests, and free time! And yes: free time! Time to look back and evaluate the past year. Have we tried to make a change? Have we learned (and taught!) something new? Have I been a better person? Lucky and Happy he who replies "Yes!" I wish you all a great Nowrooz!

Quotable Quotes

"One language sets you in a corridor for life. Two languages open every door along the way."
- **Frank Smith**, *Contemporary psycholinguist*

"Learn everything you can, anytime you can, from anyone you can; there will always come a time when you will be grateful you did."
- **Sarah Caldwell** (1924-2006), *American opera conductor and impresario*

"To have another language is to possess a second soul."
- **Charlemagne** (742-814), *European King*

"Language is the road map of a culture. It tells you where its people come from and where they are going."
- **Rita Mae Brown** (1944-), *American writer*

"Language is the archives of history."
- **Ralph Waldo Emerson** (1803-1882), *American essayist, lecturer, and poet*

with performance-based assessment, as fully discussed by Norris et al. (1998), concern the practicality issues and its consequences. Performance-based tests are usually difficult to design and administrate. This is in itself a major problem, but, for the very same reason, the number of test tasks designed in a single test will be relatively small, and, by the passage of time, this can endanger the test security too because the test tasks would lose their originality, and testees would become too familiar with them. Another by-product of this limitation could be the insufficient coverage of the content, which stands out as a threat to the content validity of the test and its generalizability, as generalizations would not be easily possible from one single test to the whole gamut of real life contexts. Performance-based tests also cost very much because of the equipment (such as voice recorders or cameras) usually needed to record the performances or the time and money needed for hiring or training raters.

Conclusion

   When first introduced seriously in the field of language testing in the 1970s, performance-based assessment received widespread attention, and many considered it as a revolution. Morrow (1979, p. 144) even called it "the Promised Land," and many people had high hopes for this new approach; however, this "Promised Land" was never truly reached. Just like almost any other novelties, performance-based assessment was welcomed enthusiastically at first, but, by the passage of time, its popularity faded as its weaknesses gradually came to be better known after putting this approach into practice. Nonetheless, the contributions of this approach to the

field of language testing should not be underestimated. It was, after all, a move forward, and although it never proved to be the Promised Land for language testers, it did pave the way towards this Land – if, of course, such a land exists at all.

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interlocutor/assessor."

The problem of reliability seems, at least to some extent, inescapable because an effort to enhance validity naturally leads to a relative reduction of reliability. The opposite of this holds true as well: In order to make a test more reliable, the validity of that test might be threatened (Heaton, 1990). This seems to be a give-and-take equation, determined by the laws of nature, and one should decide in advance which issue should receive the primary attention. According to Hughes (2003, p. 50), "[T]here will always be some tension between reliability and validity. The tester has to balance gains in one against losses in the other." This continuing tension between reliability and validity has been the point of much argument and concern in the field, and many other scholars have also dealt with it (e.g., Morrow, 1979 or Underhill, 1982).

Unlike many traditional types of tests, such as multiple-choice questions, in which scoring is highly consistent and very easily done, rating in performance-based assessment becomes a major concern because raters deal with real-world performances, not the simple tests of factual knowledge (Shohamy, 1995)

Hughes (2003) also provides an example of a composition writing test to clarify the tension between reliability and validity. In order to make such a test more reliable, the test writer needs to take measures to decrease the potential variability this test could cause in testees' performance on this test. One way to reach this goal would be to set the instructions in a way that testees will be restricted in terms of what they can write about or how they can write it. Think of a writing test in which testees are required to use, for example, the past simple tense to write their composition. This limits testees' freedom of choice, and less freedom results in more reliability, but would such a test be a really valid test of real-world writing? Does it reflect the realities of how we write in our daily lives? Do we feel forced to use a specific verb tense when writing something in the real world? The answer is a definite "No."

The issue of rating and raters has received a great deal of attention in performance-based assessment, and this is considered by many (such as Norris et al., 1998) as one of the main drawbacks of this approach to language testing. Unlike many traditional types of tests, such as multiple-choice questions, in which scoring is highly consistent and very easily done, rating in performance-based assessment becomes a major concern because raters deal with real-world performances, not the simple tests of factual knowledge (Shohamy, 1995). This is the very thing that causes trouble: the complexity of human behavior in real life. No matter how hard the raters might try to be objective in their ratings, they would inevitably engage in some subjective judging process as well. When objective scoring is not present, as Henning (1996) points out, inter-rater reliability estimates should be calculated. According to him, even when high inter-rater estimates are obtained, they cannot be totally dependable (See Henning, 1996 for a discussion of how this is possible).

Many other problems often associated

Backwash effect is undoubtedly among the most crucial topics studied by many scholars of the field, and, as Hughes (2003, p.53) states, "an entire issue of Language Testing has been devoted to the study of the ways of achieving beneficial backwash effect." This is where performance-based assessment is very much valued, as it not only is effective in eliminating the negative backwash effects caused by traditional tests, but it also initiates positive backwash. In case of multiple-choice questions, as an example of more traditional tests, the negative backwash is that the testees would try to learn the strategies of doing better in answering this format of tests rather than try to master the language. As for the performance-based assessment, however, the testees need to work on their language proficiency if they wish to get good grades, which is considered a totally beneficial backwash effect.

What Are Some of the Problems with Performance-Based Assessment?

Performance-based assessment, just like any other approach to language testing, is not without its drawbacks. Bachman (1995), for example, in a separate chapter on test methods, points to a number of problems involved in assessing performance. The effect of test methods, as one of the widely discussed issues in language testing, is a source of concern, as people simply may differ in their reactions to specific testing methods. For instance, some people might find it really difficult to enter a conversation with native speakers, but they might be very good at giving a lecture, or vice versa. Similarly, the test setting (such as personnel's behavior) could also affect the

assessment of a testee's performance. Furthermore, the personality factors of an individual could influence his/her performance on a language test. As an example, people with different social backgrounds or learning styles might perform differently on the same test.

Although the problems mentioned above might be present in many other approaches to language testing other than performance-based assessment, there are other disadvantages that could be argued to more specifically concern this approach. As discussed by McNamara (1996), the relevance of the test tasks to the real world is a crucial factor. Since it is not always possible to assess performance in real-world contexts,, there always exists a major concern of not being able to match the real world sufficiently and/or appropriately. Therefore, despite the fact that performance-based assessment enjoys much higher levels of validity in comparison to the traditional tests of knowledge of the language, the validity of such an assessment should not be blindly overestimated or easily taken for granted. Presenting a detailed survey of the problems with establishing different types of validity for performance-based assessment is beyond the scope of this introductory paper. The interested readers may refer to McNamara (1996) for a more detailed discussion.

Another point of concern in performance-based assessment is the issue of reliability. Due to the nature of the real world, its unpredictability, and the lack of scientific control, tests dealing with real-world tasks generally fail to maintain high levels of reliability. As Fulcher (2000, p. 484) states, "performance would be judged subjectively, qualitatively and impressionistically, by a sympathetic

real-life situations (Wiggins, 1989), and this provides support for the construct validity - as well as the face validity - of such tests. For example, having a short conversation with a stranger to get some information about a specific issue or to ask for directions to a specific destination could constitute a typical form of test task in a performance-based test. Such a task would, to a great extent, resemble a real-life situation that many people may encounter when going to a foreign country. This resemblance of test tasks to real life tasks, i.e. the authenticity of test tasks, renders performance-based tests more valid. Using a mock job interview as a test task could be a good example here.

Performance-based tests also generally enjoy high levels of predictive validity, which is regarded as a very important factor when we wish to predict the future performance of our testees as in, for example, entrance examinations of many universities that foreign students are usually required to take before being admitted. Norris, Brown, Hudson, and Yoshioka (1998) rightly observe:

[…] unlike other types of tests, performance assessments can be used to approximate the conditions of a real task in a real-life situation. As a result, performance assessments have value in that their scores can be used to predict students' abilities in future, real-world situations, unlike other tests where scores are only very indirect predictors of ability to perform a real-life language task. We suggest that this potential for predicting or generalizing to future, real-world language use is one of the key contributions that performance assessment might make as an alternative for language assessment. (p.14)

After all, the most significant advantage of performance-based assessment in comparison with the more traditional approaches to language testing is the positive backwash effect that it causes.

to make a distinction between "weak" and "strong" versions of performance-based tests with regard to the extent a test includes nonlinguistic assessment (1996, p. 8). The work sample approach (or the stronger version) is best applied in English for Occupational Purposes contexts, where the nonlinguistic side of the performance of people is more easily observable. The cognitive approach (or the weaker version), however, might better fit the contexts in which only the linguistic performance of people could be tested. This limitation in the scope of assessment, of course, reduces the reality element of performance-based assessment, which is considered a disadvantage, as it is in mild opposition with the rationale of performance-based assessment itself, that is, assessing real life language use. Jones (1985) presents a similar categorization of performance-based assessment by naming "direct assessment," "work sample method," and "simulation techniques." This categorization, just like McNamara's, is done in a strong-to-weak order in terms of the reality of the testing process. An example of such an assessment could be a record of the extracts of language someone has produced over a period of time in his/her workplace.

Why Is Performance-Based Assessment Valued?

As discussed above, in the section about the history of performance-based assessment, it should now be clear that this approach to language testing, or testing in general (see Robert, Eva, and Dunbar, 1991, for a variety of subject matters in which performance-based assessment is used), was basically an attempt to satisfy the needs of the

governments or universities that were seeking to find ways to have a valid measure of people's real abilities, rather than their mere knowledge. From this perspective, at least, performance-based assessment is valuable because it has been a step forward in responding to the emerged needs of the time. Aside from how successful or unsuccessful this approach proved to be later, it was nevertheless a change for the better, and many (such as Miller and Legg, 1993; Moss, 1992; Wiggins, 1989) started to support it.

In case of multiple-choice questions, as an example of more traditional tests, the negative backwash is that the testees would try to learn the strategies of doing better in answering this format of tests rather than try to master the language. As for the performance-based assessment, however, the testees need to work on their language proficiency if they wish to get good grades, which is considered a totally beneficial backwash effect

Performance-based assessment is a more valid type of assessment when it comes to assessing testees' language proficiency compared with the older tests of language knowledge or translation. In a performance-based test, the testees are required to use language in a way that they will most likely need to use it later in

The advent of Communicative Language Teaching and its popularity focused attention on communication as a "process" which demanded the application of knowledge of target language forms, meanings, and functions in meaning negotiation (Larsen-Freeman, 1986). This further supported the introduction of performance-based testing into the field, as it was the communicative competence (and, subsequently, the realization of such competence) that rested at the heart of both. The increasing number of the foreign students entering British and American universities constituted the practical reason for embracing performance-based assessment, and the flourishing of Communicative Language Teaching is considered as the theoretical basis of this new approach to testing.

What Is Performance-Based Assessment?

According to Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics (Richards and Schmidt, 2002, p. 392), performance-based assessment is "an approach to assessment that seeks to measure student learning based on how well the learner can perform on a practical real task." The examples brought for this approach to assessment in the same book include essay writing or doing conversations, as opposed to unreal tasks, such as multiple-choice questions or gap-filling ones. These are, of course, the more common examples of performance-based tests; however, there are other types of such tests with even higher levels of resemblance to real-life language and context. McNamara (1996) states:

[There are] two main approaches to second language performance assessment: (1) work sample approach, which has its origins in general and vocational education and in personnel selection, and has influenced both general purpose and specific purpose assessment in second languages; and (2) a more cognitive and distinctively linguistic approach in which attention is focused less on the task, which may be relatively unrealistic in real-world terms, but on the qualities of execution in the performance, and/or the evidence it provides about the candidates' control of the underlying linguistic system. (p. 2)

McNamara goes even further

discrete-point tests, integrative tests were developed, and they received a great deal of support from many scholars. Integrative tests differ from discrete-point tests in assessing two or more skills at a time, instead of testing each item separately. Cloze and dictation are the typical examples of such tests. As Heaton (1990, p.16) rightly observes, integrative tests could also be viewed as an improvement on discrete-point tests by "testing of language in context." Nonetheless, it should not be forgotten that integrative tests involve "functional language but not the use of functional language". That is, they do not tap the socio-cultural, socio-linguistic, or communicative performance of the learners and do not consider the interaction between interlocutors (Farhady, et al., 2006).

The failure of discrete-point and integrative tests to measure communicative competence along with the new policies of the governments of English-speaking countries set the ground for the advent of performance-based assessment. In order to be able to give admission to students with the minimum level of language proficiency required for living and studying in their countries and universities, British and American universities felt the need for more authentic tests that could assess the communicative competence of the applicants rather than their knowledge of English language (Baker, 1995).

The main criticism of multiple-choice items, on the other hand, concerns the strong claim that the ability to answer discrete items of a language test correctly does not equal proficiency in that language

Introduction

The importance of testing, as discussed by Farhady, Jafarpur, and Birjandi (2006) and Hughes (2003), makes us act more meticulously when making a decision about the testing approach that best fits our objectives and purposes. Throughout the history of language testing, which goes hand in hand with the history of language teaching, different theories, approaches, methods, and techniques, have been proposed and utilized in various contexts (Brown and Hudson, 1998). Now the question is: Why has the field of language testing undergone so many changes? The most straightforward answer to this question could be that different needs arise at different times, and so new approaches would be introduced to satisfy those needs. Here follows a short description of the needs that gave rise to performance-based assessment.

How Performance-Based Assessment Came into Vogue

1950s witnessed the introduction of scientific approaches in the field of testing. Science deals with numbers and calls for precision, so objectivity lies at the heart of scientific analyses of all kinds. The result of the application of scientific practices in language testing during this time led to a new approach of constructing tests, widely known as discrete-point approach (Weir, 1990). As the name itself implies, discrete-point testing breaks the language into distinct segments. Hughes (2003, p. 19) defines discrete-point testing as "the testing of one element at a time, item by item". Such breaking of language into smaller parts and testing each part separately provides the test taker with more control on the process of testing. To better grasp the idea of discrete-point

testing and its strengths and weaknesses, we can refer to multiple-choice items, which very often serve as the typical example of discrete-point tests (although there are many other test formats falling in the same category, such as true-false questions).

performance-based assessment is "an approach to assessment that seeks to measure student learning based on how well the learner can perform on a practical real task

Harris (1969) points out a number of the advantages of multiple-choice items. One of the significant benefits of multiple-choice items is that the test writer can include many multiple-choice items in a single test, as they do not take much time to answer, which could result in an increase in the content validity of the test. The other eye-catching point is that scoring multiple-choice items is easy, fast, and objective, which would add to the reliability of the test. The main criticism of multiple-choice items, on the other hand, concerns the strong claim that the ability to answer discrete items of a language test correctly does not equal proficiency in that language. As Brown and Hudson (1998, p.659) put it, "real-life language is not multiple choice." In other words, having good knowledge of language elements (linguistic competence), such as grammar or vocabulary, is one thing, while being able to use that language communicatively (communicative competence) is quite a different thing (Farhady et al., 2006).

To compensate for the deficiencies of

Performance-Based Assessment:
What We Should Know about It

Mehrdad Yousefpoori-Naeim

PhD Candidate, TEFL, Shahid Beheshti University

Email: m_yousefpoori@sbu.ac.ir

چکیده

با افزایش محبوبیت رویکرد ارتباطی در آموزش زبان، حوزهٔ سنجش و ارزشیابی زبان نیز دستخوش تغییرات چشمگیری شد که نتیجهٔ آن ظهور سنجش عملکرد ـ محور در این حوزه بود. طولی نکشید که این نوع جدید سنجش مورد توجه مدرسان و پژوهشگران قرار گرفت و به محبوبیتی دست یافت که تا امروز از آن کاسته نشده است. مقالهٔ حاضر تلاشی است برای معرفی سنجش عملکرد ـ محور، چگونگی شکل‌گیری این نوع سنجش و قوت‌ها و ضعف‌های آن. در پایان نیز چنین نتیجه گرفته می‌شود که با وجود دستاوردهای فراوان سنجش عملکرد ـ محور در حوزهٔ سنجش و ارزشیابی زبان، این نوع سنجش نتوانسته است انتظاراتی را که در ابتدای مسیر رشد آن وجود داشت، برآورده کند.

کلیدواژه‌ها: رویکرد ارتباطی آموزش زبان، سنجش و ارزشیابی زبان، سنجش عملکردـمحور

Abstract

With the rise of the Communicative Language Teaching, the field of language testing also witnessed outstanding changes, which resulted in the advent of the performance-based assessment. It did not take long for this new approach to language assessment to gain popularity among teachers and researchers, and its passion has not petered out to this day. The present paper makes an attempt to provide readers with a concise overview of what performance-based assessment is, how it was developed, and how it should be viewed in terms of its strengths and weaknesses. It is concluded that despite the numerous benefits the field of language testing has gained from performance-based assessment, it still falls short of the expectations raised at its early stage of development.

Key Words: communicative language teaching, language testing, performance-based assessment

as well as the types of content and activities will help to shape the learner's view of language" (p 210). It is important to note that, in spite of the disagreement of the majority of the teachers with the adequacy of the activities, they agreed that the exercises were based on CLT and integrated different skills. In contrast, Alemi and Hesami (2013), Ghorbani (2011), and Golpour (2012) found that in the previously taught textbook, the number of activities encouraging communicative practices were inadequate. Moreover, the data collected by Alami and Hesami (2013) revealed that the language of the textbooks was not representative of the real life situations.

Sheldon (1988) asserts that "textbooks are physical artifacts, and the author needs to recognize that layout, format, typography, and graphics are also essential for a successful coursebook" (p 8)

Conclusion

In the third millennium where international communication is essential and English is used as the dominant international language, developing appropriate and efficient textbooks for EFL students is of great importance. Efficient textbooks can be of help in the process of students' improvement in terms of language knowledge and skills. They will enable them to use the language appropriately. Overall, it can be concluded that the newly published textbook is much more efficient than the previous one, though some revisions and modifications

are required to improve it. Since the necessity of textbook cannot be neglected in the EFL classroom, it is important for teachers to continuously evaluate the textbook from different angles to meet the learning needs of the students. This way they can maximize its learning potential and enhance the status of English teaching in Iran. The findings of this study have implications for curriculum designers and textbook developers to modify the textbook to improve its efficiency.

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students. Furthermore, the developers of the newly developed textbook have emphasized that while developing the book, they considered the Islamic Iranian cultural values. The attitudes of the teachers approve this claim (83.6% for culture and 61.2% for religion).

The findings of this study revealed that about half of the participants agreed that the vocabulary and structure, dialogues, and exercises and activities are presented appropriately. Such a finding suggest that the book needs some revisions and modifications in these parts in order to be appropriate for the students and promote learning. Regarding the suitability of the exercises for the four language skills, namely, listening, speaking, reading, and writing, McDonough and Shaw (2003) maintain that any materials should enable the students to see the effective use of the four skills in an appropriate context because in this way we can involve the learners in authentic tasks and increase their motivation. However, evaluating the previously taught book, Mahdizade (2005), Ghorbani (2011), and Golpour (2012) found that the activities included in the book were not conducive to improving these skills. Fortunately, in the introduction of the newly developed English textbook, it has been claimed that the textbook developers have paid attention to all four language skills and none of them has been ignored. Although teachers taking part in this study implicitly accept that all these skills are included (58.2% for listening, 58.2% for speaking, 47.7% for reading, and 43.3% for writing skills), they do not approve of the adequacy of the activities. As the percentages reveal, it seems that the majority disapprove of the adequacy of the activities which have been designed for the two important skills of reading and writing. With regard to the importance of communicative exercises and activities, Nunan (1991) emphasizes that "the way materials are organized and presented,

for enhancing learning and that they are developed based on CLT. They also agree that the exercises can promote group work in the classroom.

Finally, concerning the supplementary materials provided for this book, 67.2% of the participants agree that the listening CD is related to the content of the book and it presents appropriate pronunciation. Moreover, they think that the Workbook contains exercises that are appropriately developed according to the Student's Book. They also believe that the teaching aids are available and the Teacher's Guide provides them with the information they require for teaching.

Discussion

Sheldon (1988) asserts that "textbooks are physical artifacts, and the author needs to recognize that layout, format, typography, and graphics are also essential for a successful

coursebook" (p 8). According to the results of the present study, it can be inferred that junior high school EFL teachers have a rather positive attitude towards the general theme, illustrations and appearance as well as the supplementary materials of the newly developed book. However, the results of the study conducted by Mahdizade (2005) indicated that junior high school EFL teachers disapproved the way content, examples, and illustrations were presented in the previously taught textbooks at this level. Regarding the supplementary materials for the previously taught book, Alemi and Hesami (2013), Ghorbani (2011), and Golpour (2012) found that they were not accessible to the teachers and

Results

The results of the study are presented in Table 2.

Table 2:

The Frequency and Percentage of the EFL Teachers' Attitude towards the 7th Grade English Book

variables	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Structure & vocabulary	6	9	32	47.7	25	37.3	4	6
General Theme	2	3	18	26.9	28	41.8	19	28.3
Pictures & Appearance	3	4.5	14	20.9	36	53.7	14	20.9
Dialogue	7	10.4	23	34.3	30	44.8	7	10.4
Exercises & Activities	2	3	28	41.8	33	49.3	4	6
Supplementary Materials	0	0	22	32.8	38	56.8	7	10.4

As can be seen from table 2, overall 43.3% of the participants agree that the new words and structures are introduced appropriately and in meaningful situations to facilitate understanding, the number of introduced words in each lesson is appropriate, and they reappear in the subsequent lessons for the sake of reinforcement. Moreover, they agree that new structures are introduced based on the students' needs in a logical order. The results also show that overall 70.1% of the participants are in agreement with the general theme of the book. In other words, they agree that the cultural and religious issues are adequately included in the book.

With regard to the theme of pictures and appearance, the result show that 74.6% of the teachers, taking part in the study, accept that illustrations used in the book are relevant, clear, and simple. The font used in the book is also found to be suitable for the students at this age. Moreover, they agree that the book has an eye-catching cover. The table shows that 55.2% of the participants believe that the dialogues are attractive, up-to-date, appropriate for the students' language knowledge, and there is a wide variety of dialogues. In addition, the dialogues are arranged reasonably, that is, from simple to difficult and are consistent with the students' needs.

Overall, it can be concluded that the newly published textbook is much more efficient than the previous one, though some revisions and modifications are required to improve it

Regarding the attitude of the EFL teachers towards the exercises and activities included in the book, the results show that 55.3% of them approve of the appropriateness and attractiveness of the exercises. They also believe that exercises create a meaningful situation

Method
Participants

A total of 67 English teachers teaching in the 7th grade (31 male and 36 female) took part in this study. They were from Mazandaran, Markazi, Tehran, and North Khorasan Provinces with the mean age of 37.5 years. Their teaching experience ranged from 3 to 29 years. Among them, 11.9% had associate degree (AD), 67.2% hold a BA degree, and 20.9% were MA holders. Eighty-eight percent of the teachers were involved in teaching in urban areas and 11.9% in rural areas.

Table 1:
Demographic Information of the Participants

		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	31	46.3
	Female	36	53.7
Age	20-29	9	13.4
	30-39	32	47.8
	40- over	26	38.8
Teaching Experience	Up to 9	10	14.9
	10-19	28	41.8
	20-over	29	43.3
Work Place	City	59	88
	Village	8	11.9
Academic Degree	AD	8	11.9
	BA	45	67.2
	MA	14	20.9

Instrument

To evaluate the 7th grade English textbook, a questionnaire was developed based on the checklists in Byrd (2001), Skierso (1991), and Ur (1996). It contained two main sections, one for collecting demographic information of the participants and the second one was aimed to collect their attitudes towards the textbook. The second part included six domains, namely, structure and vocabulary, general theme, appearance and illustrations, dialogues, exercises and activities, and supplementary materials. The participants were required to answer 43 four-point Likert scale items which assessed the participants' attitudes towards the six domains. The questionnaire was given to four experts in the field to comment on its statements. It was modified, based on the experts' comments. To ensure the internal consistency reliability of the questionnaire, Cronbach's alpha was calculated. The overall reliability of the questionnaire with 43 statements was 0.93 which is considered an acceptable indicator of reliability. The collected data were analyzed using SPSS version 18. To find the answer to the research question, descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, and mean were employed.

textbooks are "designed to give cohesion to the language teaching and learning process by providing direction, support and specific language-based activities aimed at offering classroom practice for students" (Mares, 2003: p, 131) and foster effective language learning (Cunningsworth, 1995)

Introduction

In an ELT classroom, there is a strong reliance on textbooks because "materials [textbooks] are not simply the everyday tools of the language teacher, they are an embodiment of the aims, values, and methods of the particular teaching/learning situations" (Hutchinson, 1987: p, 37). Ur (1996) asserts that textbooks are a supportive teaching instrument. In other words, textbooks are "designed to give cohesion to the language teaching and learning process by providing direction, support and specific language-based activities aimed at offering classroom practice for students" (Mares, 2003: p, 131) and foster effective language learning (Cunningsworth, 1995). For example, in a study, Richards, Tung, and Ng (1992) found that textbooks were one of the main sources of teaching materials. In another study carried out by McGrath (2006) it was revealed that English teachers of secondary schools considered the use of textbooks as important.

Studies have shown that textbooks are highly common in ELT contexts and ELT professionals use textbooks for daily teaching purposes and the fact is that very few of them would not use the published materials at some stage of their profession (Byrd, 2001; Litz, 2005; McDonough & Shaw, 1993). Since they are the most crucial component of an EFL classroom, the evaluation of the textbooks is of great importance. Textbooks are revised and republished and sometimes new books are written to meet the changing focuses of instruction as well as the changing language needs of the learners. A number of researchers have emphasized the importance of post-use evaluation of a textbook since it can provide data concerning the actual effect of the

textbook on the users (Tomlinson, 2003; Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2004). Actually, when a book is newly developed for an EFL context, its evaluation is even of more importance because its pedagogical value need to be determined before long-term use.

Textbooks are revised and republished and sometimes new books are written to meet the changing focuses of instruction as well as the changing language needs of the learners. A number of researchers have emphasized the importance of post-use evaluation of a textbook since it can provide data concerning the actual effect of the textbook on the users

Prospect 1 developed for the 7th grade students is a new textbook in Iran. Hence, there is a need to collect empirical data to evaluate the book from different angles. The present study was conducted to collect data eliciting the attitudes of the EFL teachers teaching in several parts of the country as to evaluate the extent to which the expectation of material developers are fulfilled. The following research question guided the study:

What are teachers' views on Prospect1 in terms of structure and vocabulary, general theme, appearance, illustrations, dialogues, exercises and activities, and supplementary materials?

The Attitude of Iranian EFL Teachers towards the Junior High School Textbook: Prospect 1

Nasrin Khaki (PhD in TEFL)
Administration of Education, District 1, Sari
n_khaki2001@yahoo.com
Abolfazl Khodamoradi (PhD in TEFL)
Administration of Education, Mahallat
Mahyar Ganjabi (PhD in TEFL)
Payame-Noor University, Tehran

چکیده

در کشورهایی که وزارت آموزش‌وپرورش کتاب‌های درسی را تهیه می‌کند و معلم در تدوین و انتخاب آن‌ها نقشی ندارد، ارزیابی کتاب درسی امری ضروری است. از آنجا که کتاب زبان سال هفتم به تازگی تألیف شده است، در این تحقیق تلاش شد این کتاب از دیدگاه دبیرانی که آن را طی سال تحصیلی گذشته تدریس کرده‌اند بررسی شود. به این منظور، پرسش‌نامه‌ای شامل شش محور (ساختار گرامری و لغت، موضوع کلی، تصاویر و ظاهر کتاب، تمرین‌ها، مکالمات، ضمایم) طراحی شد و در اختیار دبیران مورد نظر قرار گرفت. یافته‌ها نشان داد که بیشتر دبیران زبان انگلیسی شرکت‌کننده در این مطالعه نسبت به موضوع کلی، تصاویر و ظاهر کتاب، و ضمایم آن نظر مثبت دارند، در حالی که فقط نیمی از آن‌ها دارای نگرش مثبت نسبت به ساختار گرامری و لغت، تمرین‌ها، و مکالمات موجود در کتاب‌اند. به این ترتیب، به‌نظر می‌رسد کتاب مذکور به‌رغم مزیت‌های ساختاری، برای کارایی بهتر به بازنگری و تغییر نیاز دارد.

کلیدواژه‌ها: ارزشیابی کتاب درسی، نگرش معلمان، کتاب درسی هفتم متوسطه۱

Abstract

Textbooks are an important part of a curriculum so textbook evaluation seems to be inevitable and necessary, especially in countries where the textbooks are developed by the Ministry of Education and not selected by the EFL teachers. Since a new English book has been developed for the 7th grade students in Iran, this study aimed at evaluating the newly developed textbook from the perspective of the teachers who had used it in their classroom instruction. To accomplish the study, a questionnaire was developed to evaluate the book based on six domains, namely, structure and vocabulary, general theme, appearance and illustrations, dialogues, exercises and activities, and supplementary materials. The findings revealed that most EFL teachers were satisfied with the general theme, appearance and illustrations, and supplementary materials, while nearly half of them were not satisfied with the dialogues, vocabulary and structure, and exercises and activities. It can be concluded that, in spite of some privileges, the book is in urgent need of revision and modification.

Key Words: textbook evaluation, EFL teachers' attitudes, 7th grade, Iran

research need to be noted. The findings of the present study are restricted to elementary students' vocabulary learning achievement. Moreover, the data used in this study comprised only learners' performance on a short-term memory retention test. Future studies can investigate the performance of students at various proficiency levels, and on both short-term and long-term vocabulary retention tests. The findings reported and the conclusion made in this study, therefore, should be regarded as suggestive.

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Appendix A

Semantically related vocabulary items

Clothes	Parts of body	Fruits	Furniture
Shirt	Arm	Apple	Chair
Scarf	Leg	Orange	Table
Belt	Knee	Mango	Clock
Shoes	Neck	Melon	Mirror
Coat	Eye	Grape	Stove
Socks	Ear	Cherries	Sofa
Skirt	Chin	Peach	Desk
Jacket	Hand	Fig	Bed

Semantically unrelated vocabulary items

1st group	2nd group	3rd group	4th group
Book	Pillow	Glass	Spoon
Car	Bread	Bird	Plane
Bag	Paper	Watch	River
Nurse	Door	Rice	Comb
School	Bike	Flower	Basket
Ball	Horse	Carpet	Soap
Sheep	Ladder	Teacher	Shop
Gun	Ring	Camera	Flag

those words.

There might be several reasons why learning semantically grouped words are more difficult than un-related groups of words for novice learners. First of all, although according to the semantic field theory words are organized and stored in the mind through making networks among words (Lehrer, 1974), it seems that this argument does not apply to the process of learning, but might be, in all probability, limited to the way words are represented in the mental lexicon. In other words, learning new vocabulary items may involve a route of mental processing which is different from the route that is used for representing lexical items (Wilcox & Medina, 2013). Furthermore, semantic field theory may not be applicable to elementary language learners. Waring (1997) contends that elementary learners first need to develop a basic vocabulary knowledge network and then into which add new vocabulary by making further semantic links. Similarly, Wilcox and Medina explain that, at the elementary level, "even though the mind may tend to store accumulated vocabulary in semantic fields, initially it is prepared to receive words that need to be organized in that way, not to receive words that have already been organized semantically" (Wilcox & Medina, 2013, pp. 1065-66).

A second plausible explanation for the results is that perhaps recalling similar words during the semantically clustered training sessions caused cognitive interference. According to interference theory grouping words into semantic clusters increases the similarity among new words. When similarity increases among target words, the difficulty of vocabulary retention also increases, so that it is harder for language learners to remember related words. Robinson (2001)

discusses that discriminating between semantic features of similar vocabulary items may raise task complexity, and in turn, affects the process of retrieving words. Similarly, Finkbeiner and Nicol (2003) argue that cognitive interference is more likely due to repetitive activation of lexical entries within a semantically similar set of words.

Ausubel (1968) discusses that sometimes the differences between new and existing information can cause learning troubles, particularly when learners are supposed to learn "confusingly similar" ideas. Extensive research into the distinctiveness hypothesis, which holds non-similar (distinctive) information is easier to be learned, seems to have confirmed Ausubel's assertion (Baddeley, 1990; Papathanasiou, 2009). The proponents of this hypothesis contend that new words should ideally be presented in an unrelated way so as to decrease the task difficulty of learning, and remembering words. The findings of this admittedly limited study seem to lend support to distinctiveness hypothesis.

The pedagogical implication of this study for language instructors and course book designers is not trivial. As pointed out in the introductory section, a frequent and popular practice among material developers is presenting words in semantically clustered sets. The findings of this study may appear surprising to authors and course book designers as they call for a reflection on the current practice of grouping related words into semantic clusters. The study also complements the existing literature and suggests exploring alternative methods of presenting vocabulary.

Finally, the following limitations to this

Throughout the study attempts were made to present new words in different ways to provide two different manners of presentation as required by the research design. In addition, efforts were made to allocate the same number of repetitions and also the amount of time to teaching each word in all classes. Vocabulary items were presented in a controlled procedure in terms of instruction and time to create two distinct study conditions for teaching semantically related and unrelated words.

Robinson (2001) discusses that discriminating between semantic features of similar vocabulary items may raise task complexity, and in turn, affects the process of retrieving words. Similarly, Finkbeiner and Nicol (2003) argue that cognitive interference is more likely due to repetitive activation of lexical entries within a semantically similar set of words

In order to examine the effect of manner of presentation on students' vocabulary retention, the researcher compared the students' performance on tests of related words with that of unrelated words. As is shown in Table 2 descriptive statistics revealed that the mean value for each test of unrelated words was higher than the mean value of test results in related words condition. Whereas in the related condition only 57.44% of the new words were recalled by learners, in the unrelated

condition 68.56% were remembered. Manner of presentation appeared to have exerted an effect on vocabulary recall. However, in order to gain a clearer understanding of the effect, test scores were submitted to paired sample T-tests. The results of the analyses revealed a statistically significant effect of method of presentation, (p < .001). Table 2 shows the results of the T-tests.

Table 2: *The results of T-tests*

Tests	Mean	SD	T	df	Significance
Session 1, related set 1	4.43	1.55	5.65	67	0.00
Session 2, unrelated set 1	5.78	1.64			
Session 3, related set 2	4.44	1.70	2.57	67	0.012
Session 4, unrelated set 2	5.07	1.72			
Session 5, related set 3	4.57	1.66	3.35	67	0.001
Session 6, unrelated set 3	5.41	1.37			
Session 7, related set 4	4.94	1.73	2.97	67	0.004
Session 8, unrelated set 4	5.68	1.85			
Total, related condition	18.38	4.29	6.91	67	0.000
Total, unrelated condition	21.94	4.17			

The finding of the study suggests that presenting new words to elementary learners in a semantically unrelated fashion, compared to a semantically related fashion, results in better vocabulary retention. This finding is in line with the results reported in the literature (Erten & Tekin, 2008; Finkbeiner & Nicol, 2003; Papathanasiou, 2009; Tinkham, 1993; 1997; Waring, 1997; Wilcox & Medina, 2013), illustrating that grouping words in semantically similar sets impedes rather than facilitates the process of learning

idiomatic meaning). Another limitation was the selection of nouns frequently used in every day situations. This was advertly done to prevent any probable confusion on the part of students. Following the guidelines suggested in the literature the selected vocabulary items were then inspected for their length, and semantic relations.

This careful process of homogenizing and balancing vocabulary items was followed by a pilot study. That is, in order to ensure that the students would not know the meaning of the words, and the target vocabulary items would be unfamiliar to the students, a small scale study was conducted with 7 students. As was expected, children were not familiar with the items. The final draft of the word list included 64 vocabulary items to be used in the main phase of the study. These final items were then categorized into eight lists: four semantically related word lists, and four semantically unrelated word lists. Each of the eight word lists had eight vocabulary items (see Appendix A for a comprehensive list of words).

Based on the final word list a total of 64 flashcards, each corresponding to a vocabulary item, were prepared. Flash cards contained photos of the target words together with their written form. In addition, for each student 64 practice sheets were prepared which were used during the practice stage. Practice sheets included matching exercises where the participants were asked to match the written form of the new words with their pictures. The photos used in practice sheets were similar to those used in the flashcards.

Procedure

The procedure used in this study was modeled after Erten's and Tekin's study (2008). A "presentation – practice – test" procedure was followed in the present study. The study was conducted as a part of the regular instruction, and lasted for eight sessions. Vocabulary instruction, in each session, lasted, on average, 40 minutes. In the first session, the first semantically related set of words was introduced to the participants. In the second session, the first semantically unrelated group of words was introduced. The same procedure was followed for the remaining sessions and the remaining word lists, (see Table 1). In each session, new words were presented by means of flashcards and then were practiced through working on practice sheets. Each session ended with an immediate test of the target words, to measure students' short term recall of vocabulary.

Table 1: *The procedure of the study*

Session 1	1st Lesson: related set 1 (clothes) (presentation, practice, and immediate test)
Session 2	2nd Lesson: unrelated set 1 (presentation, practice, and immediate test)
Session 3	3rd Lesson: related set 2 (parts of body) (presentation, practice, and immediate test)
Session 4	4th Lesson: unrelated set 2 (presentation, practice, and immediate test)
Session 5	5th Lesson: related set 3 (fruits) (presentation, practice, and immediate test)
Session 6	6th Lesson: unrelated set 3 (presentation, practice, and immediate test)
Session 7	7th Lesson: related set 4 (furniture) (presentation, practice, and immediate test)
Session 8	8th Lesson: unrelated set 4 (presentation, practice, and immediate test)

learners made fewer errors than those in the related vocabulary condition.

The theoretical arguments and the empirical evidence for and against presenting vocabulary in semantically clustered sets summarized above calls for further research. We are faced with two main opposing views on presenting new vocabulary, with each view offering enough convincing arguments and supports. Thus, it is safe to propose that there is room for further research. The best way for us to make a sound decision is to apply both methods in real classrooms and compare the results. The present study, therefore, was designed to compare the effectiveness of semantically related and nonrelated vocabulary presentation in the context of a language institute. The following research question guided the present study:

Does teaching new vocabulary items in semantically related sets versus semantically unrelated sets make a difference in vocabulary retention?

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Method

The study was conducted on four intact groups of students in a language teaching institute. The alternative methods that were employed for teaching new words were 1) presenting words in semantically related sets (e.g. parts of body: arm, leg, neck, etc.), and 2) presenting words in semantically unrelated sets (e.g. book, car, nurse, ball, etc.). The main purpose of the study was to evaluate the relative claims of the two different methods.

The research design that was employed for answering the research question reflects what Hatch and Lazaraton (1991) call 'one-group, quasi-experimental research design'. It is characterized by alternating time series models and is seen

particularly suitable for this study because, within a time series framework, it allows measuring the effect of two alternative methods on the same group of students by altering the manner of vocabulary presentation within specified time spans.

Participants

As was mentioned above, the context of the study was a language institute. The study was carried out on four intact groups of elementary EFL learners. The number of the students who participated in the study was 68, with 32 participants being male and 36 being female students. Their ages ranged from 8 to 11 years old. Regarding their English proficiency, it should be mentioned that all of the students were studying at the first grade of elementary level and they had not had any formal instruction in English prior to enrolling at the institute. Therefore, their vocabulary size was extremely limited and they were very similar to each other in terms of level of English proficiency. All children in this study were from families of middle social status. The language of all children was Persian and they were living in monolingual families.

Materials and instruments

Prior to the study, the researcher prepared a list of target words. The vocabulary items were selected from a number of educational textbooks designed for elementary learners. Initially a total of 150 words were shortlisted. Then, through several exchanges of ideas with colleagues, the researcher removed all abstract words and cognates from the initial word list. Attempts were also made to avoid words that were lengthy (i.e. having three or more syllables), or potentially difficult (e.g. words with

investigated interference effects on vocabulary learning and retention. The results of these studies showed that the presentation of new vocabulary items to L2 learners in clusters of semantically and syntactically similar words impedes rather than facilitates learning. Similar findings were reported by Erten and Tekin (2008), Papathanasiou (2009) and Wilcox and Medina (2013). These researchers questioned the popular practice of course book designers, (i.e. presenting new vocabulary that belongs to the same semantic set together) and concluded that such a practice may cause interference due to cross-association and may even hinder vocabulary learning.

Although the studies mentioned above provide considerably important pedagogical implications, there are some limitations on the generalizability of the results found in these studies. The first limitation is that in these studies only a few words were tested. Moreover, except for Papathanasiou's study (2009), the above studies were conducted in strictly controlled and artificial contexts. Thirdly, it was not made clear whether the same effects would hold for learners of different proficiency levels.

Mention should be made, however, of the study conducted by Schneider, Healy, and Bourne (1998). Their study, which was conducted in a less controlled and more natural context, yielded different results. Their findings initially seemed to support the assumption that learning semantically related words is easier than learning unrelated words. However, the results of long-term retention tests revealed that learning new words in the unrelated vocabulary condition was faster and that

differences among related words.

Another concept that is believed to lend support to semantic clustering is "semantic field theory" (Channell, 1981; Lehrer, 1974). This theory rests on two premises: 1) vocabulary is cognitively organized by interrelationships and networks among words, 2) words that are closer in meaning are located closer to each other in the mental lexicon (Wilcox & Medina, 2013). In other words, based on the semantic field theory, the mind classifies words through semantic connections, and these connections are considered semantic fields (Channell, 1981). This theory, thus, suggests that since vocabulary is organized in the mind into different word sets that are linked in meaning (Miller & Johnson-Laird, 1976), language instructors should present new vocabulary in semantically-related groups, to facilitate the process of learning.

Although the above arguments provide a theoretical framework in support of semantically clustered vocabulary presentation, there are only a few empirical studies that defend this position. The body of literature often cited in support of presenting semantically grouped words includes memory studies that involve monolingual students learning artificial words. Such studies have found that grouping words in semantic clusters facilitates later recall or recognition. (Carter & McCarthy, 1988; Lewis, 1997; McCarthy, 1990). They claim that this method is in line with theories of lexicon representation and suggest that there is a good organization of semantic fields in the human brain. Hashemi and Gowdasiaei (2005) discuss that vocabulary should be presented in semantic sets within an appropriate context as learners will get involved in deeper levels of mental processing. Thus, they assert, if students make more efforts to differentiate words that are semantically related their learning will last longer.

Arguments against presenting vocabulary in semantically related sets

There are a number of counterarguments for presenting words in semantically clustered sets. One such theoretical stand is that of distinctiveness hypothesis which "relates ease of learning to the distinctiveness (nonsimilarity) of the information to be learnt" (Papathanasiou, 2009). This hypothesis focuses on differences rather than similarities and argues that "since similarity seems to confound the mind, distinctiveness should help organize it" (Wilcox & Medina, 2013, p. 1058). The conclusion drawn from this hypothesis suggests that new vocabulary should be presented in a nonrelated fashion, so that the learner is presented with information organized in a way that is conducive to the process of learning (Wilcox & Medina, 2013).

Another theoretical concept providing support against semantic clustering is "interference theory". This theory states that as similarity increases between targeted information and other information learnt, the difficulty of learning and remembering the targeted information also increases (Papathanasiou, 2009). Relying on this theory, Waring (1997) contends that new words should not be presented in semantically grouped sets, because the similarities of these words may interfere with each other, and thus impair their retention.

Experimental evidence that corroborate the above theoretical positions has been offered by a number of second language (L2) researchers. For example, Tinkham (1993; 1997) and Waring (1997)

learning.

Recently, contradictory recommendations have been emerging from numerous studies into the use of semantic links in educational materials and activities for vocabulary teaching (Papathanasiou, 2009). At the one end of this conflict, there is a theoretical framework supporting the procedure of presenting new words in semantically clustered sets with the assumption that it facilitates the learning of L2 vocabulary (e.g. Aitchison, 1994; Channell, 1981; Lehrer, 1974). On the other hand, some empirical investigations indicate that presenting semantically related words seems to hinder the process of vocabulary learning (e.g. Laufer, 1989; Tinkham, 1993, 1997; Waring, 1997, Erten & Tekin, 2008; Finkbeiner & Nicol, 2003; Papathanasiou, 2009; Wilcox & Medina, 20013). Further inconsistencies come from studies that present evidence in favor of packaging new words in semantic clusters, on the basis that it is an effective manner of teaching new vocabulary and that it perhaps reflects the natural organization of the mental lexicon (e.g. Carter & McCarthy, 1988; Lewis, 1997). In order to contextualize the present study, the following section reviews the theoretical arguments as well as experimental investigations that both support and oppose presenting related lexical items together.

Arguments that support presenting vocabulary in semantically linked groups

A quick examination of the literature reveals that there are basically four main arguments in favor of presenting new vocabulary in semantically related clusters. The first theoretical argument is that new learning occurs when new material can be attached to current knowledge (schema). On this basis, Stoller and Grabe (1995) argue that vocabulary can best be taught in semantically related sets because such an instruction can easily activate schema and connect target materials with materials already learned. In addition, this type of presentation makes the meaning of these words quite clear by helping students understand the full semantic content of the related words and also distinguish similar words from one another (Hashemi & Gowdasiaei, 2005).

The second major related argument in support of presenting clustered words comes from the common and popular practice of course book designers and materials developers. They are often driven to present vocabulary in semantically related fashion mostly because of the analysis of students' communicative needs (Erten & Tekin, 2008). Such a practice is believed to be "an effective method of teaching" (Finkbeiner & Nicol, 2003 p. 369). Consequently, educational materials are often divided into different chapters, reflecting various situations where learners might face in real life.

The next most common justification cited in the literature has to do with ease and practicality of presenting vocabulary in classroom activities (Haycraft, 1993). Many practitioners believe that presenting words in semantically related clusters not only echoes students' expectations in a classroom but also facilitates the process of teaching by organizing and orchestrating the procedure of instruction. Jullian (2000) refers to a classroom activity which incorporates an explicit approach towards the presentation of semantically related vocabulary. The writer points out that such an activity raises consciousness by drawing students' attention to subtle

چکیده

بسیاری از کتب آموزشی واژگان جدید را در قالب مجموعه کلماتی ارائه می‌دهند که از نظر معنایی به هم وابسته‌اند. با وجود این، پژوهش‌های تجربی نشان می‌دهند که این نوع تدریس نه تنها باعث سهولت در روند یادگیری واژگان نمی‌شود بلکه ممکن است جریان آن را کندتر کند. پژوهش فرارو با هدف مقایسهٔ تأثیر دو روش تدریس واژگان انجام شده است: تدریس واژگان مرتبط و تدریس واژگان بی‌ارتباط. آزمودنی‌های این پژوهش ۶۸ زبان‌آموز مبتدی یک مؤسسه آموزشی بودند. فرایند پژوهش در چارچوب یک طرح تحقیقاتی شبه تجربی و طی ۸ جلسهٔ آموزشی انجام شد. در چهار جلسهٔ آموزشی فراگیرندگان به روش اول و در چهار جلسهٔ دیگر به روش دوم آموزش دیدند. مقایسهٔ میزان اثربخشی روش‌ها نشان داد که یادگیری واژگان در زمانی که کلمات غیر مرتبط آموزش داده شده‌اند، به مراتب بهتر از زمانی بوده است که واژگان مرتبط تدریس شده‌اند. یافته‌های پژوهش مؤید این است که ارائهٔ واژگان مرتبط در یک جلسهٔ آموزشی باعث اختلال در فرایند یادگیری می‌شود و از میزان تأثیرگذاری آموزش می‌کاهد.

کلیدواژه‌ها: آموزش واژگان، گروه‌بندی معنایی کلمات، نظریهٔ تداخل، واژگان ذهنی

Introduction

Vocabulary knowledge is central to language proficiency and crucially important for second language learners. It has recently received considerable attention and popularity in applied linguistics with various strands of research and pedagogical interest (Gardner & Davies, 2014; Read, 2000; Richards and Renandya, 2002; Wilcox & Medina, 2013; Zhang & Lu, 2014). A long-standing dimension of research in the field however, has been a lack of consensus about how to present vocabulary in the most beneficial way to facilitate learning and improve retention: in semantically related groups or not? (Finkbeiner & Nicol, 2003; Papathanasiou, 2009) Bearing this query in mind, the purpose of the present study was to investigate which of these two ways of vocabulary presentation would prove to be more effective in L2 vocabulary

A Comparative Study of Two Methods of Vocabulary Instruction

Mehdi B. Mehrani

English Department, University of Neyshabur

mehrani@neyshabur.ac.ir

Abstract

Although educational materials often present new vocabulary in semantically clustered fashions, empirical investigations indicate that presenting words in semantically related groups seems not to facilitate but even to hinder the process of vocabulary learning. The present study was conducted to compare the relative effects of two methods of vocabulary presentation: semantically related words versus semantically unrelated words. The study was conducted as part of regular instruction, in a language institute on 68 elementary language learners, and lasted for eight sessions. A "presentation – practice – test" procedure was followed within a quasi-experimental research framework. Throughout the study the participants were taught four semantically-related and four semantically un-related sets of words. The results of eight series of vocabulary tests revealed that students' performance in the semantically unrelated condition was significantly better. The findings suggest that presenting semantically related vocabulary items may cause interference in the process of word learning, at least at the proficiency level tested in this experiment.

Key Words: interference theory, mental lexicon, semantic clustering, vocabulary instruction.