language skills (test modules)? If this difference generally exists, is it also observable in the performance of Academic and General Training candidates separately?

2. Can Academic candidates be considered to have a higher knowledge of English language?
3. Which skill can best be used as the predictor of general proficiency of Iranian IELTS candidates?

Research Hypotheses

The aforementioned questions could best be reformulated in the following hypotheses:

1. There is no significant difference among the average scores of Iranian IELTS candidates in the four modules of listening, reading, writing and speaking.
2. There is no significant difference between the average IELTS overall scores of Iranian Academic and General Training candidates.
3. There is no significant correlation between the Iranian candidates' scores in each of the four modules and their overall IELTS score.

Method

Participants: The data used in this study are the actual scores obtained

new developments in testing theory, has resulted in this up-to-date, constantly revised and flexible testing system.

As a task-based test of academic and vocational English, IELTS has been capable of establishing itself all around the world. In 2003, more than 300,000 candidates took the IELTS exam and indications are that the recent strong growth is being maintained in 2004. In the last 5 years, a great number of young Iranians in the pursuit of higher education, better job opportunities and generally a higher standard of living have traveled to other countries, mainly English-speaking countries like Canada, England, and Australia, and thus have been required to sit for the IELTS exam for the assessment of their communicative abilities in English. As a result, the main concern of English language teaching specialists in Iran has shifted towards IELTS preparation programs.

Probably one of the first of its kind in Iran, the present research aims at giving a rough picture of Iranian IELTS candidates' performance in both Academic and General Training formats of the test. It can particularly determine what language skill(s) require(s) more attention and instruction and thus can be quite insightful to those involved in the running of IELTS preparation programs in Iran.

Research Questions

The present study addresses the following questions:

1. Do Iranian IELTS candidates perform differently in the four

Task-based exams: These kinds of exams are capable of combining authenticity and interactiveness in tasks that have characteristics similar to those in TLU, ie the target language use. (Bachman and Palmer, 1996)

IELTS: The International English Language Testing System is an established task-based test of academic and vocational English, covering all four language skills - at nine levels from Non User to Expert User. (IELTS Annual Review 2003/2004)

Academic and General Training Formats: IELTS is available in two formats: Academic and General Training. All candidates take the same Listening and Speaking Modules; however, there is a choice between Academic and General Training in the Reading and Writing Modules. The Academic Reading and Writing Modules assess whether a candidate is ready to study or train in the medium of English at an undergraduate or postgraduate level. The General Training Reading and Writing Modules focus on basic survival skills in a broad social and educational context.

Introduction

The International English Language Testing System (IELTS) was formally released for use in November 1989, superseding the earlier English Language Testing Service (ELTS). The ELTS test was originally designed as a test for prospective postgraduate students but a growing demand from other student groups and receiving institutions as well as

The Performance of Iranian IELTS Candidates: A Descriptive Study

Arshya Keyvanfar*

Abstract

General proficiency assessment remains to be a very demanding issue in the field of teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL). Despite the existence of a wide variety of accredited general English language tests, the majority of educational and vocational institutions still prefer to screen their applicants through the two widely known exams of TOEFL and particularly IELTS (the International English Language Testing System) which is capable of evaluating the candidates' ability to perform different tasks via the four language skills. The present study aims at investigating the performance of a group of 500 Iranian Academic and General Training candidates who have sat for IELTS in Iran. The statistical analyses indicate that most unexpectedly Iranian EFL learners have their best performance in speaking and are particularly weak at listening, which happens to be the best predictor of their general language proficiency. Furthermore, it can be claimed that Academic applicants do not significantly perform better than General Training applicants.

Key Words: TOEFL – IELTS – Language skills – proficiency assessment .

---

* Islamic Azad University - North Tehran Branch

Manchester,England.

-Somers, H.L 2003. Computers and Translation : A translator's Guide. Amsterdam : John Benjamins Translation Library.

-Terence, L. 2001. Combining tools to improve Automatic Translation. Available from: (http://www.eamt.org/summitviii/papers/lewis.pdf).

-Vandder Meer,J.2003. The Business case for Machine Translation. The Breakthrough is for Real, IN: The LISA Newsletter.vol.12.

-Baker,L. 1999. Some Difficulties in Translation Available from : Translation Research Group@TTT.org

-Cronin, M.2003. Translation and Globalization. New York, London. Routledge.

-Esselink, B.2001. Leningrad Meets Amsterdam Meets Aquarius IN: Language International April 14-15

-Hutchins, W,J Somers, H.L 1992. An Introduction to machine translation, Academic press, London.

-Hutchins, W,J. 1996- Readings in machine Translation, (ed.) S. Nirenburg ,H.L Somers and Wilks (eds.). Cambridge, mass : The MIT press.

-Hutchins, W.J. 2001.Machine Translation and Human Translation, In Competition or in Complementation? IN: Machine Translation , Bahri publication new Dehli.

-Hutchins, W.j. 2003. Computer-based Translation system and tools(online). Available from : (http://www.eamt.org/archive/hutcins.)

-Kay, Martine. 1997 The proper place of Men and Machines in Language Translation IN: Machine Translation, vol.12.

-Kay, Martin.1999.Machine Translation: The Disappointing past and present.Xerox Palo Alto Research Center, Palo Alto, California, USA.

-Martinez,G.L.2003.Human Translation versus Machine Translation and full post-editing of raw machine Translation output. A dissertation submitted to Dublin University.

-Shuttleworth , M.2002. Teaching Machine Translation. 6th International workshop of the European Association for Machine Translation.

idiomatic and metaphorical expression. At present time, they are working on idiomatic dictionaries so that the computer can distinguish the different meanings of the same word.

High speed is another advantage of MT. Human translation is just too slow (2000 to 3000 words a day) and expensive while MT is fast (2500 up to 15000 words per minute) and cheap. MT is sufficiently accurate and good enough in terms of quality and speed in order to conduct most business conversations and execute an e-commerce translation, because it gives an instant idea of the meaning of document or e-mail content. According to Gartner Group (2003) "MT is expected to be among the 100 most important technologies in the 21st century."

Today, there are more low-cost high quality automation translation systems on the market covering more language combination than ever before. According to the sixth compendium of translation software dating from March 2003, there are 152 separate MT systems just for English as source language. In addition, English is translated into 37 different target languages. Thus, Understanding where MT is useful and why, will help ensure successful deployments.

Bibliography

-Allen, Julie.2003. Citing and Referencing: A Guide for Students. Dublin City University Library.

-ALPAC, 1996.Language and Machine: Computers in translation and linguistics. A report by the Automatic Language Processing Advisory Committee. National Academy of Sciences, Washington, DC.

incorporates the correct language pair dictionary for it if the text does not contain more than three different topics.

Advantages of MT

Many researchers and translators are often disappointed with the output of MT, but the technology is improving and more users emphasize that "MT is not perfect, but it has become an economic necessity(Vander Meer 2003)." Hutchins(2001) confirms the fact stating "The growth of the global telecommunication networks and the internet, making possible immediate communication in many languages, has led to a demand for translating systems and services to deal rapidly in real time with an immense and growing volume of electronic texts of all kinds." Lou Cremers(2002) has claimed "MT should be regarded as enabling technology which speeds up routine work leaving the translators to apply special domain and language skills."

Since the world is badly in need of translation(Kay 1997) and the demand will even be higher in the future(EsseLink 2001,Cronin 2003) machine translation is fast becoming an essential technology for globalizing websites. Therefore, it can be used in a number of specific domains and as a tool for getting the gist(Allen 2003).

Experts hope to reduce the rate of errors and improve the quality of MT outputs in the future.According to Transclick Group (2004) "in spite of 5% to 35% error rate in machine translation, we believe we can reduce that error rate by 50% in the next 12 months." They claim their computer in the future will recognize the context, and import the right

1a. Pre-editing: is understood as the process of identifying problems and, where necessary editing the source text before translating it so that any strings of text that an MT system will have problems with are highlighted and removed or modified in advance. The final aim is to achieve better human readability and clarity of the SL text, as well as better computational processing or translatability.

1b. Post-editing is the attempt to convert raw machine translation output into a product that can not be distinguished from human translation.

2. Controlled Language (CL)

If we can restrict the grammar and lexicon and try to reduce or even eliminate ambiguity and complexity in texts, MT results will be acceptable. Therefore, MT works best in domain specific and controlled environments. The first success in this regard was "Meteo", a system for translating weather forecasts from English into French which is used by the Canadian Broadcasting service.

3. Use of MT along with TM

Translation Memory(TM) is a computer software program used to create a sentence database of a company's translations, for re-use and on subsequent translations. Therefore, TM should not be confused with MT. The difference is that in Machine Translation (MT) a computer translates the text, while in Translation Memory(TM) systems, the computer restores translated sentences. (Terence 2001, Shuttleworth 2002)

4. Dictionary building and updating

Dictionaries can be customized for translation of dynamic content in specific subject domain so that it first recognizes the context and

Commission use MT only as a first step. Later human translators have to intervene to give the text its final form.

Word-for-word rendering is another problem by MT. The computer can only recognize entries already present in its memory and is incapable of interpreting the logical meaning of a phrase.

As a consequence, machines do not produce perfect quality translation for the time being, and the outcome sound too "literal" and, therefore, awkward. But we should also consider that MT is a means to an end and that translation itself has never been and cannot be "perfect". As Hutchins (2001) pointed out "there are always other possible translations of the same text according to different circumstances and requirements. MT can be no different: there cannot be a perfect automatic translation."

Optimizing Machine Translation Efficiency

According to Lorena Guerra Martinez (2003) different approaches can be taken to optimize MT efficiency:

1) Human interaction either before (pre-editing), during, or after (post-editing) MT.
2) Controlled language (CL).
3) MT combined with Translation Memory (TM) systems.
4) Dictionary building and updating.

A brief explanation of each will be outlined to present a general overview.

translation." Hutchins (2003) pointed out that "MT is still better known for its failure than success."

Baker (1999) has identified three types of general translation difficulties when using MT. The first one refers to distinguishing between general vocabulary and specialized terms. Baker (1999) argues that "A computer or an inexperienced human translator will often be insensitive to subtle differences in meaning that affect translation and will use a word inappropriately." The second type of difficulty is distinguishing between various uses of a word of general vocabulary. The various meaning of a word such as "run" for which 54 different meanings have been recorded in dictionaries cannot be distinguished by MT. The third type of difficulty is the need to be sensitive to the total context including the intended audiences of the translation. MT cannot taken into account the context and important details such as regionalism.

Another disadvantage of machine translation is that it often takes more time pre-editing and post-editing than it actually takes for translating the text. Martin Kay (1999) also asserts that "few informed people still see the original idea of fully automatic high-quality translation of arbitrary texts as a realistic goal for the foreseeable future. Many systems require texts to be pre-edited to put them in a form suitable for treatment by the system, and post-editing of the machine's output is generally taken for granted." He believes that if the translation machine would consult with a human speaker of the SL with detailed knowledge of subject matter, that outcome would be more acceptable. Even some international agencies such as the United Nations and the European

target texts without any human intervention.

Different types of translation

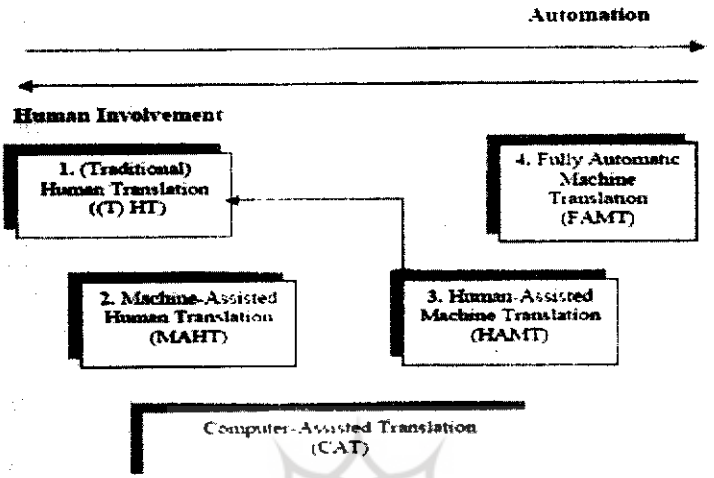

Fig.1 (Hutchins and Somers 1992)

Since machine translators are widely used by organizations and companies around the world, it is worthwhile to look into its reasonable potential and current limitations.

Disadvantages of MT

While MT is an interesting concept and substantially increases the translation speed, the reality is that machine translation is poor in quality. It seems that we cannot have both high quality and high speed at the same time. Language is just too complicated for machines to understand all of the vocabulary, grammar, and context in source and target language. Hutchins (1996) was also very negative about MT. Somers (2003) indicated "MT was slower, less accurate and twice expensive as human

Machine Translation (MT) of written text from one language to another uses specialized computer software programs, that input a text in a certain language, the source language (SL), and deliver its content in an equivalent text in another language, the target language (TL). So, when a computer translates an entire text and then presents it to human, the process is called Machine Translation (MT). According to Hutchins and Somers (1992), there are four basic types of translation in which the degree of human involvement is different. Using an appropriate terminology we can categorize them as :

1) **Human Translation (HT)**: When a human performs all steps in the translation process and composes a translation. The process is known as human translation (HT).

2) **Machine Assisted/Aided Human Translation (MAHT) or computer Assisted Translation (CAT)**: Translation in which a human translator is responsible for doing the translation. The translator makes use of a variety of computerized tools that can range from automatic lookup programs to systems, which require the translator to approve each sentence. The purpose is to speedup the human translation process.

3) **Human Assisted Machine Translation (HAMT):** The process takes place consulting with a human speaker of the source language (SL) with detailed knowledge of the subject-matter for pre-editing and post-editing.

4) **Fully Automatic Machine Translation (FAMT):** An automatic translation system that makes use of an advanced computational linguistic analysis to process source documents and automatically create

An overview of Machine Translation (MT)

Saed sifarian*

For many years, man has thought of inventing a dream-machine that could remove the language barrier and produce the highest quality translations to mankind. As a result, for more than five decades people have tried to program computers to translate from one natural language to another, and the emphasis has always been on search for methods and theories for the achievement of perfect translation.

Translators, on the other hand, have watched the development in the field carefully. Some of them believed that translation could not possibly be mechanized. Others feared that their profession would be taken over entirely by machines. (John Hutchins-2001)

However, the use of Machine Translation (MT) seems to be inevitable in the 21st century because of the need for rapid information exchange and competing in the globalized market-place. According to ALPAC's report in 1996 (Automated Language Processing Advisory Committee) "MT will be the glue that holds the global information society together." Therefore, it seems essential for everyone to become familiar with its concept.

Key Words: Machine Translation – natural language – mechanized – globalized market-place – Automated Language Processing.

What is Machine Translation (MT)?

* North Branch of Azad University

http://exchangers.state.gove/forum/vols/vol38/no4/pl2.htm.

Stotesbury, H. (1990). Finnish History Students as 'Liminal' Summarizers on the Threshold of Academia. Jyvaskyla, Finland: University of Jyvaskyla. Reports from the Language Centre for Finnish Universities, No. 38.

University Press.

Lynch, B., & Hudson, T. (1991). EST Reading. In M. Celce-Murcia (Ed.), Teaching English as a second or foreign language (2nd Ed., pp. 216-232). New York: Newbury House.

McNeil, J., and Donant, L. (1992). Summarization strategy for improving reading comprehension. In J.A. Niles and L.A. Harris (Eds.), New inquiries in reading research and instruction (pp. 215-219).

Orlich, D.C.; Harder, R.J.; Callahan, R.C.; Kauchack, D.P.; & Gibson, H.W. (1994). Teaching strategies: A guide to better instruction (4th Ed.). Lexington: D.C. Heathand.

Pearson, P.D., Roehler, L., Dole, J., & Duffy, G. (1992). Developing expertise in reading comprehension. In S. J. Samuels & A.E. Farstrup (Eds.). What research says to the teacher (2nd Ed) (pp. 145-199). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Pressley, M., & Afflerbach, P. (1995). Verbal protocols of reading: The nature of constructively responsive reading. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Raphael, T.E., and Pearson, P.D. (1985). Increasing students' awareness of sources of information for answering questions. American Educational Research Journal, 22, 217-236.

Raphael, T.E., and Wonnacott, C.A. (1985). Heightening fourth-grade students' sensitivity to sources of information for answering comprehension question.

Ross, B.R. (1999). Teaching reading in today's elementary schools (7th ed.). Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Sheng, H.J. (2000). A cognitive model for teaching reading comprehension. Retrieved: December 19th, 2001, from:

References

Bernhardt, E. (1991). Reading development in a second language: theoretical, empirical, and classroom perspectives. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

Block, E. (1986). The comprehension strategies of second language readers, TESOL Quarterly, 20 (3), 463-480.

Brown. A. L., Palincsar, A. S. and Armbruster, B.B. (1994). Instructing comprehension-fostering activities in interactive learning situations. In R. Ruddell, M. Ruddell and H. Singer (Eds.) Theoretical Models and Processes of Reading (4th Edition). Newark NJ: International Reading Association.

Carrell, P.L. (1991). Strategic reading. In J. E. Alatis (Ed.), Georgetown University Round Table on Languages and Linguistics 1991: Linguistics and language pedagogy: The state of the art (pp. 167-178). Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.

Carrell, P.L. (1991). Second language reading: reading ability or language proficiency? Applied linguistics, 9, 233-242.

Carrell, P.L. (1998). Can reading strategies be successfully taught? The language teacher on line. Retrieved May 5th, 2000, from: http://langue,hyper,chubu.ac.jp/jalt/pub/tlt/98/mar/carrel.htm

Cornoldi, C. and Oakhill, J. (2001). Reading comprehension difficulties: Processes and intervention, Journal of_pragmatics, 33, 943-956. [On-Line]. Available: www,elsevier.nl/locate/pragma

Dole, J.A., Duffy, G.G., Roehler, L.R., and Pearson, P.D. (1991). Moving from the old to the new: Research on reading comprehension instruction. Review of Educational Research, 61, 239-264.

Grellet, F. (1991). Developing reading skills. New York: Cambridge

groups could not be rejected.

Additionally, in the last and third contrast the difference between the mean scores of the Summarizing and the Self-questioning groups was not significant. As a result, the third hull-hypothesis as no statistically significant difference between the summarizing and the self-questioning groups could not be rejected, as well.

Conclusion

According to the results of this study, it can be cogently concluded that assigning students to summarize the text influences their reading comprehension positively. Summarizing strategy provides students with something to do after reading and enhances interest and recall on the part of students. Moreover, teachers can make use of different strategies as teaching devices in their classroom or employ inferential questions to give the opportunity to the students to express their own views and be active in the class.

Teachers can make use of different strategies as teaching devices in their classroom. Using strategies creates new situations for the students and makes learning more interesting. These strategies would help students to use their reading ability to solve problems. Besides, students would feel responsible for their learning.

In last step, in order to find out which group means differed significantly from each other a post-hoc Scheffe test was conducted for the pair-wise comparisons. The results are presented on the table below:

The Post-hoc Scheffe Test

Comparisons		Observed Difference	Critical Difference
Summarizing	X = 38.21	3.46	3.07*
Control	X = 34.75		
Summarizing	X = 38.21	1.93	2.87
Self-questioning	X = 36.28		
Self-questioning	X = 36.28	1.53	3.02
Control	X = 34.75		

** Denotes significant difference at .05 level.*

As represented in the table, there was only one statistically significant difference among the three comparisons. The Summarizing group, whose mean score was (38.21), outperformed the control group on the post- test. Thus, the first null-hypothesis as no significant difference between the Summarizing and Control groups' mean scores was rejected, so teaching the subjects through the summarizing technique had a statistically significant impact on their performance on the post-test. The other two contrasts were not significant. In the second contrast the difference between self-questioning and control groups' mean scores was not significant. So it was concluded that the second null hypothesis as no statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the two

and experimental groups in order to find out the probable differences between the performances of the three groups after the treatment. Then a one-way ANOVA was run to compare the mean scores of the subjects on the post-test. The following table reveals the results:

One-way ANOVA, Post-test by Groups

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	D.F.	Mean Square	F observed	F critical
Between Groups	247.49	2	123.74	3.89	3.07
Within Groups	3937.81	124	31.75		
Total	4185.30	126			

The results revealed that F observed (3.89) at 2 and 124 degrees of freedom were greater than the critical F (3.07).Thus, it was concluded that there were significant differences among the means of the three groups on the post-test and the treatments that the experimental groups received during the semester had proven to be effective.

Descriptive Statistics, Post-test

Groups	Mean	Std Dev	Min	Max	N
Control	34.75	5.25	24	49	40
Summarizing	38.21	6.06	24	52	42
Self-questioning	36.28	5.54	26	51	45

Readability indices of the some of the passages in the treatment phase

Descriptive Statistics, Pre-test

Groups	Mean	Std Dev	Min	Max	N
Control	31.67	3.04	26	37	40

Readability Indices	Reading Passages								
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	5.9	5.4	6.1	5.5	5.8	6.2	6.5	5.6	6.9

Summarizing	30.97	4.15	24	41	42
Self-questioning	31.75	5.23	24	45	45

One-way ANOVA Pre-test by Groups

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	D.F.	Mean Square	F observed	F critical
Between Groups	15.59	2	7.79	.42	3.07
Within Groups	2276.06	124	18.35		
Total	2291.65	126			

Since the F observed value (0.42) at 2 and 124 degrees of freedom did not exceed the critical F value (3.07), it was concluded that there were not any significant differences among the means of the three groups on the pre-test.

At the end of the study, a teacher-made test was given to the control

Statistical Procedure

As it was mentioned earlier, three passages were used for the pre-test and nine passages were used for the post-test. The pre-test and post-test passages were selected to have approximately the same readability indices as the passages used in treatment phase. In order to check the readability level of these passages, the Fog's Readability Formula was employed. Following tables display the readability indices of the passages.

Readability Indices of the 3 Reading Passages of the Pre-test

Readability Indices	Reading Passages		
	1	2	3
	6.6	6.8	7.1

Readability Indices of the 9 Reading Passages of the Post-test

Readability Indices	Reading Passages								
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	6.9	6.4	7.1	6.5	6.8	7.2	6.2	6.6	6.9

choice comprehension questions. In order to standardize the test, it was administered to a group of 40 students similar to the groups of this study through a pilot study. In addition to computation of the readability of the passages, the process of item analysis was performed to determine the characteristics of individual items and the reliability was computed by Cronbach's alpha. The reliability estimate was 0.89.

Design

The present study was implemented on the basis of a quasi experimental design due to the fact that randomization was not feasible and intact groups were dealt with. The major goal of such a design was to determine whether there exists any statistically significant difference between improving reading comprehension ability of learners who practiced the aforementioned strategies and those who did not.

Data Analysis

At this stage, the statistical findings were analyzed and interpreted in order to find out whether the treatment produced any statistically significant impact on improving the reading comprehension ability of the experimental groups. To accept or reject the stated null hypotheses, the scores from both pre-test and post-test were analyzed in different steps. The ANOVA was pre-test and post-test means of control and experimental groups simultaneously, in order to identify whether any statistically significant differences could be observed to be the basis for drawing conclusions. Furthermore, a Scheffe test was used to check the validity of the results of ANOVA.

significant difference between the subjects on the pre-test. Consequently, one class with 40 subjects was considered as the control group and the other two classes with 42 and 45 subjects as the experimental groups.

After the pre-test the three groups were instructed two sessions a week, each session 90 minutes. The treatment took 30 sessions during which students were involved in reading passages and working on them in different ways. The subjects in the control group read the material silently after the explanation of the key words and aloud reading of the passage by the teacher. The teacher asked comprehension questions. The subjects used scanning and skimming strategies in answering the questions. Besides, they were supposed to have discussions on the topics. However, the subjects in the experimental groups, instead of scanning and skimming and oral discussion, were supposed to summarize the passages or generate questions as reading strategies. One of the groups was asked to write a summary of the main and minor ideas in the text and submit them to the teacher. Through this procedure the teacher could check the students' knowledge about the text. Similarly, the subjects in the other experimental group read the text and generated questions on the topics. This group was asked to write as many questions of any kind on the main idea and the minor ideas in the text. The focus was on recognition of the main idea and specific pieces of information in both of the experimental groups.

In the post-test phase, the newly developed comprehension test, which was adapted from four different versions of (CELT), was administered to the three groups. The test was a reading comprehension test which consisted of nine reading comprehension passages followed by multiple

Instrumentation

The following instruments were utilized in this study:

1. A comprehensive English language test (CELT) that measured and determined the subjects' level of general English language proficiency and checked the homogeneity of subjects' reading comprehension ability.
2. A newly developed standardized comprehension test, which was adopted from four different versions of (CELT) administered to subjects as a post-test.

Procedure

The procedures followed in this study were conducted in three main phases, which consisted of administering the pre-test, the treatment, and the post-test. In the pre-test phase, in order to examine the homogeneity of the students, a Comprehensive English Language Test (CELT) was administered. This test which was taken by 127 subjects of the study, consisted of 90 multiple choice items (30 vocabulary items, 45 grammar items, and 15 reading comprehension items).

However, prior to the pre-test phase, a pilot study was conducted to estimate the reliability of the test. 40 students took the test. The readability of the passages was calculated in order to match with the readability of the texts which students studied during their class time. Besides, the process of item analysis was performed to determine the characteristics of individual items and based on the results poor items were discarded. Subsequently, the reliability of the test was computed through Cronbach's alpha and the reliability estimate was 0.69.

The results of this test showed that there was no statistically

HO_2:"Self-questioning does not have any statistically significant impact on improving Iranian EFL learners' reading comprehension ability."

HO_3:"There is no statistically significant difference between those EFL learners who summarize the text and make comprehension questions while reading and those who do not."

METHOD

Subjects

A total of 127 female Iranian junior university students majoring in English Language Translation in Islamic Azad University at Garmsar, participated in this study. The subjects were assumed to be able to summarize the reading texts or to make comprehension questions while reading because of having passed two courses of reading (reading one and two) before.

The subjects were administered a comprehensive English language test (CELT) and those students who had scored one standard deviation above and below the mean were considered as the subjects of the study. Each group included different numbers of students, who were assigned into one control group, one experimental group of summarizing and one experimental group of self-questioning. The three groups were homogenous in that they were typical Iranian second-year university students who had studied English through formal instruction in an EFL environment.

regular reading instruction. Therefore, the present study was aimed at exploring the possible effect of student's efforts to summarize and make comprehension questions on their better understanding of the reading texts. It was presumed that summarizing the reading texts or making comprehension questions instead of answering them could direct the attention of the learners to the major ideas of the texts and hence prove to be better strategies for teaching reading comprehension.

Research Questions

Considering the purpose of the present study, the following research questions were proposed:

1. Does the use of summarizing and making comprehension questions while reading have any statistically significant impact on improving Iranian EFL learners' reading comprehension ability?
2. Is there any statistically significant difference between those EFL learners who summarize the text while reading and those who do not?
3. Is there any statistically significant difference between those EFL learners who make comprehension questions while reading and those who do not?

Null hypotheses

Based on the above research questions, the following null hypotheses were formulated:

HO_1:"Summarizing does not have any statistically significant impact on improving Iranian EFL learners' reading comprehension ability."

for the question generation, Raphael and her colleagues were able to help students develop a sense of efficacy and confidence in their ability to differentiate strategies in both responding to and generating their own questions for the text. They showed that when students learn to generate questions for the text, their overall comprehension improves. Also when Question-generation strategy is implemented in classrooms, it is probably better to use it not as a steady routine repeated religiously for every text encountered, but as an activity that is regularly but intermittently scheduled into guided or shared reading.

Statement of the Problem

In recent years, specialists in the field of language teaching have focused on cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies that can increase students' comprehension and learning of academic subject matters from written texts. Numerous studies (Carrell, 1998; McNeil and Donant, 1992; Block 1986; Pearson et al., 1992) have examined the effectiveness of various studying techniques, i.e. reading strategies, such as underlining, note taking, summarizing, questioning and answering, outlining and elaborating. The motive behind utilizing these strategies has been to help learners in the process of reading comprehension.

In order to investigate the impact of reading strategies on reading comprehension ability of EFL learners, two while-reading strategies namely summarizing and question - making were chosen. In order to achieve the purpose of the study, reading comprehension ability of a group of students making comprehension questions and summarizing as while-reading strategies was compared with that of a group undergoing

"Often confused with determining importance, summarizing is a broader, more synthetic activity for which determining importance is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition. The ability to summarize information requires readers to sift through large units of text, differentiate important from unimportant ideas, and then synthesize those ideas and create a new coherent text that stands for, by substantive criteria, the original. This sounds difficult, and the research demonstrates that, in fact, it is." (p. 244).

Instruction and practice in summarizing not only improve students' ability to summarize texts, but also increase their overall comprehension of text content. The ability to summarize information is an essential skill in reading. As Stotesbury (1990) stated, summarizing entails the reduction of a text to its essential constituents which means that students have to be able to grasp the overall structure of a text and be able to distinguish the major issues from the minor ones.

Self-Questioning

Self-questioning during reading is a strategy which actively monitors comprehension. When readers detect a comprehension failure, they should use a "fix-up strategy". While the impact of questions on comprehension is important, the more interesting questions are (a) whether students can learn to generate their own questions of the text and (b) what impact this more generative behaviour might have on subsequent comprehension (Raphael and Pearson, 1985; Raphael and Wonacutt, 1985).

Through a model of giving students ever-increasing responsibility

understanding happens. The basic idea behind the comprehension category is to understand the material and not just to memorize it because memorization may not involve understanding. Consequently, a comprehension - level question requires active participation by the student. The student should somehow process or manipulate the response so as to make it more than simple recall.

Pressly and Afflerbach (1995) stated that skilled readers know and use many different strategies in coming to terms with text. They proceed generally from front to back of documents when reading. Good readers are selectively attentive. They sometimes make notes, predict, paraphrase, and back up when confused. They try to make inferences to fill in the gaps in the text and in their understanding of what they have read. Good readers intentionally attempt to integrate across the text. They do not settle for literal meanings but rather interpret what they have read, sometimes constructing images, and other times identifying categories of information in the text, and on still other occasions engaging in arguments with themselves about what a reading might mean. After making their way through the text, they have a variety of ways of firming up their understanding and memory of the messages in the text, from explicitly attempting to summarize to self-questioning about the text to rereading and reflecting. The many strategies used by skilled readers are appropriately and opportunistically coordinated with the reader using the processes needed to meet current reading goals.

Summarizing

Dole et al. (1991) described **summarizing** as follows: