



### ارزیابی نقادانه جایگاه زبانشناسی چامسکی در برنامه درسی آموزش زبان انگلیسی بعنوان زبان خارجی

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#### چکیده

تفاوت بین نظریه و عمل یکی از مشکلات اساسی برای مدرسان زبان بوده است. نظریه پردازانی که منفک از واقعیات محیط آموزشی می باشند نظریه هایی را ارائه می دهند که در ظاهر مناسب بافتهای متفاوت می باشد. این مسئله در مورد نقشی که به زبانشناسی نظری در حوزه آموزش زبان و بالاخص زبانشناسی چامسکی که در پی قوانین جهانی می باشد، نمود بیشتری پیدا می کند. توجه این رویکردها که از آنها تحت نام زبانشناسی نظرگرا نام می برند معطوف به بررسی ذهن بدون در نظر گرفتن بافت اجتماعی میباشد (بیوگراند، ۱۹۹۷) چنین ویژگیهایی باعث می گردد که چهارچوب زبانشناسی نظرگرا بسیار مناسب با بافت آموزش زبان (که جنبه کاربردی دارد) نباشد. ازسوی دیگر، زبانشناسی کنش گرا در برنامه های آموزشی دوره دکتری و کارشناسی ارشد نادیده گرفته می شود. این پژوهش جایگاه زبانشناسی نظری را در برنامه درسی کارشناسی ارشد و دکتری آموزش زبان از طریق مطالعه کیفی میزان ارتباط چنین واحدهای نظری زبانشناسی با رشته کاربردی آموزش زبان انگلیسی بررسی می کند. در همین راستا، از ۳۰ دانشجو و دارندگان مدرک رشته آموزش زبان انگلیسی مصاحبه بعمل آمد. نتایج تحقیق حاکی از کاهش میزان علاقه مصاحبه شوندگان نسبت به مسائل زبانشناسی نظرگرا و وجود عدم ارتباط آن مسائل با رشته تدریس زبان در ایران بود.

**واژگان کلیدی:** زبانشناسی نظرگرا/چامسکی، زبانشناسی کنش گرا، آموزش زبان انگلیسی بعنوان زبان خارجه

# A Critical Appraisal of the Status of Chomskyan Linguistics in TEFL Curriculum

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## Abstract

The theory/practice distinction has almost always been one of practitioners' basic headaches. Theoreticians who are detached from the practical reality of educational settings put forward the theories which are presumed to be conducive to different contexts in a generalized fashion. This predicament looms large with regard to the role attached to pure linguistics in the realm of language pedagogy, particularly Chomskyan linguistics which is after a universal say. Such approaches, called *homework*, focus on an individual's mind out of the social context (Beaugrande, 1997). Such features might render the homework framework not so much appropriate to TEFL contexts where practical specifics count. On the contrary, *fieldwork* linguistics has been paradoxically ignored, particularly in linguistics courses offered in TEFL M.A. and Ph.D. programs. This study is intended to investigate the status of pure linguistics in graduate/postgraduate TEFL curriculum in Iran through a qualitative survey study of the attitudes of TEFL M.A. and Ph.D. students/holders towards the relevance of such linguistic courses to their academic and occupational enterprise. To this end, given the cross-sectional nature of the study, a written interview framework was developed for 30 M.A. and Ph.D. students/holders in TEFL. The results of content analysis indicated the participants' increasing lack of interest in *homework* linguistic issues and belief in their irrelevance to the teaching profession; the participants' more experience of dealing with Chomskyan linguistics resulted in less interest and the belief that it would lack practical value in TEFL. Pedagogical implications and suggestions are discussed.

**Keywords:** Fieldwork Linguistics; Homework Linguistics; TEFL

## 1. Introduction

The hot perennial controversy over the existence of any meaningful relation between theory and practice has resulted in demystification of some basic problems a practitioner has to get to grips with. Among them, one is



the strata of expertise which have brought about two “categories of people”: the intelligent thinkers and theorists who are disconnected from the reality of the situation they are making decisions about and the less intelligent practitioners who are in direct contact with the reality of classroom, but they are not in a position to make higher-order decisions (Cook, 2003; Davies & Elder, 2007). This issue has rendered them passive in receiving information handed down from those so-called intellectuals. This issue has encouraged the present researchers to investigate the status quo in academia where basic and determining decisions are made, and their far-reaching effects have long directed the whole enterprise toward some devastating and mind-boggling destination, that is, the dysfunctional theory/practice discourse. To this aim, the researchers decided to do some program evaluation of the TEFL graduate/postgraduate curriculum in Iran to make the picture clear, based on the perceptions of some groups of participants. McDonough (2002) believes that some rich sources of data regarding the usefulness of a curriculum are student feedback, teacher feedback and course specifications. According to him, the people involved in the educational process and the content of different courses can lead us down an illuminating path toward more sensible and calculated decisions. In the light of these views, feedback from the students, some of whom were also teachers in schools, have been considered to form the basis of interpretations.

## **2. Theory/Practice Discourse**

One of the sources of confusion regarding the place of linguistics in TEFL curriculum is the blurred picture of the relevance of such a theoretical issue to the whole context of language education. This highly mind-boggling issue has its origins in the old argument over the type of relation between theory and practice. As Clarke (1994) states, dichotomization as one of the most dangerous procedures runs the risk of simplification of complex realities. This holds true of such a discourse in which theory and practice are considered to be treated distinctly. According to him, such a tunnel vision of reality of education has led to two general categories of people involved in such a setting: one is composed of the so-called experts who serve as some particularly brilliant intellectuals while the other category includes people who are to be passive recipients of the information being spoon-fed to them by those experts.

Clarke (1994) assumes that such a discourse is dysfunctional for teachers who are the most complete picture of the outcome of such a great enterprise.



To show how deeply ingrained the problem proves to be, he sets forth a number of uncomfortable facts completing our understanding of the discourse we are involved in.

**1. *Individuals involved in theory building and researches very seldom are language teachers themselves.*** When it comes to real-life, rarely can one encounter a person who is a teacher as well as a theory builder. This doesn't necessarily follow that the theorists' do not contribute to the field but the crux of the problem is that their agendas do not match those of classroom teachers. While the theorists' main concern is second language acquisition (SLA), teachers have some other categorically different concerns. This may render a fact very disappointing; that is, theorists' ideas are mostly received as the Gospel Truth.

**2. *As a direct result, the theory/practice distinction creates strata of expertise, in which, paradoxically, teachers are seen to be less expert than theorists.*** The irony which is conspicuous is that as one manages to secure a position to theorize and have reflective practice, one is removed from the daily contact with the realities of classroom. The aftermath of such an unavoidable predicament is to believe that teachers are not knowledgeable enough to theorize, compared to 'the knowledgeable' who have already lost their contact with the context about which they are to give theories. A tangible example of such a syndrome is that of Krashen (1983, cited in Clarke, 1994) who takes the viewpoint of "we" who do the thinking and some "they" who behave according to what "we" set forth. As Johnson (2003) states, college teachers are assumed to have a higher social status than practitioners. On the contrary, if teacher education programs allocate most of the program to the *practicum*, their subjective well-being and self-esteem will increase (Hascher, Cocard, & Moser, 2004).

**3. *The theory of theory/practice discussions is usually imported from other disciplines.*** Larsen-Freeman (1990, cited in Clarke, 1994) says: "The major problem is that the second language teaching field has either been without a theory or it has had its theoretical needs inappropriately met by relying on related disciplines outside itself, most notably linguistics and psychology" (p. 261). Considering the approach taken toward SLA as a modular one, Widdowson (1990, cited in Clarke, 1994) contends that the main part of the studies is derived from generative linguistics and, accordingly, focused on grammatical competence as separate from other aspects of language knowledge. The great discrepancy felt between the focus



of linguists, that is, grammatical competence, and that of teachers, that is, performance, reeks of exclusion of classroom from consideration.

**4. *The theory/practice discourse tends to be general, rather than specific, limited in depth and detail.*** In such a discourse, what is emphasized is generalizability and statistical significance of findings as advantageous over local and situated experience. This moves individual teachers' perspective on the issue out of focus. Situated understanding of reality of the classroom is one of the definite qualities of efficacious teachers. According to Tudor (2003), the subtleties of every classroom call for such spontaneity on the part of every teacher as conceptualized by the ecological perspective on language teaching rather than by the technological one.

**5. *The theory/practice mentality of the profession creates an atmosphere which exaggerates cognitive phenomena and underestimates the institutional, political, and interpersonal constraints that teachers must deal with.*** The fallacy that all decisions regarding a classroom and the process of teaching must be based on research data or an already developed theory results in excising teaching from its context. As far as the encounters between human beings which happen in any educational setting differ from moment to moment, hard and fast rules proposed by research studies become rigid to lend themselves to such a flexible context which is always in a state of flux. No preconceived theoretical model can be tolerated since teachers are inherently provided with a sense of plausibility (Prahbu, 1990), which makes them capable of offering apt and plausible policies at every particular moment.

Beaugrande (1997) states that a theory which is supposed to push practice forward is not worth the name of a 'valid theory' regardless of external and internal aspects. In his words, "How far a theory is applicable to practice is a good measure of how far the theory is valid as a theory" (p. 279). He draws our attention to the trend that human practices were well established long before theories began to be provided. This leads one using his common sense to expect that practice would most probably play a decisive role in determining what sorts of theories are to be produced. To him, the most uneasy relation between theory and practice is in the realm of linguistics. The following section zeroes in on a sensible and applicable categorization of two major linguistic approaches Beaugrande puts forward and checks against the "applicability" yardstick.



### 3. Fieldwork and Homework Linguistics

As Beaugrande (1997) states, linguists in the fieldwork framework go out to work in the field, that is, the social and cultural context with its own activities. Such a linguist describes the observed talk of native speakers. The techniques of prominence in this approach are observation and induction which result in a *data-driven* set of findings. The most efficient people in such a framework are those who join in the social practices of the community of the speakers in order to interpret the data.

The data which form the basis for homework linguists come from “home,” or, rather, introspection and intuition. They make attempts to formulate and describe the kind of knowledge native speakers are presumed to know about language. The resultant theories are mainly *theory-driven* since formality, rigor and compactness, which are called “parsimony” by linguists of this type, are among the main predetermined standards of design. Thus, the resultant situation is disparate from ordinary language practices (Beaugrande, 1997).

### 4. A Practice-Driven Theory

The following characteristics qualify a theory which is assumed to be a practice-driven one, to be factored into the realm of applied linguistics and deemed conducive to TEFL.

- a. It needs to explain how cultural contacts occur and how to make them meet the specific needs of second language learning. In doing so, case studies in anthropology and sociology as well as the ones in linguistics can prove very informative. Furthermore, the deciding process of needs assessment in ESP can work toward this aim (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Jordan, 1997; Robinson, 1991).
- b. It needs to explain how the training of teachers and the role of learners in conventional classrooms might effectively offset the lack of opportunity for cultural immersion (Brown, 2001; Lewis & Hill, 1985; Nunan, 1999).
- c. It should support a program effectively while building up cultural sensitivity (Atkinson, 1999)
- d. It should also describe methods whereby ordinary learners can attain at least some indirect access to cultural immersion via the classroom.

Beaugrande (1997) summarizes all the abovementioned qualities about practice-driven theory as follows:



[A theory] should provide realistic data-driven and practice-driven descriptions of the emergence of the language system at various stages of fluency in both native and second languages and in both natural and pedagogical settings, plus an account of the more effective and expedient means of moving from a less advanced stage to a more advanced one. A body of such theorizing should be closely coordinated with a library of fieldwork and case studies on the actual activities of participants, made widely accessible and expandable via the Internet. (p. 285)

The fieldwork position was severely criticized by Chomsky (1965) on the grounds that it has taken a discovery procedure for constructing the grammar-what his own theory obviously could not do. Such a reason for rejection seems very bizarre since the type of language one craves to learn is just the one used and realized in a social context. To Beaugrande (1997), Chomskyan theory is a static enclosure of circular technical constructs created chiefly to subserve academic politics. Since what this theory accounts for, at best, is language acquisition, as directed and strictly controlled by what is called Language Acquisition Device (LAD), there would seem to be no job on the part of the teaching people, but to make learners aware of the mismatch consisting between deep and surface structure.

One may object to the above argument since it is again a set of hypotheses which suffer from the same abstraction as Chomsky's does. To examine how practicable and useful such a position has turned out to be, one of the most seminal proposals in ELT, which has been put forth by Krashen (1985), is to be examined against practicality criteria.

### **5. The Realizations of Homework Linguistics in ELT**

Krashen has been a definite follower of Chomsky's approach, an approach composed of constructs which prop each other up in circular ways; for example: language must be acquired by the LAD; the LAD must exist because language gets acquired (Beaugrande, 1997). Many criticisms have been leveled at Krashen's position. For instance, his consideration of his learning/acquisition dichotomy as a very rash claim which has in vain tried to simplify the reality has been criticized (McLaughlin, 1987). To him, 'acquisition' is a phenomenon which is different from 'learning' in that it happens unconsciously and automatically and quite independent of learning/teaching policies and teachers' efforts. This speculation seems to be



a misapplied concept. Also, his  $i+1$  hypothesis smacks of the wrong belief that a deterministic competence would rule out learning in principle because the only prerequisite for learning to occur is ‘comprehensibility’ of input. Interestingly, there is another perspective, the communicative approach, which emphasizes more contextualization of grammatical rules and teaching sociolinguistic rules. People like Krashen would most probably disallow this due to the shaky grounding that it does not fit the theory.

Another shortcoming of Chomskyan approach is ignoring motivation, self-confidence, a sense of belongingness, defensiveness and anxiety which have been empirically examined for their effect on learning and teaching process. According to Brumfit (1980, cited in Beaugrande, 1997), if one takes the UG approach, he cannot help disregarding teachers, teacher education, cultural aspects as outside the realm of generative linguistics. Such a ramification must be tolerated by those who go under the weight of context-reduced theorizing. Such a syndrome is due to some forgetfulness on the part of those who fail to determine the prospects of application before building theories which, otherwise, would share a very important feature, that of applicability. The limited scope of linguistics has been put differently by White (1992), who emphasizes that “generative grammar certainly cannot provide an explanation of everything that L2 learners do or fail to do. Its relevance is strictly limited to providing a potential explanation of the acquisition of rather formal aspects of language structure” (p. 219). To conclude, the application of homework linguistics, due to its shortcomings, have fallen short of application criteria.

## **6. Two Important Movements in Teaching/Learning Area**

In this section, two determining proposals which have recently been made and resulted in remarkable shifts of emphases in two inseparable aspects of teaching and learning are reviewed critically to see how much linguistic ideas like the above have benefited them.

### **6.1. Postmethod Condition**

In the era of postmethod which has put great emphasis on the deciding role of teachers and tried to do away with the reins imposed by the prepackaged methods, we easily observe that the springboard of many successful enterprises is considered to be individual teachers who are in direct contact with the reality of classrooms. As put by Prahbu (1990),





subjective understanding of the teaching or the very *sense of plausibility* of teachers, is foregrounded as one of the main qualifications in that “teachers need to operate with some personal conceptualization of how their teaching leads to desired learning-with a notion of causation that has a measure of credibility for them” (p. 172). Regarding the relation between theory and practice here one can refer to the concept of *principled pragmatism* proposed by Widdowson (1990, cited in Kumaravadivelu, 1994, p. 30). This concept implies that “the relationship between theory and practice, ideas and their actualization, can only be realized within the domain of application, that is, through the immediate activity of teaching” (p. 30). The top priority in postmethod era is context-sensitive language education based on a true understanding of local linguistic, sociocultural, and political particularities (Kumaravadivelu, 2001). The way such an era has started to angle for ELT is far away from dictation of ‘homework’ rules and methods which benefit from strong theoretical background as homework linguistics des. Besides, two main manifestations of postmethod-oriented teaching; that is, “action research” (Auerbach, 1994; Rearick & Feldman, 1999) and “reflective teaching” (Jay & Johnson, 2002; Pollard, 2002) have not got into the field of homework linguistics at all.

### **6.2. Form-Focused Instruction**

Due to many shortcomings of Krashen’s model, particularly the ones originating from input hypothesis and unconscious acquisition, and the enormous practical significance taken on by the communicative aspects of language teaching (Skehan, 1998; Williams, 1995, cited in Fotos, 1998), what was strongly felt was a need for an approach to deal with different aspects of a language which moves neither formal aspects nor social/communicative dimensions of the target language out of focus. The rationale behind such a movement was the fact that language learners “typically do not achieve very high levels of linguistic competence from entirely meaning-centered instruction” (Ellis et al., 2002, p. 421). To pursue this aim, ‘form-focused instruction’ (FFI) emerged, trying to put forward an effective way of formal instruction in a communicative classroom (Doughty & Williams, 1998). The blueprint which formed the basis of FFI was much in line with the findings of fieldwork linguistics rather than homework linguistics. This trend has fared well to this day and is likely to continue to shed more light on the importance of consciousness and metalanguage as a catalyst in the process of learning/teaching.



In light of the above discussion, it can be assumed that homework version of linguistics has had almost no major role in the advancement of English Language Teaching (ELT) despite the importance attached to it in other fields. This is evidenced by many criticisms leveled at the theory of Universal Grammar (UG) in field of second language teaching (e.g. Ellis, 1994). Although the above discussion might be convincing enough to many of those interested in the topic, the present researchers tried to empirically examine their observation that has led them to think Chomskyan linguistics, as compared with fieldwork linguistics, is not likely to play an effective role in ELT. To this end, they tried to explore the perceptions of some M.A. and Ph.D. students/holders involved in ELT with regard to what contributions Chomskyan linguistics has made and can make to the field.

## **7. Method**

### **7.1. Participants**

The participants of this study were 30 TEFL M.A. and Ph.D. students/holders, including 10 M.A. freshmen, 14 second year/graduate M.A. students and 6 Ph.D. students or holders from a number of universities in Tehran, Iran. The freshmen M.A. students had passed linguistics courses at undergraduate level only and had just taken the M.A. course of Issues in Linguistics. Also, around 50% of them were practicing as L2 teachers at institutes and schools, mainly. The M.A. second year and Ph.D. students/holders had passed linguistics or linguistics-related courses at graduate levels as well. Regarding their teaching practice, around 70% of them were practicing as teachers at the moment of data collection and the rest had stopped teaching for a short while due to different reasons but considered L2 teaching as their main career. The former group was compared with the latter in the analysis of the results since their understanding of linguistics was mainly based on the courses offered at undergraduate level and these courses just partly focused on Chomskyan pure linguistics. In contrast, the latter had the experience of linguistics which mainly focused on Chomskyan linguistics at graduate/postgraduate level. For the sake of ease of report, the first group will be called "G1" and the others altogether will be called "G2" in the following.

### **7.2. Data Collection**

To collect data, a written interview framework was developed for TEFL M.A. and Ph.D. students/holders, consisting of a few items which focused on



the participants' attitudes towards linguistics. The items were reviewed by two experts in the interview development for the content and wordings. The revised items are as follows:

1. *How relevant do you find linguistics to graduate/postgraduate TEFL curriculum?*
2. *How satisfied are you with the present syllabus provided in linguistic courses?*
3. *Is the number of credits allocated to pure linguistic courses appropriate in proportion to other courses?*
4. *How related do you think the course of linguistics is to other courses?*
5. *Is theoretical treatment of the issues adequate by itself? If not, what else should be done in such a classroom?*
6. *How practically applicable do you find the contents taught in such courses to your prospective professional activities?*
7. *How much do your linguistics classes involve discussions about the practical contributions of it to ELT?*
8. *How well do your linguistics teachers justify the relevance of such courses to your major and future activities?*
9. *Some linguistics professors don't consider practical application a prerequisite for linguistic issues to be incorporated in the curriculum. How reasonable do you find such a stance?*
10. *Who teaches linguistics at your university; one who has majored in Linguistics or TEFL? Who makes a better teacher of linguistics? Why?*

The interviewees' responses were subjected to qualitative content analysis. More precisely, attempts were made to categorize the answers based on the commonalities observed in them. As a result, the order in which the questions had been posed in the interview has not been observed in the "results" and "discussion" sections. Instead, the answers to questions in a thematic manner are presented.

## **8. Results and Discussion**

With regard to the relevance of courses on pure linguistics to TEFL curriculum, most of the participants in G1 (i.e. around 80%) took the middle ground and considered linguistics as somehow relevant. They believed that the topics covered in the books on linguistics could contribute to their knowledge of language education. Furthermore, to them, the content was relevant to the field of ELT (English Language Teaching) and they were



satisfied with it. Given that they were interviewed when they were passing the first couple of months of their M.A. studies, they were not yet very familiar with the content of linguistics courses at graduate levels. In the B.A. courses of linguistics, a variety of topics including phonetics, semantics, syntax, pragmatics, and morphology are usually worked on at a basic level. Besides, Chomskyan linguistics is not usually given so much weight. In contrast, most of the respondents in G2 (i.e., beyond 80%) did not consider the course relevant to their field of study and were mostly dissatisfied and thought it would be necessary to modify the syllabus content. As it was assumed that the dissatisfaction might arise from other factors such as the inappropriate methodology, the researchers probed into this issue further. Upon probing what exactly they had covered and why they were dissatisfied, the researchers found that issues related to UG constituted the bulk of their linguistics courses, and this disproportionate degree of emphasis on Chomskyan linguistics was the main source of their discontent.

With regard to the degree to which they found the allocation of credits among different courses reasonable, almost all of the interviewees in G1 believed that there was a fair allocation of credits while G2 were almost uniformly dissatisfied with the credit allocation policies. More precisely, they believed that other courses such as “Research Methodology,” “Teaching Methodology,” “Teaching Skills” and “Testing” were far more important than linguistics and, accordingly, deserved a higher number of credits. They believed so because they considered such courses as more relevant to the main concerns of their major, as one had written:

I just do not find it fair, a 2-credit course for linguistics, and a 2-credit course for teaching methodology or for testing. Someone tell me which are more important? I do see the contributions of testing and teaching to the field and my career but when it comes to linguistics, almost nothing. My friends also think like I do.

When asked about the meaningful relationship between the course of linguistics and the other courses in the graduate/postgraduate curriculum of TEFL, G1 were somehow in agreement with the existence of a meaningful connection between linguistics and other TEFL courses, and some of them would refer to issues like phonetics and phonology to support their positions whereas G2 tended to disagree with the existence of any significant relationship between the two as, to them, linguistics was defined as mainly Chomskyan in their courses. The responses indicated that it was rather easy



for them to find contributions of TEFL courses to each other while there was a different story concerning linguistics. For example, one mentioned:

When I attend other courses like testing and teaching methodology, the link between them and ELT profession is very tangible for me; however, whenever I step in linguistics class, it is as if I have entered a different world. Everything is different and the links disappear! I just have no idea what to do with the stuff presented in the class.

Regarding the debate over theory/practice and the proportions of theory and practice which need to be incorporated into the curriculum, almost both G1 and G2 approved of the necessity of theoretical treatment of TEFL issues in linguistics on grounds that it was an integral part of the course. However, the idea shared by almost all was that the discussions would often become too abstract and irrelevant to TEFL itself. The confusion surrounding them originated from their failing to establish connections between class discussions and practical aspects of ELT. The solution offered by most was incorporation of some practical issues focusing on the pedagogical implications and applications of the linguistic topics in TEFL while, as shown below, around 70% of G2 believed that the Chomskyan approach taken in most of the course has almost no application in TEFL.

When asked how applicable they find the content of linguistics to their prospective professional activities, all of those in G1 tended to approve of practical value of the issues covered in linguistics and some mentioned phonetics as a good example, while around 70% of G2 interviewees argued against such a belief. However, again, almost all of the participants in both groups agreed that the discussions in their linguistics classes mainly focused on the theoretical debates in linguistics and, further, did not involve them in discussion about practical applications of linguistics in ELT.

When invited to focus on some aspects of their linguistics instructors, such as their attitudes towards the status of linguistics and academic backgrounds, almost all of the respondents in G2 indicated that their instructors' justifications for the relevance of Chomskyan linguistics to their major of the study and future careers were not convincing enough. This observation is of note since a proper correspondence between teachers' intentions and students' interpretations is a key to learning progress on the part of learners. Nonetheless, the responses showed that instructors had not managed to foreground the significance of linguistics to ELT, as perceived by almost all of the interviewees in G2. Moreover, it was mentioned by



around 50% of G2 interviewees that some instructors did not think linguistics should have implications in ELT to justify its contribution to ELT. One of the interviewees in G2 said “When we criticize the relevance of linguistics to our major and job, they [their instructors] either remain silent or say things that never convince us.” G1 had almost no idea in this regard since, as mentioned by almost all of them, they had never questioned the relevance of the course because they didn’t find it lacking.

As for their instructors’ academic background, that is, the major they had studied, almost half of G1 and G2 interviewees’ Linguistics instructors were found to be Linguistics graduates who, to them, had little insights into the realm of ELT. This can be considered as one of the main reasons behind ignoring the discussion of pedagogical implications of linguistics in such classes.

In light of the above discussion, moving from freshmen in G1 to those passing their second year of M.A. and the Ph.D. candidates/holders in G2, we can find a trend towards less and less positive attitudes to Chomskyan linguistics. Freshman students mostly have a somehow positive stance towards such a course as the basis of their judgment is their limited background, that is, the linguistics courses offered in their B.A. programs of Translation Studies, English Literature, or Language Teaching. However, when it comes to higher levels of graduate/postgraduate studies, their perspectives change and become more negative towards linguistics courses, which mainly consist of Chomskyan pure linguistics.

## 9. Conclusion and Pedagogical Implications

The results of this study indicated considerable dissatisfaction with Chomskyan linguistics on the part of graduate/postgraduate TEFL majors in Iran. Filling the main part of the syllabus with *homework* linguistic issues, hoping that it may resolve the *logical* problem of language acquisition, as claimed by advocates of UG (Brown, 2001), is far from the logic that builds on what is happening in the real life of ELT practitioners. Going through the history of teaching methodology to this day, issues like communicative aspects and postmethod concept do not show a trace of such new horizons provided by UG/homework linguistics. In addition, as the observed trend toward a more negative perspective on the role of linguistics is in high correlation with passing more years in such a practical field, we find that the more comprehensive the respondents’ understanding of and familiarity with TEFL are, the more negative their attitudes toward linguistics tend to



become. One cannot help considering a senior and higher level student's attitude more in line with the outlook of the major of the study and the real prospects. Thus, we might have the warranty to conclude that they take a more sensible and inclusive stance towards the totality and ingredients of their major of the study.

Given that half of the senior students in G2 have been TEFL practitioners, one can claim that they have a more complete picture of TEFL, compared with freshmen. Hence, we should put much more trust in their pessimism regarding the *irrelevance* and *inapplicability* of Chomskyan linguistics in ELT rather than in freshman students' optimism regarding the direct *relevance* and *applicability* of this course. This also leads us to think that TEFL practitioners, in general, tend to align themselves with G2, who expressed their dissatisfaction with the applicability and much coverage of homework linguistics in the TEFL syllabus. All in all, what is conspicuous by its absence is the connection every practitioner craves to see one day between theory and practice, hoping that educational policies are to meet the real-life needs of the society, at large.

Linguistics, in its entirety, is necessary, but what knowledge a TEFL major is required to possess is another issue. As it is important to know what to include in the syllabus, it is equally important to know what not to include, or, in regard to our present situation, what to exclude. The results of this study suggest that if we incorporate more "fieldwork" issues, this may solve a great part of the problem since it brings the matter to the reality of the society. Homework linguistics is unlikely to open many windows, at least, for those involved in the applied discipline of ELT while *fieldwork* linguists may help us much more since their conceptualization of language is so much indicative of a social and contextual flavor.

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