

## Exploring the Impact of Linguacultural Competence of Iranian EFL Learners on their Speaking Performance

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### Abstract:

*Linguoculturology is a new field of linguistic research dealing with manifestation of culture of different nations that are reflected in ELT situations. Accordingly, the aim of the present investigation was to examine if teaching English in EFL Iranian secondary high schools can make a change in their linguocultural competence and to empirically test the extent to which teaching EFL Iranian secondary high school students in a linguocultural context was likely to impact their speaking skills. To achieve this goal, the study was carried out in an Iranian secondary high school, in Dezful, Iran. In the first phase of the research, to assess 100 female participants' knowledge of the Iranian linguocultural context and to increase the participants, linguocultural awareness and their subsequent linguocultural competence a standard checklist was employed. A pretest-treatment-posttest design was used in the respective linguocultural situation with 50 of the students participating in the real instruction to verify their probable speaking promotion. The study was conducted over a four-month time period. The data gathered from filling out a standard checklist and from the students' performance on pre-posttests was analyzed using SPSS software. Results indicated that, at least for the participants in the current experiment, the type of instruction embedded in the Iranian linguocultural context was significantly effective in promoting the learners' linguocultural competence and their speaking abilities, respectively. Based on these findings, recommendations for ELT in comparable circumstances were given. As the study was not exempt from potential shortcomings, suggestions for further research was put.*

**Key words:** linguacultural competence, EFL Learners, Speaking Performance

## Introduction

The spread of English around the world is well documented, although, according to Hall (2018) it is difficult to calculate accurately the exact number of English speakers in the world. Crystal (2012) estimates that English is now spoken by between one and a half to two billion people globally and in almost every country. Kachru (1997) divided the varieties of English into three famous circles; inner, outer and expanding. Inner Circle (containing the US, the UK, Canada, Australia and New Zealand), the Outer Circle (containing post-colonial English speaking countries such as Kenya, the Philippines or Nigeria) and the Expanding Circle which holds the rest of the world (P, 214). Iran is one of the countries in the expanding circle in which English has no administrative status but it is studied as a foreign language or as a sort of “World Englishes” (to borrow a term coined by Kachru).

Kachru (1997) states that the rapid process of globalization as well as significant changes in connections which exist among nations and people has emphasized the use of a language as a means of communication to meet the changing world’s needs. Due to largely military, political and economic dominance of Britain and the United States (as the core of the circle). It is now widely accepted that globalization has led to English becoming a world lingua franca among people who do not share a common first language.

Traditionally, the question of which English to teach focused on the perceived competition between British and US English. As Jenkins (2015 as cited in Hall, 2018) observes, the Englishes that are revered and are the goal of teaching and testing in many parts of the world are still native speaker varieties. The materials and methodologies that are promoted are still those favored by English as a native language (ENL). Communicative approaches with an emphasis on ‘learner autonomy’ and monolingual (English only) textbooks; the teachers who are most highly sought after are native speakers of English; and the tests which are taken most seriously measure learners’ competence in relation to native speaker norms (P. 120).

However, Hall (2018) states that the relevance of this perspective for many ELT contexts has been increasingly questioned. Additionally, for many speakers, the purpose for which English is being learnt and used have changed, with English increasingly used as a lingua franca (ELF) between non-native speakers who do not share an L1, rather than primarily for communication with native speakers of English.

According to Choi (2015), this distinctive nature of the contemporary use of English leads arguments of that English belongs to not only native speakers but also non-native speakers and non-native speakers are legitimate users of English with their own rights. Teaching only native speaker standard English could be harmful to the cultivation of learners’ ability to communicate with future interlocutors from diverse linguocultural backgrounds (ibid). However, English as a lingua franca in linguocultural contexts has been widely elaborated on mostly at a theoretical or conceptual level and pedagogical research is rare.

Linguoculturology is a new field of linguistic research dealing with manifestation of culture of different nations that are reflected in the language. It is comprised of two sub-disciplines of linguistics: Sociolinguistics and Culturology. In culturology, researchers use sociolinguistic methods to explain diversity of language phenomenon.

Linguoculturology is aimed at scrutinizing linguistic units in connection with historical and social development of the country at different periods and thus ensure general broad comprehension of the language as a complex system (Grareva, 2014). Byram (2002) thinks that when people are talking to each other their social identities are part of the social interaction

between them. In language teaching the concept of 'communicative competence' takes into account by emphasizing that they need to acquire not just grammatical competence but also the knowledge of what is 'appropriate' language.

This research touches the problem of essence and specificity of the notion of 'linguocultural competence': the role and place of national culture(C1) in formation of llinguocultural competence of Iranian's EFL learners and as Warschauer (2000) puts it, enabling them, through English to impose their voices on the world. The same author further states that such a paradigm and such a new perspective of EFL education requires recognition of the educational process by searching for new effective methods of developing linguocultural competence systematically by using reflective, communicative principles that help to work in broader cultural, social and economic contexts.

Language policy and planning is affected by ideologies or systems of ideas masquerading through social, political and religious ideas( Van Dijk, 2006). The same author states that foreign language learning and teaching has always been linked directly or indirectly to hegemonic practice and this is the reason why Iranian language policy makers focus on maintaining a strategic language policy. This is what we focus on in this research to teach English as a tool in order to highlight the national culture of learners.

Regarding the type of language the learners need to be exposed to, the general trend is well documented to be that texts should be 'authentic'. Hall (2018) points out that to be effective in preparing language learners to communicate beyond the classroom contexts learners need to work with texts originally written for non-teaching purposes. Tasks should also replicate naturally occurring, 'authentic communication' outside the classroom (ibid). Authentic texts and tasks, it is argued, draw upon more realistic models of language use and leave learners better prepared for life outside the classroom. In line with these assumptions, Seidlhofer (2003) claims that contrived simplification of language in the preparation of materials will always be faulty, since it is generated without the guide and support of a communicative context (P. 78).

Hall (2018) states that perhaps unsurprisingly, many teachers and applied linguists disagree with the suggestion that only 'real language' should be presented in ELT classrooms. Therefore, the aim of this thesis was to investigate if 'unreal', scripted or simplified language which is presented in Iranian secondary high school textbooks (Vision series) would be effective to promote the learners' linguocultural competence which may in turn influence their speaking abilities so they may be able to use their relatively learnt English as a lingua franca in cases they may find themselves in situations where they need to communicate with speakers of other cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

## Research Questions

The present enquiry was an attempt to challenge the traditional linguistic orthodoxy that according to Risager (2008) views language and culture as inseparable. Put it another way, while languages may be psychologically related to a particular culture and cultural experiences of individuals, they are sociologically separate from other cultural phenomena (ibid). With this in mind, this investigation was designed to answer the following research questions.

1. Does teaching English in EFL Iranian secondary high schools affect their linguocultural competence?

1. Does teaching English in a linguocultural situation promote the learners' speaking abilities?

## Review of Literature

### Approaches to the language-culture relationship

As according to Risager (2007), cultures spread across languages and likewise languages spread across cultures (for many years, authorities have been engaged in exploring the relationship between the two entities and have concluded that the study of a language cannot be separated from culture studies and vice versa. Kramsch (1983) believes that When language is used in contexts of communication, it is bound up with culture in multiple and complex ways (P. 25).

Nobody would nowadays raise doubts regarding the idea that there is a close relationship between language and culture and, consequently, that language teaching ought to encompass cultural issues. It is necessary, however, to reconsider culture pedagogy with regard to the impact of globalization and to the new modes of communication resulting from it. Therefore, as Risager (2007) states, the new approach in culture pedagogy combines social network theory and studies of intertextuality. The social network theory views social relationships between human beings as nodes and ties; nodes being the entities within the networks and ties being the relationships between them. Through a social network intertextual chains (a news item retold to another person who may further write about it in an e-mail, etc.) are created, and through them ideas, values and attitudes may spread between individuals and likewise between institutions in a variety of discourses and genres (ibid). As a result, the contemporary world is beyond doubt a “global village” in which state boundaries do not obstruct global communication, and, consequently, languages have ceased to be confined to restricted territories (Risager, 2007, P. 168).

Regarding the connection between language and culture, some researchers claim that the relationship between language and culture varies according to the point of departure (Risager, 2007). In a generic sense, for example, language and culture are always inseparable for culture is a system of symbols and language is one such system in the network (ibid). From the sociological perspective, language and culture are two discrete entities since language use spreads along social networks and a variety of cultural contexts. From the psychological point of view, however, language and culture have always developed together in the individual subject in a unique amalgam. From the system-oriented point of view, however, Risager (2007), emphasizes that the two entities are separable (P. 187).

### Cultural competence and lingoculture

Risager (2007) attempts to neutralize the traditional language-culture dichotomy by introducing certain concepts that link the two conceptions, especially *linguaculture* and *discourse* (P.153). He views the notion of *linguaculture* (also called linguoculture) as a bridge between the structure of the language and the socially determined personal idiolect (P. 172) and relates it to three dimensions of language: *sociological, psychological, and systemic*. When an utterance/text is produced, it contains linguacultural intentions, i.e. semantic and pragmatic functioning of the utterance in the given situation.

Regarding L2 speakers, their linguaculture (semantic connotations, etc.) also are rooted in their L1; thus, language acquisition is a specific process resulting in truly personal linguistic resources that are not devoid of personal cultural experience, which results in specific understanding and interpretation of the world. Linguaculture in the linguistic system is

regarded by Risager (2007) as a discursive superstructure on the linguistic system, a continuum ranging from semantic and pragmatic potential (denotative aspect accounted for in dictionaries) to encyclopedic information.

The link between language and culture when the language in question is a foreign language, researchers stress, is specific due to the interplay of L1 and L2 languages and languacultures. Due to L1 interference learners develop an amalgam of their L1 and L2 languages/languacultures (interlanguage) despite their awareness of some semantic and pragmatic distinctions between their L1 and L2. Even highly competent L2 speakers are reported to manifest traces of what Risager

regards as their L1 languaculture.

As the related literature displays, there has been considerable research on the global spread of English and its impact on English language use. In particular, there is extensive interest in how the fluid nature of English as a major lingua franca is widely influencing real world communication and the consequent pedagogical implications for English language teaching and learning Mackerras (2007). However, to date there has been limited research on the ways in which ELT teachers can adapt their teaching strategies to ensure that learners are equipped to use English in the real world.

Specifically, as it was stated in previous chapter this study was an attempt to continue the line of research in that linguocultural inputs have recently been put to the test in ELT situations as critical, interactive, alternative and integrating approaches that are associated with lingua communication (Mackerras, 2007). In need of theoretical and practical support, teachers still endeavor to explore ideas and activities for teaching and learning that could be feasible in their instructional contexts in order to transcend the linguocultural dominance and provide lingua franca insights into classroom practices. This we hypothesized calls for opportunities to be created for students to legitimate their use of resources and skills to learn and use English on their own terms in a linguocultural situation in ELT contexts in general and in Iranian ELT programs in specific. We believe that this area line of still controversial enquiry is waiting for more empirical evidence to be specifically explored.

## 2.5 Related empirical studies

Reviewing the related literature on the new field of Linguoculturology reveals that the major issues put forward in this area of ELT are theoretical in nature and the rarity of the number of experimental studies dealing with this area is evident. Despite this, we tried our best to intensively study some of the related investigations. As the related literature indicates, for many speakers, the purpose for which English is being learnt and used have changed, with English increasingly used as an ELF between non-native speakers who do not share an L1, rather primarily for communication with native speakers of English (Jenkins, 2011). Some researchers have found that the linguistic characteristics and associated communication strategies learnt in linguocultural situations (mainly in classrooms) to use in lingua franca contexts may differ from native speaker norms (Jenkins, 2007; Jenkins et al., 2011; Kirkpatrick, 2007).

Seildhofer (2011), for example, notes that ELF communication often includes, for instance, no-use of the third person -s (e.g., he plays) and use of a single question tag (e.g., isn't it?), features that do not hinder communication by ELF speakers.

Jenkins (2007; 2015) meanwhile examines the collaborative strategies that ELF speakers engage in to support successful communication, such as the avoidance of idioms, increased supportive responses (e.g., yeah, right) and adaptation of pronunciation to facilitate listener understanding. Therefore, as Hall (2018) puts it, in many lingua culture situations the assumption that British or North American English is the ‘natural’ variety for English language teachers and learners to focus upon is potentially problematic, or, at least, open to review.

In another study, Jenkins (2015) observes that some learners will always need or aspire to native speaker norms and varieties of English, perhaps for travel to, or study in the UK, US, Australia or New Zealand, for example. Yet even here, Jenkins argues that learners should be made aware of the differences between native and lingua franca forms and contexts (ibid).

Alternatively, Hall (2018) draws a significant conclusion from his researches in a variety of linguocultural contexts (China, South or East Asia, Nigeria and Singapore) in that he believes that, it could, in the future perhaps, mean adopting and teaching a local variety of English such as Indian or Chinese English in South or East Asia where English language communication may be dominated by these two powerful and influential economies or, for example, Nigerian English in Nigeria, Singaporean English in Singapore and so on (Kirkpatrick, 2007).

Meanwhile, (Hall, 2018) identifies six possibilities for ELT in lingua franca contexts. They include:

**Option 1:** Teach standard (British? American?) English;

**Option 2:** Define a form of “international English” and teach that;

**Option 3:** Offer a range of Englishes in the classroom;

**Option 4:** Offer successful L2 speakers of English models;

**Option 5:** Give learners exposure to largely native-speaker English but place a very low premium on conformity;

**Option 6:** Include the study of language and dialects in a language teaching program (P. 129).

To conclude, as Risager (2007) observes, language use and by extension ELT can be realized in a L1 context, a foreign language context or a L2 context- or a mixture of these. Apparently, a language’s linguoculture is characterized first by the historical embedding in L1 contexts. But contexts must not be understood in purely national-territorial terms (ibid). Apart from these types of broader societal and historical context, gaining insight from his extensive experimental observations, Risager (2007) stresses the importance pragmatic or life contexts, which draw on the individual’s personal experience with, a knowledge of, the world as well as their personal linguistic experience materialized in the form of their linguistic/linguocultural resources mainly operationalized in ELT classroom world-wide.

## Method

### Design

The present investigation was quasi-experimental in that the participants were not selected randomly and there was no control group. The design exploited was a pretest, instruction and posttest. That said to select the participants two tests were administered (see below). The participant learners were involved in the real treatment which lasted for 4 months. Immediately, after the instruction was over, a posttest was administered.

### Participants

Using a convenience sampling strategy as the most common non-probability sampling in L2 research (Mackey & Gass, 2012), where an important criterion of sample selection is the convenience and the resources of the researcher we selected two secondary high school intact classes for the present investigation. To be more precise, a quick oxford placement (QOPT) test was among eight second grader classes in Farzanegan high school in Dezful, a city in the south west of Iran. Based on the results of this test, two of the classes with the highest mean scores were selected. All the students were female students with an average age range of 16. All the participants' home language was Persian. The total number of the students in these two classes was 50. Notice that although, because there is a limitation to the number of students to be in one class, the students were in two separate classes (with 25 students each). we treated them as a single sample and we provided them with the same type of instruction (see the procedure section below). In other words, there was no control group in this quasi-experimental study.

### Instructional materials

The main source of input and instruction utilized was Vision 2 English for Schools published by Iranian ministry of education (research and planning organization). The book comprises 3 chapters and it is accompanied by a work book. Each unit of the book starts with a conversation in that some of the targeted new vocabulary items, idioms and grammatical structures are presented. The second major section of each chapter is a reading passage in that most of the targeted words and grammar forms are represented and recycled. Each unit of the book is ended in a subpart dealing with listening and speaking activities. There, the class can specifically focus on listening, speaking and pronunciation practice. The book has been designed and organized in a way that seems to be a source to develop the students' general command of English irrespective of the native English culture with an eye on the students' home culture as an instance linguocultural situation (see the features of linguocultural contexts of ELT presented in the previous chapter).

As a complementary source of both classroom activities and tasks we found English Through Culture by Hassannejad and Fathi (2021) an excellent text. The book presents a wide variety of tasks and activities which we exploited so we could involve the participant learners in speaking activities in that many Iranian cultural values, norms and situations have been well presented. Some of the questions and tasks the participants were required to do in pre-posttests were also selected from this text.

## Testing materials

To select the most homogeneous classes for the study, a standardized QOPT was administered. Based on the results of the test, from among the eight second grader classes in the high school, two of the classes with the highest mean score were selected. To ensure that the two groups were comparable they took a pretest in that their entering speaking ability was assessed. After a for month time period of instruction, an immediate posttest was conducted so the participants' speaking performance was assessed after they were subject to treatment. To assess the students' speaking abilities, two expert raters were invited to test the participant learners' speaking. In so doing, we adapted a validated speaking scale developed by Brown (2010). After averaging the scores determined by the two scorers, the interrater reliability of the scores calculated.

The third testing instrument developed and employed in the study was a checklist. According to Mackey and Gass (2012), the backbone of any survey is the instrument used for collecting data (P. 75). Checklist design requires a rigorous process to produce an instrument that yields reliable and valid data (ibid). With this in mind, a checklist with a five Likert scale format was developed. To make the checklist valid we consulted two expert university professors. Based on their comments, we piloted and modified some items to make it more valid. The checklist was then administered to determine the extent to which ELT in the Iranian high schools is an instance of linguocultural situation. We adapted the items in the checklist from the main features that characterize linguocultural ELT situations introduced in the relevant literature on ELT as a globalized carrier in linguocultural contexts in that English is intended to be learnt as a major lingua franca for worldwide communication irrespective of the home cultures of the nonnatives. To make sure that all the students could understand the items in the checklist, it was rendered in to Persian (see English and Persian versions of the checklist presented in appendix 3).

## Procedures

Risager (2007) is of the idea that one's linguocultural competence is first and foremost tied to the language one learns first in life. From this perspective the researcher claims that learning other languages means building on the lingua culture of your first language. Personal connotations to words and phrases are transferred, and a kind of language mixture develops, where the new language is supplied with linguocultural matters from the first language (ibid, P. 8). In his model, Risager (2007) puts it nicely that language teachers face transferability in the language of linguacultural diversity. Teaching the target language means managing the semantic-pragmatic potential of that language. Thus the English language (to take an example of a language that is sometimes described as potentially culturally neutral), carries linguoculture no matter in what context it is used, no matter where it is used, and with topic. According to Risager (2007), being a language teacher is, therefore, always also being linguocultural teacher (P. 8).

With this insight obtained from Risager's model, the Iranian context of ELT is no exception i.e. as an instance of linguacultural situation. Accordingly, we exploited a variety of class room techniques in that the students practiced speaking. That said, in each class session the students were involved in a host of activities adapted from Thornbury (2005). Some of the exploited activities used to develop the participant learners' linguocultural competence and in turn their speaking performance were as follows:



1. Presentations and talks mainly based on the content of the reading passages given in each unit
2. Role-play and simulations
3. Discussion and debates mainly in a for and against fashion
4. Conversation and chats (based on the theme of the sample conversations presented in each unit of the student books)

To operationalize these suggested activities, question-answer-feedback sequences were used so the students may talk to their classmates and to the teacher who was both a participant, an input provider, a manager, and a feedback provider on the students' oral productions. In other words, in a content based language teaching (CBLT) context established all classroom activities revolved around the content of the students' main book and the work book accompanied it.

## Data Collection and Analysis

The data for the study was gathered by means of several instruments. The first was a checklist developed to collect the learners' view of how they considered learning English in the Iranian linguacultural context of English language. The second tool was a QOPT administered to select the most homogeneous experimental groups. To assess the learners' command of speaking in English a pretest was run. Another parallel test was administered immediately after the treatment was over.

A variety of appropriate data analysis procedures were utilized. The first was descriptive statistics in that the observed mean of the groups on QOPT and the pre-post speaking test were presented. To account for the dependability of the test scores, the reliability index of all the tests was calculated. A Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistical test was administered on the results of tests to ascertain that the test scores were normally distributed so there might not be extreme scores in the sets. A t-test was conducted on the students' pre-post test scores to compare their performance from pretest to posttest. Results obtained from administering the checklist were subject to a chi-square statistical test to account for the frequency of the selected options in the Likert scale. Reliability of the checklist was also calculated. All the calculations were accomplished by Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version. The level of significance was set at .05.

## Results

Three sets of data were analyzed. Concerning the data collected by administering the 20 item Likert scale checklist we chose a convenient procedure in that every five items were presented and analyzed in four segregated tables and figures. This will be followed by analyzing the results of the QOPT. In the third subsection of the chapter results of the pre-post tests are displayed and interpreted. As the students were in two separate classes with 25 students each, the results of the QOPT were given for the two groups separately so we could compare their general entering English proficiency to make sure they are homogeneous respecting their overall abilities in English before they were involved in the study. As for the pre-posttests of the participants' speaking performance, the scores of the learners in both groups were summed up and averaged in a single group of 50. The logic was that regarding

their general entering English proficiency, the groups were comparable (as suggested in results of QOPT). Moreover, the two classes were instructed by the same teacher and the type of experimental conditions to which the groups were assigned were the same (see the procedure section of the study in chapter 3). The level of significance was set at 0.05.

Table 4. 1: Reliability of the checklist

Cronbach's Alpha	Number of items
<b>.813</b>	20

Concerning the validity of the checklist developed for the study all the items were selected from high ranked papers on the issue of linguoculture as a rather current trend in ELT (see chapter three of the thesis). Table 4. 1 gives the dependability index of the checklist that turned to be .813 which in turn means that its value is high enough to be reliable.

Table 4. 2: Numerical values of the responses to the first five items in checklist

	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
SD	18	100.0	-82.0
D	42	100.0	-58.0
NI	20	100.0	-80.0
A	150	100.0	50.0
SA	270	100.0	170.0
Total	500		

Results of the cumulative frequency with which the first five items of checklist were selected in the five level of the Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (SD) to strongly agree (SA) are presented in Table 4.1. The total number of the students responding to the checklist was 100. The total number of the choices was 500 (100 times 5). As the table indicates a total of 18 out of 500 choices expressed strong disagreement with these items. In contrast to that 270 out of 500 were in strong agreements with the first five items of the checklist. To be precise, in between these two extremes were 42 (D), 20 (NI) and 150 (A).

Table 4. 2: Results of the Chi-square test on responses to the first five items in checklist

<b>Chi-Square</b>	<b>478.880<sup>a</sup></b>
<b>df</b>	4
<b>Asymp. Sig.</b>	.000

Table 4. 2 shows the results of a Chi-square test on these values. 0 cells (,0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 100,0. Since the significant value is less than .05 ( $P = .000$ ), the test clearly suggests that the observed frequencies given in Table 4. 1 are statistically significantly variable with the minimum and maximum frequencies given to SD and SA.

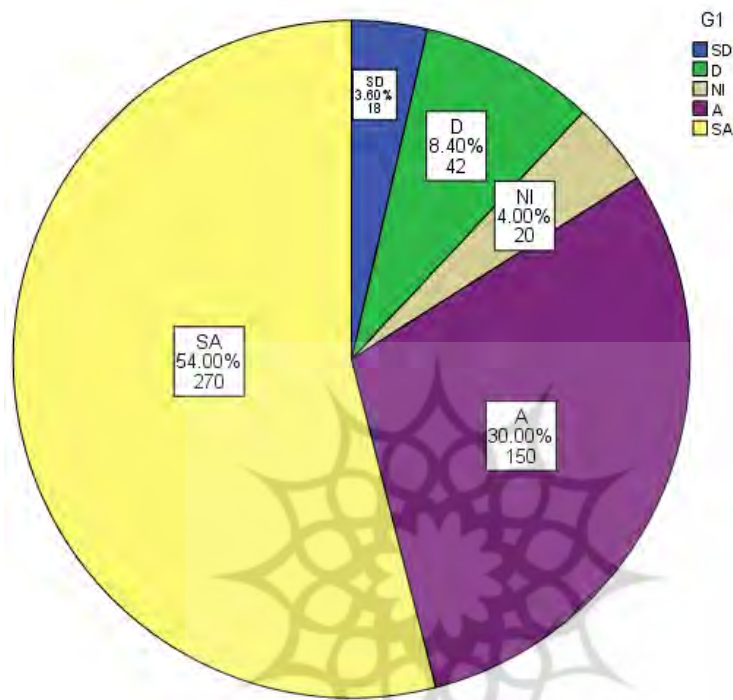


Figure 4. 1: Visual illustration of the participants answers to the first five items in the checklist.

Pie chart 4. 1 presents the visual illustration of the percentages of the selected items in the checklist. The chart evinces that approximately 3% of the students were in strong disagreement with the first five items in the checklist. The chart further indicates that at the other extreme 54% of the total responses were in strong agreement with these statements. The second highest value is 30% which means that about one third of the participants simply agreed with the statements. Moreover, the figure shows that only a little more than 8% of the students were in disagreement with items and just 4% of them had no idea (NI).

Table 4. 3: Numerical values of the responses to the second five items in the checklist

	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
<b>SD</b>	51	100.0	-49.0
<b>D</b>	60	100.0	-40.0
<b>NI</b>	20	100.0	-80.0

<b>A</b>	108	100.0	8.0
<b>SA</b>	261	100.0	161.0
<b>Total</b>	500		

Table 4.3 shows the observed frequencies of the second five statements selected in the checklist. The least frequently selected item was NI and the most was SA. The table clearly gives the frequency with which the other statements in this set were marked by the participant learners.

Table 4. 4: Results of the Chi-square test on responses to the second five items in the checklist

<b>Chi-Square</b>	<b>363.860<sup>a</sup></b>
<b>df</b>	4
<b>Asymp. Sig.</b>	.000

To specify if the observed frequencies presented in Table 4. 3 were significantly variable a Chi-square test was run. Table 4. 4 provides the results. 0 cells (,0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 100,0. With a df value of 4 and a significant level which was less than .05 ( $P = .000$ ), the observed frequencies presented in Table 4. 3 turned to be significantly variable.

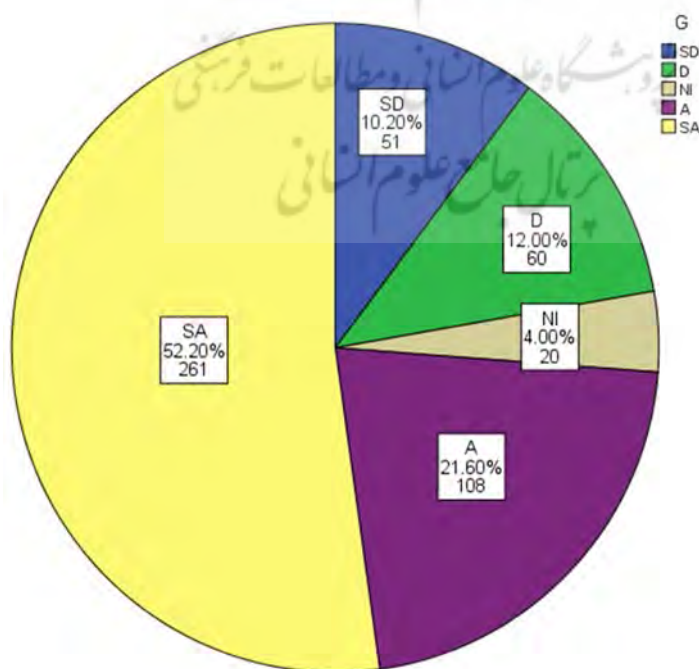


Figure 4. 2: Visual illustration of the participants answers to the second five items in the checklist.

Figure 4.2 clearly illustrates the percentage of the items selected in the second set in that around 52% of the students were in strong agreement with the second five items with a minimum number of the students who (4%) had no idea (NI). The chart obviously illustrates the percentages of the three other statements in checklist.

Table 4. 5: Numerical values of the responses to the third five items in the checklist

	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
SD	42	100.0	-58.0
D	86	100.0	-14.0
NI	8	100.0	-92.0
A	125	100.0	25.0
SA	239	100.0	139.0
Total	500		

Table 4. 5 displays the observed frequencies of the third five items selected. The maximum frequency was 239 (SA) and the minimum which turned out to be 8 (8). The table also shows that 125 out of 500 choices were in agreement with the statements (A).

Table 4. 6: Results of the Chi-square test on responses to the third five items in the checklist

<b>Chi-Square</b>	<b>319.700<sup>a</sup></b>
<b>df</b>	4
<b>Asymp. Sig.</b>	.000

A Chi-square test was conducted to determine if these observed frequencies were significantly variable. 0 cells (,0%) have expected frequencies less than 5%. The minimum expected cell frequency is 100,0. As the table demonstrates, this test gave a df value of 4 and a less than .05 significant level ( $P = .000$ ). That is to say, according to these results, the observed frequencies presented in Table 4. 5 were significantly variable.

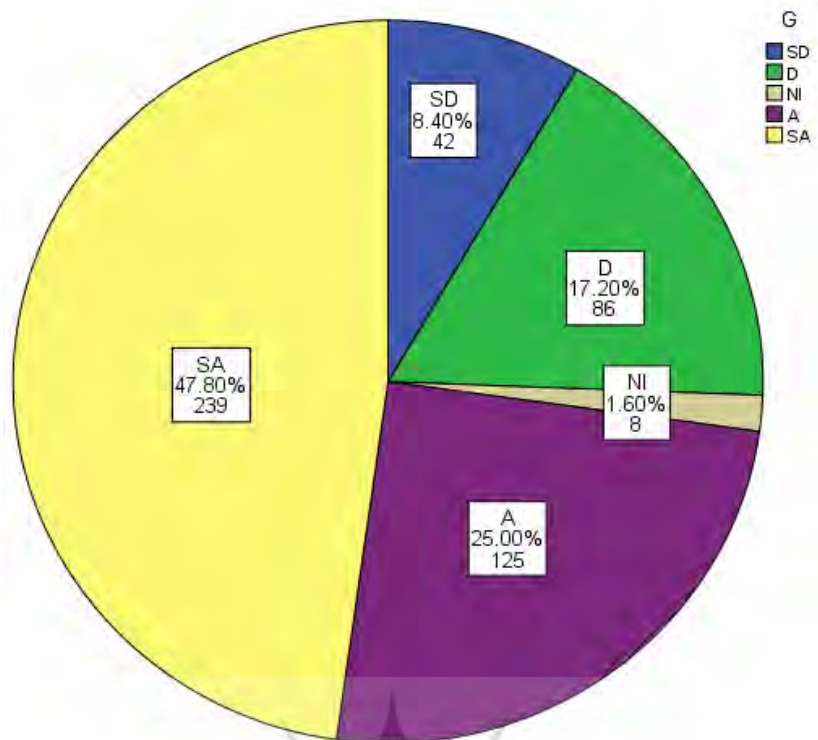


Figure 4. 3: Visual illustration of the participants answers to the third five items in the checklist.

Figure 4. 3 gives a clear visual illustration of the data presented in Tables 4. 5 and 4. 6. Comparing the percentages with which the items were chosen are given on the chart with the least and most percentages which turned out to be 1. 60% (NI) and 47. 80% (SA), respectively.

Table 4. 7: Numerical values of the responses to the fourth five items in checklist

	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
<b>SD</b>	37	100.0	-63.0
<b>D</b>	39	100.0	-61.0
<b>NI</b>	8	100.0	-92.0
<b>A</b>	120	100.0	20.0
<b>SA</b>	296	100.0	196.0
<b>Total</b>	500		

The observed frequencies of the learners' choices of the fourth set of the statements in the checklist are evinced in Table 4. 7. A total of 296 out of 500 have been in strong agreement and a minimum number of the students have shown that they had no idea.

Table 4. 8: Results of the Chi-square test on responses to the fourth five items in the checklist

<b>Chi-Square</b>	<b>549.700<sup>a</sup></b>
<b>df</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Asymp. Sig.</b>	<b>.000</b>

To make sure that the observed frequencies in Table 4. 7 were significantly different a Chi-square test was employed. 0 cells (,0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 100,0. The df value was 4 and the significant level was less than .05 ( $P = .000$ ) which means that the frequencies were significantly different.

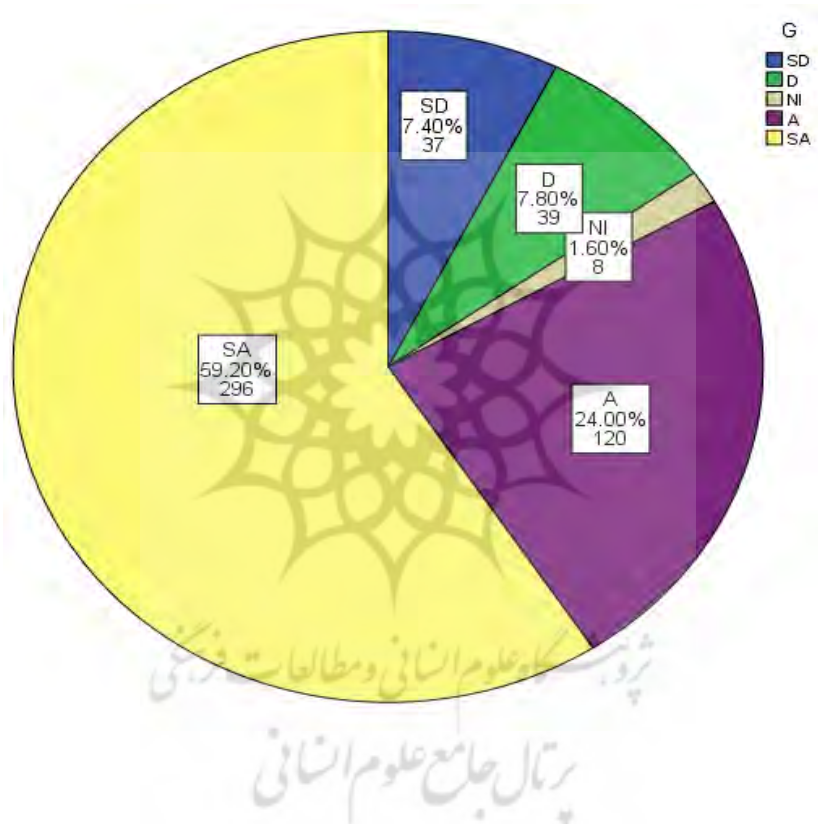


Figure 4. 4: Visual illustration of the participants answers to the fourth five items in the checklist.

Figure 4. 4 provides a visual display of the total responses to the fourth five statements in the checklist e. The chart gives the total percentages of the items by the participants. The maximum percentage is approximately 59% which suggests that the majority of the students strongly agreed with the last five items. The figure further indicates that 24% of the participants agree with the statements in this subsection of the checklist meaning that nearly 80% of the participant learners either strongly agreement or simply agree with the last five items in checklist which are all characteristics of linguocultural contexts of English language learning.

To sum up, the data gathered by administering the checklist suggest that the majority of the students were in agreement with the view that they are learning English in a linguocultural context and that this type of context can be effective in promoting their linguocultural

competence which in turn might hinder them to foster their speaking abilities to communicate with other non-native learners of English world-wide. That is to say, the visual data presented by the pie chart indicate that the students, attitudes towards the linguocultural situation in that they were learning English was positive as they were mainly in agreement or even strong agreement with the items in the checklist which was designed to inform them that the type of English they were learning might be effective to aid the practice speaking in an instance of linguocultural context (Iranian context) so they may someday exploit their English to effectively communicate with other learners of English world-wide.

In other words, this subpart of our data provides evidence for the first research hypothesis schools can make a significant that teaching English in EFL Iranian secondary high-schools change in their linguocultural competence which in turn enables them to promote their speaking abilities a point to which we turn in the second phase of our data analysis.

Table 4. 9: Results of descriptive statistics on QOPT

Groups	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
<b>A</b>	21.3200	25	2.44472	.48894
<b>B</b>	22.0800	25	1.89121	.37824

Results of descriptive statistics of the QOPT are as presented in Table 4. 9. The observed mean score of class A was 21. 32 and that of class B turned to be 22.08.

Table 4.10: Results of one-sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov test on the group scores on QOPT

		<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>
	<b>N</b>	25	25
<b>Normal Parameters<sup>a,b</sup></b>	Mean	21.3200	22.0800
	Std. Deviation	2.44472	1.89121
<b>Most Extreme Differences</b>	Absolute	.192	.167
	Positive	.192	.115
	Negative	-.091	-.167
<b>Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z</b>		.960	.833
<b>Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)</b>		.315	.491



To make sure if the scores of the QOPT were normally distributed, a one-sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was run. Table 4. 10 displays the results. Since the value of the significant level was greater than .05 ( $P > .05$ ,  $P = .315$  and  $.491$  for groups A and B, respectively), the scores were normally distributed making the groups comparable.

Table 4. 11: Results of independent samples t-test on QOPT for groups A and B

Groups	Independent Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
A	-	2.38537	.47707	-	.22463	-	24	.124
B	.76000			1.74463		1.59	3	

To compare the observed means of the groups on QOPT, an independent t-test was conducted. With SD value of 2.38, a df value of 24 and the significance level which was greater than .05 ( $P = .124$ ), it was clear that observed mean scores of the classes were not significantly different. With this in mind, the groups were homogeneous respecting their entering English proficiency which indicates the level of linguocultural competence in a foreign language learning context (Agar, 2006 & Risager, 2006).

Table 4.12: Reliability of the checklist

Inter-rater Reliability index of speaking tests
<b>.764</b>

The average value of the inter-rater reliability index of pre-post speaking tests turned out to be .764. Based on two logics the assumption is that the tests were dependable. The first reason is that they were administered by two expert raters using the standard speaking scale developed by Brown (2010). The reliability index given in Table 4.13 which is .764 is also high enough to be trustable.

Table 4. 13: Results of descriptive statistics of the pre-post speaking performance

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
<b>pretest</b>	10.9000	50	2.71992	.38465
<b>posttest</b>	16.6200	50	1.81704	.25697

To assess the participant learners' speaking ability a pretest and a posttest were administered, respectively, prior and after the treatment. As they are given in Table 4. 12, the observed mean scores for pre-posttests were 10.90 and 16.62.

Table 4. 14: Results of one-sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov test of pre-posttest speaking performance

		<b>pretest</b>	<b>posttest</b>	
	N	50	50	
<b>Normal Parameters<sup>a,b</sup></b>	Mean	10.9000	16.6200	
	Std. Deviation	2.71992	1.81704	
	<b>Most Extreme Differences</b>	Absolute	.170	.123
		Positive	.170	.097
		Negative	-.103	-.123
	<b>Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z</b>	1.200	.869	
	<b>Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)</b>	.113	.438	

To account for any extreme or outsider score in pre-posttests a one-sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was carried out. Table 4. 13 indicates that with significant values of .113 and .438 in turn ( $P > .05$ ), the scores of pretest and posttest were normally distributed with no extreme scores.

Table 4.15: Results of paired samples t-test on speaking performance

Pair		Paired Differences				t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference			
					Lower			
1	pretest - posttest	-5.7200	2.6267	.37147	-6.4665	-4.9735	-15.398	.000

The total number of the participants in groups A and B was taken to be cumulatively 50. To compare the observed mean scores of this unified group from pretest to posttest a paired samples t-test was performed. Results shown in Table 4. 14 demonstrate that with an SD value of 2.62, a df value of 49 and a significant level which turned out to be less than .05 (P = .000) the pre-posttest mean scores were significantly variable meaning that increasing the speaking ability of the respective participant learners was likely to be the result of the type of instruction they were subject to and that this type of instruction was effective in increasing the participants' linguocultural competence which might potentially provide them with an English asset to relatively communicate with other learners of English language world-wide.

To conclude, the second phase of our data provided evidence to support the hypothesis that teaching EFL Iranian secondary high school students in a linguocultural context can positively affect their speaking abilities. In other words, the data gathered from the students' performance on the speaking test prior and after the treatment suggest that the linguoculture experimental condition to which the participant learners were assigned was effective to help them experience a significant promotion in their speaking skills.

## Discussion and Conclusion

One phase of the current investigation aimed at verifying if teaching English in EFL Iranian secondary high schools can make a change in their linguocultural competence. To achieve this goal a checklist in that the fundamental features of linguocultural situations were presented based on the recent scholarly articles was used to arise the participant learners' awareness of the respective linguocultural context (Iranian context) where they were involved in learning English as a lingua franca (see appendix 2). Results revealed that the instrument could help increase the students' competence or awareness of the linguocultural context in that they mostly agreed with the items of the checklist. This suggests that if instructors or educational systems inform the students of the special various linguocultural contexts of English language learning, the learners, as Breen (2001) believes, would be thinking and feeling people acting with the real purpose that is generated by what they see a significant and meaningful situation for them as learners in particular social and linguocultural contexts (P. 178).

The point we put here, of course, is not in conflict with the general objectives and ultimate goals of ELT. As Brown (2007) notes, second language learning ‘implies some degree of learning a second culture’ and to some extent, the acquisition of a second identity. Two points are in order. First, ELT in foreign contexts should not be mixed with English language acquisition in native speaking English situations. Concerning this issue, as the above discussion suggests and as Brown (2007) points out, models of teaching culture especially acculturation model aim to explain the relationship between ‘culture learning’ and L2 development in contexts where learners might use the target language for everyday communication, that is, they seem particularly relevant to ESL learning contexts.

The second point is that with the spread of English language all over the world, ELT instructors should notice that, according to Hall (2018), the global use of English has raised a number of difficult questions: why has English become so important in the world- a ‘happy coincidence’ or a result of ‘linguistic imperialism’? What are the links between English and globalization? How has English changed as it has spread, in various linguocultural contexts, and should we now refer to ‘Englishes’? What are our attitudes towards this variations and different ways in which different groups of speakers from various linguocultures use English? What kinds of communication is English actually used for in the world? And what are the implications of these debates for English language teaching?

Back to the main theme of our first research question, we believe that, as there are fewer L1 speakers than speakers of English as a second or foreign language or English speakers from other contexts around the world, ELT systems should no longer hold to the idea of native speakerism as the norm to teach English. As our results indicated, instructors can increase their students’ linguocultural competence in their English classes owing to the reality that is put by Hall (2018) in that, for many speakers the purpose for which English is being learned and used have changed, with English increasingly used as a lingua franca between non-native speakers who do not share

an L1, rather than primarily for communication with native speakers of English (which might still be termed an EFL) that is, a foreign language situation (P. 208).

To sum up this part of the discussion, regarding the response to the first research question of the present investigation, our results suggest an affirmative answer. In other words, teaching English in EFL Iranian secondary high schools can make a change in their linguocultural competence in that both the learners and the instructors can involve themselves in learning and teaching English, respectively, in a linguocultural situation in that the learners’ purpose would be likely to increase their command of their speaking skills to communicate with other non-native learners of English learning it in other respective particular and various linguocultural contexts.

The second research question of the study was raised to provide evidence to verify if and to what extent teaching EFL Iranian secondary high school students in a linguocultural context might affect their speaking performance. Basically, this question is relied on the first question discussed above in that the participant learners’ attention and noticing of the Iranian linguocultural context of English learning was arose with an intention to promote their knowledge and competence about the non-native linguocultural context where they were involved in learning English. As it was put above our results indicated that, by using standard instruments, the researcher could organize the students’ awareness of the specific Iranian linguocultural situation with its particular expectations of the learners learning English not merely to be mixed with native English culture but to keep their home cultural norms as English

learners so they might use it to communicate with other non-native learners of English language who have learned it in their own particular linguocultures.

In relation to the first phase of the investigation, as it was stated above, the second research question was an attempt to empirically test the extent to which teaching EFL Iranian secondary high school students in a linguocultural context was likely to impact their speaking skills. Results obtained from comparing pre-posttest performances of the participant students evinced that the learners could experience a significant promotion in their speaking proficiency. In other words, our results provided supporting evidence indicating that the type of treatment exploited to teach communication skills of speaking were significantly effective to promote the participants' speaking abilities from pretest to posttest. This convinced us to give an affirmative answer to the second research question as well.

Results of the current research in general accord with Kachru (1997) view about ELT in that the author states that the rapid process of globalization as well as significant changes in connections which exist among nations and people has emphasized the use of a language as a means of communication to meet the changing world's needs. It is now widely accepted that globalization has led to English becoming a world lingua franca among people who do not share a common first language (ibid).

We assume that the traditional view of which variety of English to teach that mainly focused on the perceived competition between British and US English can be questioned. As Jenkins (2015 as cited in Hall, 2018) observes, the Englishes that are revered and are the goal of teaching and testing in many parts of the world are still native speaker varieties. The materials and methodologies that are promoted are still those favored by English as a native language (ENL). Communicative approaches with an emphasis on 'learner autonomy' and monolingual (English only) textbooks; the teachers who are most highly sought after are native speakers of English; and

the tests which are taken most seriously measure learners' competence in relation to native speaker norms (P. 120).

However, results of the present study are in line with that of Hall (2018) statements in that he points out that the relevance of the perspective for many ELT contexts has been increasingly questioned. Additionally, for many speakers, the purpose for which English is being learnt and used have changed, with English increasingly used as a lingua franca (ELF) between non-native speakers who do not share an L1, rather than primarily for communication with native speakers of English.

Choi's (2015) assertions also well document our assumptions about ELT in linguocultural contexts. According to Choi (2015), the distinctive nature of the contemporary use of English leads arguments of that English belongs to not only native speakers but also non-native speakers and non-native speakers are legitimate users of English with their own rights. Teaching only native speaker standard English could be harmful to the cultivation of learners' ability to communicate with future interlocutors from diverse linguocultural backgrounds (ibid).

In light of the relevant literature and the results obtained from the present investigation we assume that English language can be effectively taught in diverse linguocultural situations around the world without being concerned about learning English like native speakers. In other words, as the related literature shows and as our results suggest, ELT programs in various

linguocultural contexts could successfully prepare the learners to exploit English as a *lingua franca* in linguocultural contexts to communicate efficiently.

### Implications for classroom instruction

Our results convey some implications for language pedagogy particularly in the Iranian linguoculture context. In line with, Hall (2018) critique of ELT in that the author notices the division of the world into superior native speaker culture ('Us') and problematic non-native speaker cultures ('Them'), the latter labelled, for example, as 'dependent', 'passive', and 'traditional' (Holliday, 2006). We assume that this native speakerist discourses around language norms have been problematized. We should now move on to examine and explore efficacy of ELT in diverse linguocultural contexts by non-native instructors. In other words, we should now verify the common (but inaccurate) assumption that, as it is put by Hall (2018), native speakers automatically make better language teachers, before exploring further relationship between ELT methodologies and local contexts.

### limitations and recommendations for further research

The study is characterized with some pitfalls chief among them are as follows. This experiment was carried out in a limited context with only female participants. We recommend future research to take sex as an intervening variable to control its potential impacts on the outcomes. Similar studies could be accomplished in diverse linguocultures with both male and female participants.

The second variable which might have influenced the findings is likely to be the private high school where the research was conducted. That is to say, as the students in this school had passed a very difficult entrance examination to be accepted to this high school, this might have made them intensively study all the subject matters including English in advance. As a result, their good performance might have been just the result of instruction they were subject to. To account for this less controlled variable, future research is in order in that the same studies could be carried out in public schools.

Another drawback of the study that would motivate future research is that we limited the treatment and tests to the students' speaking skills. We assume that upcoming research in that an integration of language skills is put to the test in various linguocultural situations is worth doing.

Since the current study was carried out in a limited linguocultural context, we are not sure of the external validity of the results. In other words, the results are not simply generalizable to other similar situations. To account for this shortcoming, other researchers may replicate the study in similar circumstances and with similar subjects and in case they get similar results then the generalizability of the results would be more likely to be logical.

As the related literature denotes, most of the EFL practitioners still think of an ideal situation where their students are called to learn English like native speakers. An interesting way in that the current experiment might be extended is that future research would be specifically concerned with investigating the learners' attitudes towards learning English in Linguocultural contexts in that the researchers may provide more evidence as to indicate if the pupils think the same way as their teachers do and if this is really plausible.

The design of the present investigation was pretest, instruction and immediate posttest in that the lasting impact of the treatment was not measured. To deal with this drawback as the last but not least down fall of our experiment, we suggest future research with a design

exploiting pretest, treatment, immediate and delayed posttests to verify the durability of the effects of this type of instruction in similar linguocultural circumstances.

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## Appendixes

### 1. The scoring scales for speaking assessment adapted (with some modifications) from Brown (2010)

#### Accuracy:

##### Points

**0-2** Using grammatical word classes (nouns, verbs, etc.), systems (e.g., tense, agreement, pluralization), word order, patterns, rules, and elliptical forms

**2-4** Producing speech in natural constituents; in appropriate phrases, pause groups, breath groups, and sentence constituents

**4-6** Expressing a particular meaning in different grammatical forms

**6-8** Using cohesive devices in spoken discourse

**8-10** Developing and using a battery of speaking strategies, such as emphasizing key words, rephrasing, providing a context for interpreting the meaning of words, appealing for help, and accurately assessing how well your interlocutor is understanding you

#### Fluency:

##### Points

**0-2.5** Speech is so halting and fragmentary or has such a nonnative flow that intelligibility is virtually impossible.

**2.5-5** Numerous nonnative pauses and or a nonnative flow that interferes with intelligibility.

**5-7.5** Some nonnative pauses but with a more nearly native flow so that the pauses do not interfere with intelligibility.

**7.5-10** Speech is smooth and effortless, closely approximating that of a native speaker.

### 2. The linguoculture checklist

In this checklist 20 statements on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree' have been provided. Please indicate your opinion after each statement by putting a check mark (\*) in the box that best indicates the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statement.



	<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>NI</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>
1. Language and culture are inseparable to each other.					
2. Every linguistic or discourse event is structured in a way by the culture that surround the speech event and speech community.					
3. Learning English could serve as a medium for transmitting and developing my home culture.					
4. English language learning brings many advantages to its users as enabling them to “language” across linguocultural boundaries.					
5. Fundamental to English language learning is the fact that individuals learn to communicate through their culture.					
6. Awareness of linguocultural differences is required in the context of language learning to resolve communication problems and to facilitate interactions with learners of English from other nationalities.					
7. To learn English, it is not necessary to lean about the culture of English speaking nations such as the USA, the UK and Australia.					
8. Any language carries meaning and in this sense any language carries a culture.					
9. One good way to introduce my home country culture to people from other nations is learning English.					
10. English language, now, functions as a lingua franca world-wide.					
11. One’s linguoculture is first and for most tied to the language s/he learns first in life.					
12. Learning other languages means building on the linguoculture of your first language.					
13. English language learning is a carrier of linguoculture no matter where it is used and no matter what the topic is.					
14. English language learning is an experience of relating English to my home culture.					
15. As an English language learner, I will always need to try my best to learn native speaker norms for travel to or study in the UK, USA, or Australia for example.					
16. To communicate globally, adopting and learning a local variety of English as in an Iranian, Chinese or Singaporean could be enough.					
17. Despite the cultural diversity across countries, a culture neutral variety of English could be effectively learned and used to communicate world-wide.					
18. Real authentic English spoken by English native speakers is more difficult to comprehend or produce and thus less useful.					
19. Simplified language may be more accessible for me, and thus more appropriate to help me learn how to					

communicate with other non-native speakers of English world-wide.					
20. Using English always involves linguoculture as language practice is to produce and reproduce meaning.					

### 3. Sample of test tasks used to involve students in speaking activities in class

#### Task 1

##### Group work

**Discuss the following questions about "Greeting in Iran" and find out as many facts as you can about each thing. (You can take notes)**

1. What are different ways of greeting in Iran?
2. What are different ways of providing gifts on a visit to someone's home?
3. What could someone as a guest be treated in Persian society?
4. Why is it very important to start your day with warm greeting?

#### Task 2

##### Group work/ Oral presentation

**There are different types of wedding ceremonies in your city. Take notes about them through the group discussion then give a lecture based on your group notes.**

1. Name different wedding ceremonies in your city.
2. Which wedding ceremony is the most important one?
3. Do you agree to do all these ceremonies? If so explain more, please.
4. Is there a main and deep gap between the traditional and modern marriage among the Iranians?
5. What is the process of getting married and how long does it take?

#### Task 3

##### Class Work

**Interview your classmates and find out their taste of food.**

1. What are your favorite dishes?
2. Would you try to cook any Iranian dishes? Which one do you cook for your friends?
3. What are typical and usual ingredients among the foods you cook every day?

4. Which one do you prefer, Iranian ethnic food or fast food? Why?

#### Task 4

#### Game /Oral presentation

**Find out about the Iranian lifestyle through answering these questions then give a lecture. The teacher decides which group is the winner**

1. What are the main differences about Iranian and American lifestyle?
2. Do you agree with the current lifestyle in your city/country?
3. How do you think the next generation's lifestyle change?
4. Which aspect of Iranian lifestyle do you agree/disagree with?
5. Are there any specific lifestyles that should be changed or declined? If so explain more, please.

