English language teaching in Iranian mainstream schools: Pedagogical, societal and government policy environments

Razieh Gholaminejad and Amin Raeisi-Vanani
Shahid Beheshti University, Iran

The present paper draws together the existing, but largely scattered, research findings on the policy of English language teaching (ELT) in post-Revolutionary Iran. It begins with a brief history of ELT in Iran, then it deals with the major policies adopted and their consequences. It is followed by how ELT policies came under reform in 2013, inspired by the communicative language teaching (CLT) approach. The rest of the paper examines the underlying reasons why the reform failed to work as expected. To this end, a critical analysis of the missing infrastructures prerequisite to the reform is presented. These include the low budget allotted at the planning and implementation levels; teachers' unpreparedness to teach and assess based on the new approach, due to lack of educational, and economic empowerment; inefficiency of the newly-designed textbooks; the regime of school accountability; heterogeneous classes; inadequate time; extreme class sizes; and students' demotivation to use English, due to the paucity of opportunities to use it. These all stem from the top-down approach taken to implement the reform, wherein the characteristics of the educational context are disregarded. Some recommendations are given at the end, which can be used by ELT policy makers, materials developers and other stakeholders.

Introduction

One of the pitfalls for language learners in Iran is that even after studying English at schools for six years, the majority lack the ability to use the language. In fact, unless they have taken English lessons in private language institutes, few high-school graduates can even introduce themselves in English (Ganji, Ketabi & Shahnazari, 2018). More than 80 percent of Iranian high-school graduates enter universities with only a rudimentary understanding of English, which does not go beyond some passive knowledge of general vocabulary (Soodmand-Afshar & Movassagh, 2016). Results from the English section of the university entrance examinations in Iran have revealed that about 81 percent of the students obtain the score of zero in this section (Statistical Center of Iran, 2014, as cited in Ekstam & Sarvandy, 2017). In a study focusing on a recent generation of Iranian undergraduates, Gholaminejad (2020a) examined the students who were asked to rate themselves in terms of the *Common European Framework of Reference* (CEFR) bands. The majority of the participants rated their English proficiency at either intermediate (i.e. B1 and B2) or basic levels (i.e. A1 and A2).

Given that the language needs of Iranian students have not been satisfied by the mainstream educational system, private language institutes have undertaken responsibilities for increasing students' practical skills (Ganji et al., 2018). The fact that every year a substantial number of students rush to register in private language institutes may attest that the Ministry of Education has failed to bring about the required language proficiency through the mainstream English language teaching (ELT) curriculum.

There has been to date no comprehensive analysis of the tentative causes of the failure of the mainstream education to achieve a satisfactory level of ELT. The present paper seeks to explore the reasons underlying the inadequate language proficiency of Iranian high-school graduates. Through a comprehensive analysis and synthesis of the related scholarly works, we aim to delve into the related issues, giving a vivid picture of the main factors affecting this situation. It is, initially, quintessential to present an overview of the background on ELT in Iran, in order to pave the way for a clear understanding of the situation.

ELT policies after the Islamic Revolution (1979)

Although prior to the Islamic Revolution English was viewed as a means of modernising the country (Kiany, Mahdavy & Ghafar-Samar, 2011), in the wake of the Islamic Revolution in 1979, English came to be deemed as an "alien language," assumed to belong to the country's arch foes: Britain and the USA (Borjian, 2013). English, or perhaps Western culture as its corollary, was considered as a tool for exercising hegemony, menacing to the traditional norms or the Islamic-national identity of the people.

As Iranian authorities held conservative attitudes toward ELT (Farhady, Hezaveh & Hedayati, 2010), the controversial issue in the early years after the Revolution was whether English should continue to be included in the curricula or be entirely banned (Borjian, 2013). This ambivalent position can be observed in many of the documents developed by policy makers. For instance, *the 20-year National Vision* (National Vision, 2005) specified that the country hopes to be capable in economy, science, and technology, with an emphasis on high-tech knowledge production as well as effective interactions with the rest of the world. Reviewing such documents reveals that although ELT is implied as a requirement for the implementation of these plans, this is not explicitly acknowledged by the policy makers (Kiany et al., 2011).

Due to the anxiety over the spread of Western values through ELT, there was a call for a movement towards localisation (Leather & Motallebzadeh, 2015). To this end, the contents of the textbooks were subject to revisions to obviate any trait echoing English culture. In effect, the textbooks are now to disseminate the cultural elements of Iran through English letters (Rassouli & Osam, 2019). In the *Comprehensive policies of the Islamic Republic of Iran regarding globalization* (2004, as cited in Davari & Aghagolzadeh, 2015), English and French are introduced as global languages, which are regarded to be essential for the country's participation in the world. Besides, by accompanying English with other foreign languages, an effort is made to reduce the exclusive status of the English language. In this document, officials are asked to approach English as a necessary tool, but not at the cost of threatening Iranians' national-cultural identity. In another document entitled *The fundamental transformation of education* (Ministry of Education, 2011), the study of foreign languages is introduced as an optional course in the curriculum, provided that it can stabilise and strengthen the Islamic-Iranian identity.

Although not all of the statements in these documents have been put into effect (French is not part of the curriculum, and English is not an "optional" course), they indicate the ambivalent position of the policy makers. More importantly, reviewing these documents reveals that a totally new role has been defined for ELT (Atai & Mazlum, 2013): it has to be orchestrated for bolstering the "Islamic-Iranian identity" of the students.

Due to the contradictory positions of policy makers, there have been very few officially-stated documents concerning ELT, the majority being policy segments rather than coherently-structured policies (Mirhosseini & Khodakarami, 2015). Even in this small number of documents, the term *foreign* language teaching has been used rather than *English* language teaching. This suggests a sense of prudence and uncertainty underlying the statements. This is why curriculum planners have to resort to those documents set by the High Council of Cultural Revolution or the High Council of Education for ELT planning (Atai & Mazlum 2013).

The fact that many of the specified goals are not achieved in practice exacerbates the situation. For instance, according to *the National Curriculum Document* (National Curriculum, 2009), the high school graduates are expected to be able to read intermediate level texts, comprehend them and write a paragraph or a short essay. The expected proficiency for high-school graduates has not been satisfied in reality (Hayati & Mashhadi, 2010). It is argued that this is a consequence of the mismatch between statements of policy and their realisation at lower levels (Mirhosseini & Khodakarami, 2015).

The chasm between planning and practice probably stems from the highly centralised policymaking rigmarole in the Ministry of Education, whereby all the decisions are dictated, and the curriculum is centrally administered in a top-down manner, teachers are not involved, and students' needs are not assessed (Aghagolzadeh & Davari, 2017); Atai & Mazlum, 2013;. Not only the syllabus but also the c ourse contents, exams and textbooks are steered centrally, leaving little flexibility for any change in schools. In fact, teachers are restricted from taking any initiatives such as adapting to local needs. Even the communication channel between planners and teachers, which consists of annual meetings to which head teachers in all provinces are invited, is of a top-down, one-way nature (Atai & Mazlum, 2013).

Another reason for the gap is the fact that the national-level policies cannot be re-examined or changed by the planners (Atai & Mazlum, 2013). As passive conduits of these policies, curriculum planners are only in charge of operationalising such policies in this hierarchical system. They are supervised by higher-level authorities based on whether they have satisfied the pre-planned goals, and dare not make any modifications. What exacerbates the situation is the fact that, as Atai and Mazlum (2013) contended, the mechanism for appointing personnel in the Ministry is in a way that the politico-ideological beliefs of the candidates are as important as their expertise. Hence, some members of the team are short of professional qualifications but are included in the team owing to their commitment to Islam and the Islamic Revolution.

ELT in the three initial decades after the Revolution

Before the Islamic Revolution, the common methodology used for ELT in Iranian schools was in line with the global trend of the time (Foroozandeh, 2011). However, in the post-Revolution period, it seemed to digress from the trend. Since for Iranian society (during 1980s-2000s) English served primarily as a means for obtaining new knowledge, reading comprehension was underscored by the mainstream system of education (Sadeghi & Richards, 2015). A mixture of *Grammar Translation Method* (GTM), *Reading Method*, and *Audiolingual Method* (ALM) was adopted as the prevailing methodology.

Textbooks were developed based on GTM, which seemed to be the only choice for ELT at that time, considering the reality of unequipped schools, crowded classrooms, unmotivated students, and unqualified teachers (Rahimi & Nabilou, 2009). The series of ELT textbooks used during this period was titled *Right Path to English*, and were taught for almost three decades with only subtle modifications (Kheirabadi & Alavimoghaddam, 2016). These textbooks were criticised for an imbalanced treatment of the four language skills, structural-based design, and lack of supplementary materials such as audio files and teacher guides (Ghorbani, 2011). Listening skill was virtually non-existent; speaking was confined merely to brief dialogues and a handful of drills (focused primarily on grammar practice). The activities asked the learners to regurgitate mechanical sentence patterns, or to complete decontextualised writing drills. To summarise, the books kept zeroing in on grammar, vocabulary and reading comprehension development, failing to enable the learners' to express themselves.

As for assessment, perhaps the most fundamental issue was excessive use of summative, discrete-point tests including multiple-choice questions (Moradkhani & Shirazizadeh, 2017). These types of tests lend themselves very well to the evaluation of bits of isolated language knowledge (Razavipour & Rezagah, 2018). Accordingly, students would not attempt to improve their communicative skills, as the exams required them to prepare only for discrete lexical and grammatical bits and surface reading (Razavipour & Rezagah, 2018), with no attention to the communicative components. This approach to measurement was in vogue, notwithstanding evidence of a negative washback effect (Riazi & Razavipour, 2011; Safarnavadeh, 2004).

A further problem with assessment, according to Akbari (2015), may be ascribed to the fact that in Iran parents and school authorities assume that good schools are the ones that produce high scores on the standardised tests, which would indubitably overshadow teachers' beliefs. The *raison d'être* of the teachers then became to get the students prepared for their exams, instead of making them communicatively proficient (Akbari, 2015). Hence, the students set targets for passing the course through test-wiseness rather than through learning (Akbari, 2015). Teachers also had other problems in terms of assessment and lacked guidelines on how to design the final exams. The only guidelines given to them stipulated what to test and the extent to which each section was important in scoring (Atai & Mazlum, 2013).

Another major issue in this period was teachers' low level of English proficiency, fluency and pronunciation (Aghagolzadeh & Davari, 2015; Moradkhani & Shirazizadeh, 2017; Hayati & Mashhadi, 2010). Teachers lacked the motivation to improve their proficiency and teaching skills (Iranmehr & Davari, 2018; Kheirabadi & Alavi Moghaddam, 2019). This might be due to their being dissatisfied with their profession and feeling unfulfilled, things that are deemed pivotal for "success or otherwise of education in general and language education in specific" (Razavipour & Yousefi, 2017, p. 842). They were recruited based upon the results of a paper-and-pencil test and the successful completion of a two-to-four-year teacher training program, and lacked pedagogical knowledge of English or adequate education to teach language skills (Aghagolzadeh & Davari, 2015; Moradkhani & Shirazizadeh, 2017). They tended to overuse L1 (Rahimi & Nabilou, 2009) as they were not provided with any teaching guidelines, professional supervision and pre/in-service training programs (Aghagolzadeh & Davari, 2015; Atai & Mazlum, 2013; Kheirabadi & Alavi Moghaddam, 2019).

Furthermore, teachers were hard-pressed to cover the textbooks in the limited time allocated (Iranmehr & Davari, 2018), and, in crowded, unequipped classes, the consequence being a skipping of essential skills and strategies for ELT. Additionally, teachers were evaluated in a similar process to the teachers of other courses, mostly based on student pass rates, rather than upon ELT-related criteria (Atai & Mazlum, 2013).

ELT in the recent decade (2013 to date)

During the 1979-2013 period, minor modifications were made to the ELT curriculum. After about three decades of inaction (due to the authorities' political orientation), resistance was moderately overcome (Davari & Aghagolzadeh, 2015). Scientific developments, technological advances and the unavoidable rise of globalisation drew the authorities' attention to the necessity of communicating with other countries. The unacceptable performance of the ELT in the mainstream education also left room for the private sector to thrive (Davari & Aghagolzadeh, 2015). Thus, authorities in the Ministry of Education came to recognise the need for a radical paradigm change in the structural approaches of ELT, to communicative language teaching (CLT) (Asadi, Kiany, Akbari & Ghafar Samar, 2016). As many other countries had initiated this change much earlier, it was high time that Iran undertook such reforms.

In response to the Ministry's call to develop new materials for "active meaning-oriented communication" (Sadeghi & Richards, 2015), new textbooks were developed by Iran's Curriculum Development Center. Policy makers officially proclaimed CLT as the central methodology governing the books (Foroozandeh & Forouzani, 2015). Titled *English for Schools*, the new series consisted of six textbooks for the six grades of high school, intended to teach both literacy and communication. The books were divided into two 3-volume series entitled *Prospect 1 to 3*, designed for junior high school (grades 7-9) and *Vision 1 to 3* for senior high school (grades 10-12). *Prospect 1, 2,* and *3* have been respectively used for mainstream education since 2013, 2014, and 2015, and the *Vision* series since 2016 (Ajideh & Panahi, 2016).

Inspired by the CEFR bands, these books have been designed thematically, in which each lesson focuses on a central idea or function (Kheirabadi & Alavimoghaddam, 2016). The books contain no separate sections for grammar or vocabulary, since an attempt was made to teach these language components through an inductive approach (Yaghoubinejad, Zarrinabadi & Nejadansari, 2016).

In the prefaces to the textbooks, it is explained that communicative competence, strategic competence, self-efficacy, learner autonomy, problem solving, and meaning making are the goals that the books seek to achieve (Razavipour & Rezagah, 2018). It is, however, emphasised that the CLT approach used for the development of the books is not the one adopted by Western societies; rather, it is in line with the Islamic-national culture of Iran. In the preface to *Vision 1*, a number of objectives have been enumerated, including simultaneous attention to the four language skills, inclusion of a variety of activities and passages, emphasizing experiential learning, and cooperative learning (Khadem Hashemi & Maftoon, 2019). Moreover, students are encouraged to participate actively in the process of learning, and use L2 in classes (Davari & Aghagolzadeh, 2015).

In the new curriculum, the students are supposed to be assessed both summatively and formatively (Foroozandeh & Forouzani, 2015). To assess communicative competence, curriculum developers have made a shift from assessment of the bits of language knowledge to the assessment of communicative ability (Razavipour & Rezagah, 2018). All of the four language skills are to be assessed, and holistic scores are given for making pass/fail decisions (Ekstam & Sarvandy, 2017). For Grades 7 and 8, the final exams are developed by classroom teachers, who are provided with some guidelines and sample tests. However, at the end of Grade 9 (lower secondary school finishing), a national standard test is given to students (Foroozandeh & Forouzani, 2015).

Was the reform successful?

A number of studies have demonstrated that the new textbooks, compared to the previous ones, are a significant step forward for ELT in Iran (e.g. Asadi et al., 2016; Kheirabadi & Alavimoghaddam, 2016; Rahimi & Alavi, 2017). These studies indicated that the new textbooks are perceived to be more attractive, as they are developed based on current theories of ELT (Rahimi & Alavi, 2017). Teachers in some studies are shown to be satisfied with students' performance, compared to their experiences with the previous books (Foroozandeh & Forouzani, 2015). Other advantages involve the theme-based design, supplementary materials (e.g. teacher's guide and workbook), attention to learners' communicative needs (Asadi et al., 2016), integration of the four language skills, suggestion of group-work and pair-work in teacher's guide, photo dictionary attached to the book, and emphasis on meaning before form (Foroozandeh & Forouzani, 2015).

However, the innovation offered by the reform did not prove to be as satisfactory as expected. A number of studies raised doubts about its reliability. It is argued that the main barrier to the success of the reform is the top-down way in which it was implemented, in a system characterised by a hierarchical power distribution (Razavipour & Rezagah, 2018).

The consequence is that the curriculum change is designed based on the coercive-power model of change, which assumes that teachers can be made to do whatever they are told through authority and sanctions (Rahimi & Alavi, 2017). Hence, practising teachers, as Razavipour and Rezagah (2018) observed, could not embrace the reform, and merely developed superficial conformity with the reform policies. They felt that their agency was not appreciated, because their opinions were not sought, and they were not at the table when the reform was being planned (Carless, 2013). Thus, they could not take ownership of the reform (Rahimi & Alavi, 2017; Razavipour & Rezagah, 2018), lost their interests in the innovation and resumed practising their own old teaching styles (Rahimi & Alavi, 2017).

Under the coercive-power model of change, there is no need to conduct needs analyses. A number of studies criticised the reform for not being built on a prior, systematic research-oriented needs assessment (e.g. Asadi et al, 2016; Khadem Hashemi & Maftoon, 2019). Students' needs were not analysed, classroom realities were not addressed and the contextual dimensions of teachers' work were not considered. In fact, overly ambitious and unrealistic objectives were set for the reform, without accounting for the limitations and idiosyncrasies of the educational context (Aghagolzadeh & Davari, 2017; Asadi et al., 2016; Rahimi & Alavi, 2017; Razavipour & Rezagah, 2018).

In general, the inconsideration of the characteristics of the educational context can cause great strain and pressure on teachers who attempt to adapt to the new method (Walshaw & Anthony, 2007). This situation was intensified by the lack of pilot analyses (Asadi et al., 2016; Khadem Hashemi & Maftoon, 2019). As Carless (2013) noted, for an innovation to be successful, it should be based on a small-scale success which has already produced promising results.

A number of studies have discussed the missing infrastructures required for implementing CLT. These infrastructures are addressed in detail below, in nine categories: budget, teachers, assessment, textbooks, schools, students, time, classrooms, and motivation.

1. Budget

The low budget allocated for the ELT reform project and the shortage of human and physical resources were the first factors (Asadi et al., 2016). Asadi et al. (2016) illustrated that *Prospect 1* cannot compete with its internationally successful rivals which are under the auspices of internationally recognised household names like Cambridge or British Council. The low budget did not allow the materials developers to draw on sufficient resources including pictures and video recordings (Asadi et al., 2016). The materials were prepared rather hastily, without performing any systematic needs analysis or piloting (Asadi et al, 2016; Khadem Hashemi & Maftoon, 2019).

The low budget allocated by the Ministry affected the reform not only at the planning level, but also at the implementation stage. It caused shortcomings in practice, including inaccessibility of hard copies of the teacher's guide, poor distribution or paucity of

audiovisual aids, lack of supplementary materials and facilities such as high-quality players (particularly in rural or deprived areas) (Asadi et al. 2016; Foroozandeh & Forouzani, 2015; Hayati & Mashhadi, 2010; Kheirabadi & Alavimoghaddam, 2016; Moradkhani & Shirazizadeh, 2017; Rahimi & Alavi, 2017; Razavipour & Rezagah, 2018). Razavipour and Rezagah (2018) documented teachers' complaints regarding schools' insufficient resources to deal with tests of listening comprehension (especially in poor urban schools). In their study, the teachers raised issues regarding poor audio equipment, which hindered or lengthened the process of administering the listening test. Teachers, who are the main victims in countries with poor socio-economic conditions (Gholaminejad, 2020b), had to play the audio separately for each row, because they had to hold the player near the students' ears.

2. Teachers

Another problem was teachers' inability to carry out CLT efficiently. Accustomed to the traditional GTM, teachers now had to adapt to the unknown CLT principles. They neither had the power nor were professionally empowered to do so. To familiarise the teachers with this shocking "Tsunami" (Kheirabadi & Alavimoghaddam, 2016, p. 623), a number of senior teachers from different parts of the country were invited to workshops in Tehran. They were then assigned to hold workshops in their own cities for passing on the information to the rest of teachers in a cascading manner (Foroozandeh & Forouzani, 2015). This cascading approach and the limited access of teachers to the workshops and teacher guides were not enough to implement the sudden change (Iranmehr & Davari, 2018). According to Razavipour and Rezagah (2018), teachers were more likely to change *what* to teach rather than *how* to teach; they *thought* they had changed their practices while they had not, as they had to adopt something which even they could not digest completely.

Teachers' working conditions needed to be adapted to the reform. In reality, however, teachers' working conditions were still the same, including their access to audiovisual aids, time pressure and lack of professional support (Rahimi & Alavi, 2017). The curriculum change only increased teachers' responsibilities and workload. This difficult situation began to generate teachers' resistance and negative attitudes towards CLT (Foroozandeh & Forouzani, 2015; Rahimi & Alavi, 2017).

As teachers lacked appropriate educational preparation for the new paradigm, they tended to switch to the traditional approaches and their own old teaching habits (Asadi et al., 2016; Iranmehr & Davari, 2018; Rahimi & Alavi, 2017). Razavipour and Rezagah (2018) reported that teachers were not convinced that there was a problem to be remedied, and therefore did not perceive the reform to be a practical solution. Rather, they saw it as a bureaucratic formality, with no commitment to put it into action.

As Razavipour and Rezagah (2018) observed, teachers were not able to devise and implement communicative activities; they simply asked students to memorise the dialogues. They also had difficulty assessing skills. They did not know how/when to use

holistic or analytic assessments or both in speaking assessment (Razavipour & Rezagah, 2018). Although CLT recommends the use of English as the medium of instruction, Sadeghi and Richards (2015) observed that in the majority of the classes, mother tongue was the medium. Teachers' poor language proficiency exacerbated the situation (Asadi et al., 2016).

In fact, CLT was imposed on teachers, who were not selected for the job based on appropriate educational criteria[1], and who were also needing further training in language proficiency, fluency, and pedagogical skills. Far more importantly, the socio-economic conditions of the teachers did not allow them to allocate sufficient time to CLT, because assessing students' writing, for instance, is more time-consuming than scoring multiple-choice tests (Razavipour & Rezagah, 2018). Teachers had little, if any, inclination to be *au courant* with current developments in the SLA field and be savvy with alternative theories and scientific concepts of the discipline (Safari & Rashidi, 2017).

3. Assessment

The examinations or assessment practices in general retained their original pre-reform formats (Ekstam & Sarvandy, 2017). Razavipour and Rezagah (2018) observed that the reform was of little avail in affecting the dyed-in-the-wool attitudes and practices of teachers conducting language assessment. Moreover, they found that teachers did not conform to the reform as much as they should. They were accustomed to the discrete-point testing and changing that was a daunting task. Akbari (2015) further noted that although formative assessment was encouraged, summative assessment was still in vogue. In other words, the students' performance on the exams was prioritised over their real life performance.

The teachers in a study by Razavipour and Rezagah (2018) lacked the skills and knowledge necessary for the reform, especially on performance language testing. According to the authors, the tests developed by the teachers were not aligned with CLT. However, the test items could not provide opportunities for assessing the skills in an integrated fashion, also they lacked the meaningful communication element, authentic context or "creative language output" (Brown, 2005, p. 22). Although the use of grammar testing had decreased, it was still included in midterm tests, as the tests developed by teachers were not under any external scrutiny. These all indicate that they were not accepting the paradigm shift wholeheartedly (Razavipour & Rezagah, 2018).

Another pertinent issue that hampered the paradigm shift was the popularity of the discrete-point tests, dominant in the nationally held entrance examinations for universities. These exams do not test the communicative competence of the candidates (Foroozandeh & Forouzani, 2015). Rather, they evaluate the reading and grammar knowledge best

---

[1] In addition to the scores in the entrance examination, the evaluations of the student teachers are made based on other matters such as politico-religious criteria, Islamic beliefs, appropriate conduct, and physical fitness (Sadeghi & Ghaderi, 2018).

covered by former course books and this can indubitably produce a negative washback effect (Foroozandeh & Forouzani, 2015).

4. Textbooks

A number of studies investigated the efficiency of the newly-designed books. Khansir and Mahammadifard (2015) found that *Prospect 1* was beyond the English proficiency of the students. Similarly, *Vision 1* was analysed by Khadem Hashemi and Maftoon (2019), who reported that a mid-point evaluation was given by both students and teachers. The books have also been criticised for not meeting the communicative and cognitive needs of students, as well as lacking the essential components of CLT (Goodarzi, Weisi & Yousofi, 2020). Adopting the approach in Caleffi's study (2016), Asakereh, Nouroddin, Yousofi and Weisi (2019) examined the speaking and listening activities of ELT textbooks used in Iranian junior and senior high schools, viz. the *Prospect* and *Vision* series, with reference to the features of English as a *lingua franca* (ELF). Their critical content analysis unveiled that the two series fail to provide sufficient exposure to various cultural elements, characters and situational contexts. Moreover, their scrutiny revealed that the textbooks do not provide sufficient opportunities for English teachers to carry out the socio-cultural and sociolinguistic realities of the English language in their English classes. According to Asakereh et al. (2019), this appears to have rendered the presentations of English in the textbook series inauthentic and unrealistic.

A frequently raised issue about the *Prospect* series was that there was no explicit grammar instruction (Foroozandeh & Forouzani, 2015), although the series was claimed to be designed for teaching both communication and literacy skills (Asadi et al., 2016; Foroozandeh & Forouzani, 2015). This would bring about problems with accuracy or literacy skills. Teachers dispraised the overemphasis on CLT at the expense of accuracy-oriented skills (Davari & Aghagolzadeh, 2015; Leather & Motallebzadeh, 2015; Razavipour & Rezagah, 2018). As the teachers in Asadi et al.'s (2016) study stated, students failed to satisfy the needs of the workbook tasks and final exams due to the lack of accuracy. Teachers in some studies (e.g. Asadi et al., 2016; Foroozandeh & Forouzani, 2015) also mentioned that they preferred teaching letters of the alphabet at their own pace rather than following the book's order, as the books were difficult for the students with no prior background in English. Many teachers confessed to their deviation from the textbooks by explicitly teaching grammar when grammatical questions were asked by the students (Ahour & Golpour, 2013).

Another issue was the over-localisation of the contents (Asadi, et al., 2016). Although previous books were already free of any L2 cultural element, the post-reform textbooks additionally served the mission of strengthening the Islamic-Iranian identity. In other words, materials developers after the reform not only did not include the L2 culture through using authentic materials, but also eliminated any possible trace of it, and used the textbooks as a tool to permeate ideologically-charged themes and home culture. The contents may be some translated excerpts or words gleaned from the Islamic-Iranian sources. This is incongruous with the principles of the CEFR and CLT (Lappalainen,

2011). This (over)presentation of the home culture does not foster intercultural communicative competence (Ajideh & Panahi, 2016).

Another issue with the textbooks (as a consequence of home culture over emphasis) is including characters which students can hardly relate to — such as Rajaee or Beheshti (two renowned post-Revolution heroes) — which can be demotivating as they are unknown to teenagers (Asadi et al*.,* 2016); they can be replaced with more recent, famous characters such as celebrities in sport, cinema or even cartoons (Asadi et al*.,* 2016).

5. Schools

An important infrastructure factor which should have been changed before implementing the reform was the regime of school accountability. That is, schools unsuccessful in producing good grades are subject to some bizarre, tacit penalisations. Principals, therefore, press for teachers to minimise the failing of students. Given that there is no agency monitoring the quality control of the final grades, teachers freely inflate the scores to give principals what they want and thereby save themselves any trouble (Razavipour & Rezagah, 2018). Additionally, teachers perceive that the lower the scores of the students, the lower their assessment literacy is judged. This foregrounds their inability to implement the reform properly (Razavipour & Rezagah, 2018).

6. Students

Another problem was heterogeneity of the classes. This is a ubiquitous problem for English teachers in Iran, making it difficult to manage classes (Asadi et al., 2016). The mushrooming growth of private language institutes has also increased these mixed-level classrooms. Students from all parts of the country (i.e. privileged or otherwise), are treated the same in the ELT curriculum, regardless of their background (Foroozandeh & Forouzani, 2015). Reform planners needed to consider that the population of students was not limited to only the privileged students with good English backgrounds (Asadi et al., 2016).

7. Time

Another problem was allocated time for the course. Learning a language requires a considerable amount of classroom time. In fact, scholars such as Lightbown and Spada (2020) have regarded it as the best possible predictor for the L2 learning outcomes. Allocating adequate classroom time is obviously more essential in EFL contexts in which the learners are exposed to a lesser amount of comprehensible input (Gass, MacKey & Pica, 1998).

According to the curriculum of the reformed educational system, students officially start to study English as they enter the secondary school (i.e. high school) at age thirteen (i.e. Grade 7). In fact, ELT, which in the pre-reform period used to start at age 12, now begins at age 13. In the new curriculum, the time allotted has been reduced (Davari &

Aghagolzadeh, 2015). For each English course about 80 minutes is allocated per week for junior high school, and about three hours for senior high school. A high school graduate has already studied English for six academic years (September-May), aggregate to at least 500 hours during this period. This is far below the minimum amount of exposure according to CLT (Foroozandeh & Forouzani, 2015). Too many official holidays are marked in the Iranian calendar and that worsens the situation (Kheirabadi & Alavi Moghaddam, 2019). Since there are a host of different factors involved in the process of language learning, defining the exact amount of time required to learn a language is difficult. However, employing the CLT, especially in an EFL context, requires substantial time allocation. On the other hand, the "drip-feed' instruction, which is receiving a smattering amount of English instruction over long periods of time (Stern, 1985), can hardly produce good language users.

Asadi et al. (2016) showed that the teachers participating in their study believed that time constraints for instruction can negatively influence the performance of both the teachers and students. Likewise, Kheirabadi and Alavimoghaddam (2016) and Rahimi and Alavi (2017) observed that according to the teachers in their study, the amount of time specified in the book series was too short. The teachers clarified that the amount of specified time violates the principles established for CLT (Kheirabadi & Alavi Moghaddam, 2019), which accompanied by overcrowded, mixed-level classrooms makes the approach impracticable.

8. Classrooms

As a critical infrastructure for CLT implementation, class size was not defined based on CLT (Moradkhani & Shirazizadeh, 2017; Rahimi & Alavi, 2017; Yaghoubinejad, et al., 2016). One of the fundamental principles of CLT is to use pair and group work in classes in order to generate student-student interaction. Yet, the reality of the inevitable large classes in Iran makes the shift from GTM to CLT impossible (Foroozandeh & Forouzani, 2015).

An ideal class, according to Brown (2001), should not exceed 12 students. As Hayati and Mashhadi (2010) observed, classrooms in public schools of Iran have typically been overcrowded, with students sitting in rows and receiving language input from the teacher (mostly in monologues). After CLT became the dominant methodology, according to Iranmehr and Davari (2018), classrooms remained overcrowded with students. In an interview with the *Financial Tribune* (2016), one of the teachers aired his voice by criticising the "inappropriate student-teacher ratio'. He explained "I have 37 students in the classroom, so I cannot devote even two minutes of time to practice language skills with each student".

9. Motivation

Another barrier for the success of the CLT is the limited functions of English in Iran and the paucity of the opportunities for students to use English, which inevitably lowers their motivation. Generally speaking, in order to grapple with the requirements of the

information explosion epoch, as well as to access the state-of-the-art technology and scientific resources, an efficient proficiency level in English is essential for Iranian experts (Akbari, 2015). However, for the majority in Iran, English is a foreign (not a second) language, which is just spoken in the academic milieus. As soon as the learners step out of the English classrooms, they no longer get a chance to practise it. Iranians do not need English for their daily activities and hardly ever find the opportunity to visit a foreigner (Foroozandeh & Forouzani, 2015). According to Sadeghi and Richards (2015), English is generally used on the public signs and almost all domestic products or clothing items. In the social media, email or text messaging, letters from the English alphabet may be used by the young to express Persian words. While rarely are movies broadcast in English, there are a few local channels with broadcasts in English as well as a few newspapers, academic gatherings and conferences in English. A certain level of English proficiency is an advantage, or even an essential requirement, for getting employed in numerous Iranian organisations.

What one can observe in the Iranian society is that the role English plays in the current epoch as a *lingua franca* for creating relations with foreign countries is virtually overlooked. Rarely can learners or teachers travel to other countries to be given the chance of interacting with English speakers. Furthermore, there are few places such as hotels, tourist sites and business firms where tourists are to be found. There are only a few English speaking foreigners in the country working in the business sector. Thus, little face-to-face interaction with English speakers can be observed. It should be added that, having access to satellite TV (as a potential source of authentic materials) is prohibited by the Iranian government; this banning boils down to the fact that both the policy makers and clergymen in Iran deem many of the programs broadcast through the mentioned channel as neither appropriate nor moral. This is another facet which represents Iran as a *sui generis* nation-state in the Middle East or even the world (Akbari, 2015).

All in all, the political sanctions, limited interactions with English-speaking countries, limited reception of tourists, and the precautious preventive policies of the authorities to reduce Iran's dependence on a foreign language have brought about a situation in which learning English is not a necessity for the majority of ordinary people. Kheirabadi and Alavi Moghaddam (2019) argued that rarely is English used in society, as an upshot of there being few interactional opportunities with the world. Since most of the Iranian universities are not international, high school students lack a serious motivation to enhance their English skills.

Akbari (2015) argued that the paucity of opportunities for students to use the language communicatively is the major hurdle in learning English, which is why she believes that CLT is more suitable for ESL contexts. According to Ekstam and Sarvandy (2017), the low usefulness of learning English has led to growing a formally-oriented learning atmosphere in the ELT classrooms which, as Gardner (2010) stated, could negatively affect the general motivation of the learners. Indeed, lack of necessity would reduce their motivation for learning.

Concluding remarks

The present paper reviewed the post-Revolution status of ELT in Iran. Having failed to produce proficient English learners, the post-Revolution curriculum underwent a reform in 2013. However, the incompatibility between the idealistic goals set by the planners and the real situation experienced by practitioners is a clear manifestation that the reform was implemented without prior analysis, and without sufficient infrastructure (Rahimi & Alavi, 2017). Indeed, the top-down approach to the reform implementation is primarily to blame for the observed failure. Instead of following an assumption-based approach to reform the ELT curriculum, the curriculum developers first need to investigate the characteristics of the Iranian educational context in terms of the needs, interests, problems, everyday experiences, and difficulties facing a variety of students living across the country. Besides, prior to implementing the newly developed curriculum, it should be checked through proper piloting, something which was conspicuously absent here.

The curriculum change, as was shown, was limited to bringing about simply a change in "textbooks" (Davari & Aghagolzadeh, 2015). However, the textbook is just one component of the process of curriculum reform. If other components of the educational system are not taken into consideration, and if the necessary infrastructures are not modified, the reform cannot succeed. Apparently, the curriculum does not need just a reform, but a transformation of the whole system.

A number of infrastructures are vital for the implementation of a CLT-centred curriculum. First, sufficient budget needs to be allocated for the reform designers so that they have access to the necessary resources and can conduct pilot studies and needs analyses. Sufficient budget is also needed for the classrooms to be equipped with necessary supplementary materials and audiovisual aids, and for the teachers to have access to teacher's guides. Second, the teachers need to be well trained about CLT through attending more pre/in-service programs and workshops. Teachers' working conditions should also adapt to the new method. Third, teachers need also to be trained on the what, how, and why of performance language testing. Besides, the socio-economic conditions of the teachers also need to be improved. Furthermore, the discrete-point tests need to be replaced by integrative skill-based testing types in the entrance examinations of universities. Fourth, textbooks need to be developed by a team of experienced CLT experts. Literacy should be attended to as much as communication; besides, some L2 cultural elements are necessary inclusions. Fifth, the regime of school accountability should be radically reformed so that teachers are not coerced to inflate students' scores. Sixth, the students in each classroom need to be more homogeneous; they need to be placed in each classroom based on their proficiency, rather than grade. Seventh, a sufficient amount of time needs to be allocated for the course. Eighth, the class size need to be defined based on CLT. Finally, students' motivation should be increased through an increase in the use of English learning in society.

The prerequisite for satisfying the mentioned infrastructures is to develop a set of reasonable and cohesive ELT-specific policies (Davari & Aghagolzadeh, 2015). For that to

happen, policy makers need to be educated and reminded of the inevitable fact that today English is the global *lingua franca* which is more often than not used by "non-native speakers" of the language. English is not an "alien language", and does not belong to any specific country. It is an international language to communicate with the world as a conduit for the cultural interchanges with other nations, and dialogues with other civilisations (Akbari, 2015). Furthermore, they must acknowledge and account for the plurality of English as one of the main developments in TESOL over the past few decades, thanks to the scholarship of world Englishes (WE) and the wider paradigm of global Englishes (Tardy, Reed, Slinkard & LaMance, 2021).

Ghosn-Chelala (2020, p.3) suggested that instead of educating students to improve national identity, we need to adopt a global citizenship education which promotes "appreciation for, and commitment to, universal values, including interconnectedness, intercultural understanding and diversity, multiple levels of identity, social justice, peace, and sustainability". These rather utopian recommendations aside, the future predicted by Aghagolzadeh and Davari (2017) for ELT in the mainstream schools of Iran is not a promising one. As they argued, the political context of Iranian society – with state decision-makers staunchly adhering to their peremptory control and management of the educational realms on the one hand, and the shortcomings in the existing equipment and facilities of the governmental educational system on the other — will put mainstream schools in a difficult position in the competition against its prestigious private sector counterpart.

References

Aghagolzadeh, F. & Davari, H. (2017). English education in Iran: From ambivalent policies to paradoxical practices. In R. Kirkpatrick (Ed.), *English language education policy in the Middle East and North Africa* (pp. 47-62). Cham: Springer. https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-319-46778-8_4

Ahour, T. & Golpour, F. (2013). Iranian new junior high school book (Prospect 1) Weighted against material evaluation checklist from teachers' perspective. *Journal of English Language Pedagogy and Practice, 6*(13), 16-35. http://jal.iaut.ac.ir/article_523993.html

Ajideh, P. & Panahi, M. (2016). An analysis of culture-related content in English textbooks for Iranian students entitled 'Prospect' and 'Vision' series. *International Journal of Language and Linguistics, 3*(6), 87-93. http://ijllnet.com/journals/Vol_3_No_6_December_2016/10.pdf

Asadi, M., Kiany, G. R., Akbari, R., & Samar, R. G. (2016). Program evaluation of the new English textbook (Prospect 1) in the Iranian Ministry of Education. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies, 6*(2), 291-301. http://academypublication.com/ojs/index.php/tpls/article/view/tpls0602291301

Asakereh, A., Yousofi, N. & Weisi, H. (2019). Critical content analysis of English textbooks used in the Iranian education system: Focusing on ELF features. *Issues in Educational Research*, 29(4), 1016-1038. http://www.iier.org.au/iier29/asakereh.pdf

Atai, M. R. & Mazlum, F. (2013). English language teaching curriculum in Iran: Planning and practice. *The Curriculum Journal,* 24(3), 389-411. https://doi.org/10.1080/09585176.2012.744327

Borjian, M. (2013). *English in post-revolutionary Iran: From indigenization to internationalization.* Bristol: Multilingual Matters. https://www.multilingual-matters.com/page/detail/English-in-PostRevolutionary-Iran/?k=9781847699084

Brown, J. D. (2005). *Testing in language programs: A comprehensive guide to English language assessment.* New York: McGraw-Hill.

Carless, D. (2013). Innovation in language teaching and learning. In C. Chapelle (Ed.), *The encyclopedia of applied linguistics.* Chichester: Blackwell Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781405198431 [also at http://web.edu.hku.hk/f/acadstaff/412/2013_Innovation-in-language-teaching-and-learning.pdf]

Brown, H. D. (2001). *Teaching by principles.* White Plains: Addison Wesley Longman, Inc.

Davari, H. & Aghagolzadeh, F. (2015). To teach or not to teach? Still an open question for the Iranian educational system. In C. Kennedy (Ed.), *English language teaching in the Islamic republic of Iran: Innovations, trends and challenges* (pp. 13-22). London: British Council. https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/english-language-teaching-islamic-republic-iran-innovations-trends-challenges

Ekstam, J. M. & Sarvandy, E. (2017). English language teaching in Iran: Tradition versus modernity. *Chinese Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 40(1), 112-119. https://doi.org/10.1515/cjal-2017-0007

Farhady, H., Hezaveh, F. S. & Hedayati, H. (2010). Reflections on foreign language education in Iran. *TESL-EJ,* 13(4), 1-18. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ898203

Financial Tribune (2016). Poor quality of English teaching in schools. *Financial Tribune*, 27 February. https://financialtribune.com/articles/people/37215/poor-quality-of-english-teaching-in-schools

Foroozandeh, E. (2011). History of high school English course books in Iran: 1318-1389 (1939-2010). *Roshd Foreign Language Teaching Journal,* 13(4), 37-44. https://www.noormags.ir/view/en/articlepage/931220/history-of-high-school-english-course-books-in-iran-1318-1389-1939-2010

Foroozandeh, E. & Forouzani, M. (2015). Developing school English materials for the new Iranian educational system. In C. Kennedy (Ed.), *English language teaching in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Innovations, trends and challenges* (pp. 59-72). London: British Council. https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/english-language-teaching-islamic-republic-iran-innovations-trends-challenges

Ganji, M., Ketabi, S. & Shahnazari, M. (2018). English teacher training courses in Iranian private language institutes: Issues and options. *Issues in Educational Research*, 28(2), 367-384. http://www.iier.org.au/iier28/ganji.pdf

Gardner, R. C. (2010). *Motivation and second language acquisition: The socio-educational model.* New York: Peter Lang. https://www.peterlang.com/abstract/title/21064

Gass, S. M., MacKey, A. & Pica, T. (1998). The role of input and interaction in second language acquisition: Introduction to the special issue. *The Modern Language Journal,* 82(3), 299-307. https://www.jstor.org/stable/329956

Gholaminejad, R. (2020a). What do Iranian undergraduate students of social vs. natural sciences say about their language needs? *International Journal of Research in English Education,* 5(1), 104-115. https://doi.org/10.29252/ijree.5.1.104

Gholaminejad, R. (2020b). When the evil pops in: Exploring the unheard voices of teachers working in private language schools in Iran concerning supervisory observation. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, online first. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603124.2020.1740795

Ghosn-Chelala, M. (2020). Global citizenship education in conflict-affected settings: Implications of teachers' views and contextual challenges for the Lebanese case. *Teaching and Teacher Education,* 93, article 103078. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2020.103078

Goodarzi, A., Weisi, H. & Yousofi, N. (2020). CLT in Prospect Series: A predictive evaluation of Iranian junior high school English textbooks. *Research in English Language Pedagogy,* 8(1), 195-221. https://doi.org/10.30486/relp.2020.1881368.1162

Hayati, A. M. & Mashhadi, A. (2010). Language planning and language-in-education policy in Iran. *Language Problems and Language Planning,* 34(1), 24-42. https://doi.org/10.1075/lplp.34.1.02hay

Iranmehr, A. & Davari, H. (2018). English language education in Iran: A site of struggle between globalized and localized versions of English. *Iranian Journal of Comparative Education,* 1(2), 70-84. https://www.sid.ir/en/Journal/ViewPaper.aspx?ID=734472

Kennedy, C. (Ed.) (2015). *English language teaching in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Innovations, trends and challenges.* London: British Council. https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/english-language-teaching-islamic-republic-iran-innovations-trends-challenges

Khadem Hashemi, M. & Maftoon, P. (2019). Evaluation of Vision 1, the new high school English textbook. *Roshd Foreign Language Teaching Journal,* 128(34), 49-56. https://www.noormags.ir/view/fa/articlepage/1566137/classroom-research-evaluation-of-vision-1-the-new-high-school-english-textbook

Khansir, A. A. & Mahammadifard, E. (2015). An evaluation of Prospect book (Prospect 1). *Theory and Practice in Language Studies,* 5(3), 485-492. https://doi.org/10.17507/tpls.0503.05

Kheirabadi, R. & Alavimoghaddam, S. B. (2016). Evaluation of Prospect series: A paradigm shift from GTM to CLT in Iran. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research,* 7(3), 619-624. https://dx.doi.org/10.17507/jltr.0703.26

Kheirabadi, R. & Alavi Moghaddam, S. B. (2019). Opportunities and challenges of teaching English as a foreign language in Iran. *Foreign Language Research Journal*, 9(1), 53-70. https://www.sid.ir/en/journal/ViewPaper.aspx?id=728292

Kiany, G. R., Mahdavy, B. & Ghafar Samar, R. (2011). Towards a harmonized foreign language education program in Iran: National policies and English achievement. *Literacy Information and Computer Education Journal,* 2(3), 462-469. http://infonomics-society.ie/wp-content/uploads/licej/published-papers/volume-2-2011/Towards-a-Harmonized-Foreign-Language-Education-Program-in-Iran-National-Policies-and-English-Achievement.pdf

Lappalainen, T. (2011). *Presentation of the American culture in EFL textbooks: An analysis of the cultural content of Finnish EFL textbooks for secondary and upper secondary education.*

Unpublished master's thesis. University of Jyväskylä. http://urn.fi/URN:NBN:fi:jyu-2011050310724

Leather, S. & Motallebzadeh, K. (2015). Effecting methodological change through a trainer-training project: A tale of insider outsider collaboration. In C. Kennedy (Ed.), *English language teaching in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Innovations, trends and challenges* (pp. 161-172). UK: British Council. https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/english-language-teaching-islamic-republic-iran-innovations-trends-challenges

Lightbown, P. & Spada, N. (2020). Teaching and learning L2 in the classroom: It's about time. *Language Teaching,* 53(4), 422-432. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444819000454

Ministry of Education (2011). *The fundamental transformation of education.* Iran: Ministry of education, supreme council of the Cultural Revolution & supreme Council of Education [Persian].

Mirhosseini, S.-A. & Khodakarami, S. (2015). A glimpse of contrasting de jure–de facto ELT policies in Iran. In C. Kennedy (Ed.), *English language teaching in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Innovations, trends and challenges* (pp. 23-32). UK: British Council. https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/english-language-teaching-islamic-republic-iran-innovations-trends-challenges

Moradkhani, S. & Shirazizadeh, M. (2017). Context-based variations in EFL teachers' reflection: The case of public schools versus private institutes in Iran. *Reflective Practice,* 18(2), 206-218. https://doi.org/10.1080/14623943.2016.1267002

National Curriculum (2009). *National curriculum document.* Tehran: The Ministry of Education.

National Vision (2005). *The 20-year national vision of the Islamic Republic of Iran.* Tehran: The Office of the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Rahimi, M. & Alavi, J. (2017). The role of teaching experience in language teachers' perceptions of a top-down curriculum change. *The Curriculum Journal,* 28(4), 479-503. https://doi.org/10.1080/09585176.2017.1344134

Rahimi, M. & Nabilou, Z. (2009). Globalization and EFL curriculum reform in Iran: Challenges and opportunities. *Journal of Technology of Education,* 3(2), 115-124. https://www.sid.ir/en/journal/ViewPaper.aspx?id=178615

Rassouli, A. & Osam, N. (2019). English language education throughout Islamic Republic reign in Iran: Government policies and people's attitudes. *SAGE Open,* 9(2). https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244019858435

Razavipour, K. & Rezagah, K. (2018). Language assessment in the new English curriculum in Iran: Managerial, institutional, and professional barriers. *Language Testing in Asia,* 8, article 9. https://doi.org/10.1186/s40468-018-0061-8

Razavipour, K. & Yousefi, M. (2017). Iranian English language teachers' job satisfaction and organisational climate in public and private schools. *Issues in Educational Research,* 27(4), 842-858. http://www.iier.org.au/iier27/razavipour.pdf

Riazi, A. M. & Razavipour, K. (2011). (In) Agency of EFL teachers under the negative backwash effect of centralized tests. *International Journal of Language Studies,* 5(2), 123-142. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1yVX-yW2yrhm1N2b8ccIjCzf7jgDTinaO/view?usp=sharing

Sadeghi, K. & Richards, J. C. (2015). Teaching spoken English in Iran's private language schools: Issues and options. *English Teaching: Practice & Critique,* 14(2), 210-234.

https://doi.org/10.1108/ETPC-03-2015-0019 [also
https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/069c/4cc9e404e4466c00286ec81dbc59bce18f4a.pdf]

Safari, P. & Rashida, N. (2015). Teacher education beyond transmission: Challenges and opportunities for Iranian teachers of English. *Issues in Educational Research,* 25(2), 187-203. http://www.iier.org.au/iier25/safari.html

Safarnavadeh, K. (2004). *A comparative analysis of the English language curriculum in Iran, Japan, and Pakistan.* Unpublished masters thesis, Teacher Education University, Tehran, Iran.

Soodmand Afshar, H. & Movassagh, H. (2016). EAP education in Iran: Where does the problem lie? Where are we heading? *Journal of English for Academic Purposes,* 22, 132-151. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeap.2016.04.002

Stern, H. H. (1985). The time factor and compact course development. *TESL Canada Journal,* 3(1), 13-27. https://doi.org/10.18806/tesl.v3i1.471

Tardy, C. M., Reed, K., Slinkard, J. R. & LaMance, R. (2021). Exploring global Englishes content and language variation in an academic writing course. *TESOL Journal,* 12(1), e00520. https://doi.org/10.1002/tesj.520

Walshaw, M. & Anthony, G. (2007). Policy implementation: Integrating the personal and the social. *Mathematics Teacher Education and Development,* 8, 5-22. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ836492

Yaghoubinejad, H., Zarrinabadi, N. & Nejadansari, D. (2016). Culture-specificity of teacher demotivation: Iranian junior high school teachers caught in the newly-introduced CLT trap! *Teachers and Teaching,* 23(2), 127-140. https://doi.org/10.1080/13540602.2016.1205015

Razieh Gholaminejad holds a PhD in English Language Teaching from Shahid Beheshti University. Among her research interests are corpus linguistics, English for specific purposes, and academic discourse. In addition to publications in national journals, she has works published by Routledge and John Benjamins Publishing Company.
Email: r_gholaminejad@sbu.ac.ir

Amin Raeisi-Vanani holds an MA in English Language Teaching from Shahid Beheshti University. His research interests include second language reading comprehension, pragmatics, research methodology and vocabulary. His publications have appeared in journals such as TEFL Reporter, Journal of Medical Education and Development and Critical Language & Literary Studies.
Email: amin.reisi@hotmail.com, a_raeisi@sbu.ac.ir