

# Culture and Education: Bringing to Light the Views of Iranian Students of English, French and Arabic Majors towards Learning and Teaching

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## ABSTRACT

The present study investigates the hidden beliefs of BA students of three main language fields in Iran. Employing quantitative metaphor analysis, the conceptions of 300 students of English, French and Arabic were detected on the basis of the three main paradigms in education, namely Behaviorism, Cognitivism, and Situative learning and teaching. The results indicate that the three groups hold the similar beliefs towards the current university education system and share the similar ideals in this respect. The role of culture in education is discussed in light of the results. The findings are also compared with previous studies that have drawn on metaphor analysis in the Iranian context of foreign language education.

**Keywords:** culture, education, language fields, metaphor analysis, undergraduate

## INTRODUCTION

The process of education in every society is embedded in its culture. The Iranian educational system is influenced by a traditional model of learning and teaching (Hashemi, Naderi, Shariatmadari, Naraghi & Mehrabi, 2010). However, when it comes to the field of English Language Teaching (ELT), a different learning environment in English classes is expected. As stated by Talebinezhad and Sadeghi Beniss (2005), "the hot market of English learning has motivated ELT scholars in Iran to study the ways in which English can be learnt optimally" (p. 90). Indeed, ELT in Iran has become a widely established field, nurtured by modern theories and backed by a large body of research, all due to the importance of the English language. Other foreign language fields seem to be deprived of such vast number of resources, innovations, recent models of education, and research-based perspectives in English teaching and learning.

Considering the pioneering role of ELT in introducing new theories of teaching and learning, we hypothesized that ELT can be different from other languages taught in Iran. In fact, the following study aims to compare undergraduate students' perception of learning and teaching of three main language fields in Iran, i.e. English, French, and Arabic, and thus to see whether being familiar with new ideas in ELT has been able to make a difference in the field of English language, despite the traditional cultural

context prevalent in the country. For this purpose, metaphor analysis, which is an acknowledged means of research in the fields of education and applied linguistics (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005), was conducted as an indirect way of delving into the students' mindsets.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Due to its complex nature, the word "culture" is very hard to be defined. According to Hinkel (1999) there are "as many definitions of culture, as fields of inquiry into human societies, groups, systems, behaviors, and activities" (p.1). In its broadest meaning, "culture is a humanly created environment for all our thoughts and actions" (Tepperman, Curtis, Wilson, & Wain, 1994, p.1).

Different models of culture with relation to education have been proposed, all indicating the interrelationship between the culture of a community and its educational system. Hofstede (1986) designed a national culture framework consisting of four dimensions: power distance, individualism vs. collectivism, masculinity vs. femininity, and uncertainty avoidance. Hofstede provided support for the influence of these factors on the perception of education in a country. In another model, Mead (1970) categorized cultural states into three groups: postfigurative in which people learn from wise elders, configurative, in which they learn from their equals, and prefigurative, in which they learn from their juniors. Mead argued that most cultures see education as postfigurative, with teachers passing on information to students and the dominance of academic teaching methods, such as grammar-translation in language teaching. In configurative societies, group work, pair work and task-based learning are implemented. Modern technological societies are often prefigurative, where it is accepted for the young to teach the old, as seen in the case of children teaching their grandparents how to work with computers. According to Cook (2008), the latter cultural state does not exist in language teaching, "unless in certain 'alternative' methods in which the teacher is subordinated to the students' whims" (p.164). The changes in today's world have challenged people to abandon the traditional postfigurative model for a more active state in which they can engage in the construction and reconstruction of new knowledge, skills and values (Hawkins, 1997).

Education in Eastern Asia has been greatly influenced by the Confucian educational philosophy. The Confucian educational model rests on concepts such as memorization, diligence, increase in social status (Wang, 2006), 'one chance' national examinations that mediate social competition and university hierarchy, and a tendency to universal tertiary participation (Simon, 2011).

Some studies have focused on the conflicting nature of East Asian culture with modern, communicative-based approaches. Mak and White (1996) looked into the condition of Chinese ESL students studying in New Zealand in order to explain how exploratory learning methods cause anxiety in those students due to their being used to teacher-centered classrooms. Fetters (1997) showed that recently settled Southeast Asian students are not able to function well in the culture of American schools. Zhao (2007) analyzed the differences in classroom behaviors of Chinese teachers and students and New Zealand teachers and students from cultural perspectives, such as the concepts and views about kinship relationships, functions of education and roles of teachers in the classroom. Huh (2004) used a Korean university setting to examine how students learn English through classroom experiences that challenge their current cultural practices. The study demonstrated how learners coped with the conflicting Vygotskian theories of learning, which were brought about by learning English, and traditional Confucian values as part of their culture.

Hu (2002) discussed how a group of cultural influences prevent many Chinese teachers and students from embracing Communicative Language Teaching in English classes. Following the traditional Chinese model of teaching, which is one of an 'empty-vessel' or a 'pint pot' (Maley, 1982, as cited in Hu, 2002), learning is equal to reception, repetition, review and reproduction (known as the 4Rs) and meticulousness, memorisation, mental activeness, and mastery (known as the 4Ms). Hu (2002) argued that these cultural perceptions of learning along with intolerance of ambiguity and the hierarchical relationship between teachers and students are in potential conflict with methods in which students are required to be verbally active, and engage in light-hearted learning activities.

In the same vein, Cook (2009) investigated the reasons why Japanese teachers trained in teaching programs in Canada were not able to apply what they had learnt in Japanese high school English classes. The study revealed that factors such as entrance examinations, classroom culture, ministry-mandated textbooks, and pressure to conform to standard practices made the implementation of communicative-based approaches unsuccessful.

In western education, Dewey's (1916) democratic learning originated from his belief that the classroom should reflect society outside the classroom. He argued for "democratized classrooms in which students were not simply funneled information but where they participated with the teacher and with each other in Socratic dialogue about subjects near to their own life experiences" (cited in Celce-Murcia, 2001, p. 334). As stated by Scollon (1999), Socratic and Confucian discourses are in contrast with each other, assuming different roles for teachers and students. Shmuck (1985, as cited in Celce-Murcia, 2001) explained Dewey's view of the classroom as the representation of the democratic process in microcosm, whose heart is cooperation in groups. According to him, the embodiment of democracy should be in how students learn to make choices, carry out academic projects together and learn to relate to one another. In the same vein, Freire (1993) introduced the concept of dialogic education as a response to what he called the "culture of silence" in colonized contexts. He argued that through dialogue there can be an alteration from the "transmission" model of education toward a democratic, participatory and "transformative" one. While the transmission model of education sees knowledge as a package that can be transferred from one person to another, the transformative model involves critical awareness of reality and active participation to transform it.

## Metaphor Analysis

Metaphor analysis has opened a new line of research in language pedagogy. Metaphors provide a powerful tool for looking not only into language learners' frame of mind, but also into prospective or experienced teachers' professional thinking (e.g. De Guerrero & Villamil, 2002; Ellis, 2008; Saban, Kocberker, & Saban, 2007; Nitkina & Furuoka, 2008; Thomas & Beauchamp, 2011). According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980), most of our ordinary conceptual system is metaphorical in nature. Lakoff (1993) argued that our understanding of concepts, such as LOVE IS A JOURNEY or LOVE IS A CONTAINER is guided by "conceptual" metaphors that assimilate the target concept "love" into concrete source concepts such as "containers" and "journeys." Conceptual metaphors are different from linguistic metaphors, which serve as linguistic ornaments. The essence of metaphors according to Lakoff and Johnson is the "understanding and experiencing of one kind of thing in terms of another" (1980, p.5). Therefore, metaphors are analogies which allow us to map one experience in the terminology of another (Moser, 2000) and thus to gain insight into people's way of thinking about different notions and situations.

In the Iranian context of education, a few recent studies have used metaphor analysis as a method for discovering the beliefs held by learners and teachers towards learning and teaching in the country. By examining both current and ideal situations, Pishghadam and Navari (2009) took a qualitative approach to investigate high school and language institute teachers' underlying beliefs and ideas towards teaching and learning. The metaphors were categorized in line with the classification used by Martinez, Sauleda, and Huber (2001). The results indicated that the behaviorist paradigm of teaching is not only the dominant pattern, but also considered the ideal model for Iranian high school teachers of English. On the other hand, private language institute teachers had a cognitive conceptualization of teaching and opted for a context-oriented paradigm.

In a complementary study, Pishghadam and Navari (2010) used a quantitative method to observe the metaphors chosen by learners in both formal and informal contexts about learning and teaching in present and ideal situations in Iran. They came to the conclusion that most learners consider the current learning and teaching mode tend to be behavioristic, while they idealize cognitivist learning and teaching. However, in private institutes, learning and teaching, to a more extent, are based on cognitive principles.

Askarzadeh, Elahi and Khanalipour (2009) conducted a study to investigate the beliefs of Iranian English teachers working in language institutes with regard to their metaphors about language teaching. Their research revealed that there is consistent mutual belief between the teacher and the learners.

Some metaphor studies have been conducted in the Iranian university context. Pishghadam and Pourali (2011a) conducted a qualitative study on the elicited metaphors of 22 Iranian PhD students about their professors and PhD students. In another study, Pishghadam and Pourali (2011b) analyzed the metaphors of MA students about teaching and learning in Iranian universities. The studies illuminated the discrepancy between students' views towards the present and ideal situations.

The former metaphor studies conducted in Iran have focused on schools, language institutes or graduate programs. There is a dearth of research concerning the undergraduate level and non-English foreign language fields in the country. Furthermore, no comparative study has been done to allow for the differences in the learning and teaching of different languages and to look at the situation through the lens of culture.

## **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The present study, on the basis of Greeno, Collins, and Resnick's (1996) framework of learning and teaching, attempts to find out undergraduate students' perspectives in the current and ideal dominant paradigms of education in each of the main three language fields via metaphor analysis. The Greeno, Collins, and Resnick's framework includes: (1) the behaviorist perspective, which conceives learning as a passive process of knowledge absorption and stimulus-response formation, (2) the cognitive perspective, which perceives learning as an individual process of schemata construction, and (3) the situative perspective, which considers learning as an authentic participation in the activities of a social community.

Therefore, the study addresses the following questions:

1. Are there any significant differences among the behavioral, cognitive, and situative metaphors selected by BA students of English, French, and Arabic languages about learning and teaching in the current situation?
2. Are there any significant differences among the behavioral, cognitive, and situative metaphors selected by BA students of English, French, and Arabic languages about learning and teaching in the ideal situation?

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Participants and Setting**

A total of 300 language learners (N=300), consisting of 100 students of English language and literature, 100 students of French language and literature and 100 students of Arabic language and literature all studying at the BA level at Ferdowsi University of Mashhad (a city in Iran) participated in the study. Both male and female students from four grades: freshman, junior, sophomore and senior were included. Among the 100 students of English, 73 were female, and 27 were male. Their population distribution with regard to year of study was the following: 14 freshmen, 20 juniors, 26 sophomores and 40 seniors. Regarding the 100 students of French, 89 were female and 11 were male. They included 12 freshmen, 18 juniors, 33 sophomores and 37 seniors. Concerning the students of Arabic, 79 were female and 21 were male. They consisted of 21 freshmen, 26 juniors, 29 sophomores and 24 seniors.

In Iran, English is the most preferred foreign language to learn. It “seems to have smoothly found its way right to the heart of the Iranian society, approving itself as an undeniable necessity” (Talebinezhad & Aliakbari, 2002, p. 21). This is no surprise, considering the enormous importance of the English language in international media, business, science and technology. After English, comes French. The majority of the students majoring in French in Iran are those who have not been able to get accepted to study English. Only few of them choose French based on their own interest. Arabic is another foreign language, which plays an important role in the country’s language education field. Past research has revealed that students of Arabic perform weakly in universities due to lack of motivation and an unpromising job market (Mottaghizadeh, Mohammadi Rakati, & Shirazizadeh, 2010). Moreover, English and Arabic are two compulsory foreign languages in secondary schools. Students of English and Arabic enter the university with prior knowledge of the languages, whereas students of French learn the language from scratch.

### **Instrumentation**

Two checklists adapted from Pishghadam and Navari (2010) were used in the study (see Appendix). The first checklist included 27 metaphors for professors, consisting of 8 behavioristic, 7 cognitive, and 12 situative ones. The second checklist is for students which is comprised of 18 metaphors, including 8 behavioristic, 6 cognitive and 4 situative. Since not all of the participants majored in English, the checklists had to be translated into Persian. The translated version was substantiated by an expert in the field. Cronbach’s alpha coefficients for the translated versions of the professor and student checklists for the whole sample were found to be 0.64 and 0.71, respectively.

### Procedure

The translated checklists were administered to all the participants during class hours. They were asked to select the metaphors that best depicted their beliefs towards the students and university professors of their field of study in both current and ideal situations. Their responses were then classified according to the typology applied by Martinez, Sauleda, and Huber (2001), which had also been used in Pishghadam and Navari (2010). For each major, Chi-square tests were undertaken for each of the questions to see which category significantly had the highest frequency with alpha level set below 0.05.

### RESULTS

Table 1: *The results of Chi-square for metaphors selected about students in the current situation.*

	English				French				Arabic			
	Ob.N	Ex.N	Chi-Sq.	Sig.	Ob.N	Ex.N	Chi-Sq.	Sig.	Ob.N	Ex.N	Chi-Sq.	Sig.
Beh.	194	117.7	74.997	.000	207	119.0	97.882	.000	172	105.5	64.248	.000
Cog.	86	117.7			79	119.0			94	105.5		
Sit.	73	117.7			71	119.0			69	105.5		

Beh.=Behaviorist Cog.=Cognitive Sit.=Situative Ob.N=Observed N Ex.N=Expected N

Behaviorist > Cognitive > Situative

As the results of Table 1 demonstrate, behaviorist metaphors have the highest observed frequency for students of English ( $\chi^2=74.997$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). French major students have also selected a significantly high number of behaviorist metaphors ( $\chi^2=97.882$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). The same goes for students of Arabic ( $\chi^2=64.248$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Therefore, behaviorism is the principal paradigm among the students of the three majors. Students see themselves as passive beings that do not play a significant role in making their own choices for learning. The selection of metaphors such as RECIPIENT, RAW MATERIAL, OBSERVANT, VIEWER, and SHEEP show that BA language students are reactive learners.

Table 2: *The results of Chi-square for metaphors chosen about students in the ideal situation*

	English				French				Arabic			
	Ob.N	Ex.N	Chi-Sq.	Sig.	Ob.N	Ex.N	Chi-Sq.	Sig.	Ob.N	Ex.N	Chi-Sq.	Sig.
Beh.	86	121.0	26.793	.000	68	118.7	45.663	.00	81	114.0	23.211	.00
Cog.	165	121.0			172	118.7			153	114.0		
Sit.	112	121.0			116	118.7			108	114.0		

Beh.=Behaviorist Cog.=Cognitive Sit.=Situative Ob.N=Observed N Ex.N=Expected N

Cognitive > Situative > Behaviorist

Table 2 shows that for English majors, the second category of metaphors was chosen the most ( $\chi^2=26.793$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). French majors also prefer the cognitive approach ( $\chi^2=45.663$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). The significantly high selection of metaphors, such as PLAYER, COMPUTER, and CHILD, shows that students of Arabic favor a cognitive approach towards learning too. ( $\chi^2=23.211$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). According to the cognitive view, “people are active learners who initiate experiences, seek out information to solve problems, and recognize what they already know to achieve new insights” (Woolfolk, Winnie, & Perry, 2003, p.233). Thus, students like to be CONSTRUCTORS of knowledge, instead of RECEIPTS of it. They wish to play an active role in their learning, rather than functioning as blank slates.

Table 3: The results of Chi-square for metaphors selected for university professors in the current situation

	English				French				Arabic			
	Ob.N	Ex.N	Chi-Sq.	Sig.	Ob. N	Ex.N	Chi-Sq.	Sig.	Ob.N	Ex.N	Chi-Sq.	Sig.
Beh.	165	138.3	14.087	.001	191	157.3	11.725	.003	201	143.0	35.343	.000
Cog.	146	138.3			149	157.3			116	143.0		
Sit.	104	138.3			132	157.3			112	143.0		

Beh.=Behaviorist Cog.=Cognitive Sit.=Situative Ob.N=Observed N Ex.N=Expected N

Behaviorist > Cognitive > Situtaive

Table 3 illustrates that in the English group, behaviorist metaphors have the highest frequency for professors ( $\chi^2=14.087$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Students of French also chose a significant number of metaphors depicting behaviorist notions ( $\chi^2= 11.725$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). The same results are obtained for the third group ( $\chi^2 = 35.343$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Therefore, professors are regarded as PROVIDERS of knowledge, MANUFACTURING and MOULDING students. They are seen as BOOKS that dispense saved information.

Table 4: The results of Chi-square for metaphors about university professors in the ideal situation

	English				French				Arabic			
	Ob.N	Ex.N	Chi-Sq.	Sig.	Ob.N	Ex.N	Chi-Sq.	Sig.	Ob. N	Ex.N	Chi-Sq.	Sig.
Beh.	186	236.7	16.279	.000	174	217.3	12.997	.002	148	202.3	22.007	.000
Cog.	261	236.7			237	217.3			226	202.3		
Sit.	263	236.7			241	217.3			233	202.3		

Beh.=Behaviorist Cog.=Cognitive Sit.=Situative Ob.N=Observed N Ex.N=Expected N

Cognitive –Situative > Behaviorist

Based on Table 4, the observed frequencies for both cognitive and situative metaphors are more than the expected frequencies in English students ( $\chi^2=16.279$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), French majors ( $\chi^2=12.997$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and students of Arabic ( $\chi^2=22.007$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Thus, students of all three languages prefer professors who follow cognitive and situative patterns of teaching. Among the metaphors selected are PARENT, INNOVATOR, FRIEND, TRAVEL GUIDE, GARDENER, CHALLENGER and RESARCHER. Students go for

teaching situations in which the professor has social collaboration with the students, sees them as significant beings, and acts as a FACILITATOR, not a PROVIDER.

## DISCUSSION

The goals put forward by this study were to identify the conceptions of the university students of English, French, and Arabic major in terms of the main pedagogical paradigms towards learning and teaching in the current situation and to find out their ideals in this respect. The results have shown that students of all three majors have similar views and expectations towards their professors and fellow classmates. Students of English, in particular, do not have a different learning environment and seemingly, the different nature of English learning and teaching has not been able to help. Thus, under the shadow of culture, all three language majors have the same circumstances. Cultural restraints hinder the implementation of modern theories of language learning and teaching in English teaching and learning.

Regarding the students' views towards their present situation, all three majors see themselves following behavioral principles. The dominance of behaviorism can be attributed to the students' educational background, and cultural factors that have defined the meaning of education in the country.

The students of the three fields enter the university via a National Entrance Exam. This norm-referenced, multiple-choice test, leads to rote, rigid learning of a set of predetermined material and a competitive learning environment. "The test impact of entrance examinations, especially in terms of gate keeping mechanisms (McNamara, 2000) is strong and has effects on what teachers and students do in the classroom" (Cook, 2009, p.109). Going back further, as Pishghadam and Navari (2009, 2010) have stated behaviorism is the dominant paradigm in Iranian secondary foreign language education. This indicates the "Banking Concept of Education" (Freire, 1993), in which the teacher is the subject of the learning process and the students are mere objects. Education is seen as an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and receptacles waiting to be filled by the teacher. Therefore, behaviorism has become ingrained in Iranian students. They are accustomed to teacher-centered classrooms, where instructors transmit knowledge and students assume passive, complying roles.

Perhaps, the dominance of behaviorism among students of French can be justified to some extent by the fact that they begin learning the language from its alphabet, hence the high selection (92%) of RAW MATERIAL for their current situation. Nevertheless, the students of the other two majors are in the same state, although they study a language that they are familiar with. Iranian language learners usually expect themselves to imitate native speakers. In English classes, for example, American and British accents are treated as superior and proficiency in English is judged based on how native-like a person's accent is (Pishghadam & Sabouri, 2011). In Arabic classes, too much prominence is given to abstract grammar rules and theories (Mottaghizadeh, Mohammadi Rakati, & Shirazizadeh, 2010). The stress on pronunciation, accent and abstract rules of language brings about imitation and rote memorization, making the students followers of behaviorist notions.

Education in the country is associated with traditional measurement. Measurement is product-oriented and demands accurate transmission of what has been taught in the class to the exam paper given that the focus is on the "right" answer. Since alternative assessment has not become a recognized and established part of the educational system, professors and students are not in a position to maneuver much. Features such as creativity, personal autonomy, and self-expression lack in the evaluation system.



Thus, students do not learn to become critical thinkers, and end up as RECIPIENTS, SHEEP, and POTTERY.

Classroom structure for the three majors is the same. Classes are arranged according to the traditional row-column seating structure, which highlights the teacher-student dichotomy. Overcrowdedness of classrooms minimizes individual teacher-student attention and does not allow much time for student talking, turning the students into mere listeners, VIEWERS and OBSERVANTS. Students do not see themselves as FRIENDS and PARTNERS in the learning journey, due to the fact that competition is encouraged in lieu of cooperation. As Brown (2001) puts it, “the glorification of content, product, correctness, and competitiveness fails to bring the learner into a collaborative process of competence-building” (p. 77).

According to Hofstede’s (1986) categorization of cultural norms, Iran’s society can be classified as “collectivist”. Some of the characteristics of collectivist societies are: “positive association is given to whatever is rooted in tradition, education is a way of gaining prestige and joining a higher-status group, diploma certificates are important and displayed on walls, and acquiring certificates is more important than acquiring competence” (Hofstede, 1986, p. 312). Iranian students live in a society where undue emphasis is given to performance and certificates. Consequently, students are concerned with fulfilling university requirements and acquiring a university degree for its own sake. Grades and high stake tests are fatal components of every student’s educational life. Instead of focusing on competence and intrinsic factors, students are led to rote learning and memorization of “study packages”. Unfortunately, intelligence is viewed in terms of the level of performance in tests that are based on a componential view of knowledge. Therefore, grades, tests and certificates make up the “map of intelligence” in the country.

Based on Scollon and Scollon’s (2001) classification of politeness systems, Iranian culture falls into the hierarchical category with positive power difference and social distance. Likewise, in the educational system, teachers and professors are treated as superior figures. They are not to lose face, or admit their mistakes. Accordingly, students are obliged to pay full respect to their instructors, never question their absolute authority and take for granted everything that they say. These cultural codes contribute to a passive and formal learning environment, where open relationships with instructors are considered odd. Hence, instead of viewing their professors as FRIEND and ENTERTAINER, students see them as LEADER, GATEKEEPER, and PREACHER. Overall, it is difficult for teachers and students to accept any pedagogical practice that tends to put teachers on a par with their students and shaken the authoritative figure of the teacher (Hu, 2002)

The results are in line with Pishghadam and Mirzaee’s (2008) claim that the Iranian educational system has not yet made the shift from modernism to postmodernism. It seems that instructionism is dominant in university language classrooms, where learners respond reactively to the material presented by the professors. Among the metaphors chosen for students and professors in the current situation, in all three groups, the frequency of situative metaphors was the least, meaning that situative learning and teaching have not found a place in the educational system of the country. This perspective of education calls for particular conditions, which are difficult to achieve in the top-down and centralized educational system of Iran (Pishghadam & Mirzaee, 2008). An educational system that is fully controlled by the government is inclined towards unification and does not allow for individual differences and particular contexts, which are important factors in situative learning and teaching.

Concerning the students' ideals, we may conclude that the significantly high selection of cognitive metaphors for learning and both cognitive and situative metaphors for teaching points to their desire for a constructivist educational system, which is a feature of postmodernism. As stated by Nola and Irzik (2005), "the starting point of constructivist pedagogy is the recognition that each student comes to class with his own understanding of concepts and 'knowledge' constructed out of his own experiences about how things work" (p.175). Students like to have professors who see them as whole persons by guiding, nurturing, challenging and befriending them at the same time. Evidently, they are fed up with the absolutism, objectivity, and linearity that exist in the current state and demand a more pluralistic, practical and subjective educational system.

Comparing the findings with Pishghadam and Pourali (2011a, 2011b), it could be seen that language students' view of an ideal student changes as they proceed in higher education. BA students consider cognitivism as the preferable paradigm, while MA and PhD students wish to have a situative type of learning. Based on Sfard's (1998) distinction, students desire to move from the "acquisition" metaphor (cognitive view) to the "participation" metaphor (situative perspective). In Iranian universities, BA students mostly deal with courses, so for them, mental construction and information processing are considered as ideal ways of learning. However, graduate students get involved in research projects. Consequently, they become aware of the importance of the environment in their learning and look for situations in which they can have authentic participation in real-life contexts. In other words, graduate students are in want of performing tasks that will one day be expected of them as professionals. This makes them more in favor of social negotiation and cooperative learning.

## **CONCLUSION**

The present study revealed the underlying beliefs of undergraduate students of English, French and Arabic major towards learning and teaching via metaphor analysis. The results demonstrated that in all three disciplines there are discrepancies between the current and ideal situations. While the current situation is dominated by behaviorism, the students opt for a cognitive paradigm of learning and a cognitive-situative paradigm of teaching. Contrary to our hypothesis, ELT is not different from the other two major languages taught in Iran. The dominant behavioristic paradigm relates to the students' educational background and the cultural context of the country. The students' ideals also illustrate their demand for a more active role.

The findings of this study have a number of implications. First of all, the results have shown that contrary to common belief, the situation in English departments is not superior to that of other foreign language departments. Similar conditions and expectations can become common grounds for interdisciplinary cooperation. Secondly, policy makers should start realizing that language pedagogy is living in the postmodern era. New concepts, such as critical pedagogy and alternative assessment, need to be incorporated into curriculum design. University language professors, as well, should get rid of traditional styles of teaching and create a more embracing, lively atmosphere in their classes so that students could enjoy learning languages through active engagement. Finally, for students, awareness of their underlying views can help build a stronger sense of solidarity among them.

It is suggested that similar studies be done in other universities in Iran or other countries to make the results more generalizable. Other metaphor studies can be done in other fields of study, especially non-

humanities, to see how those students view their current state of affairs in the university educational system and how they desire it to be. Further studies can be done to investigate the university professors' conceptions towards themselves and their students.

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**APPENDIX**

Major: -----

Year of study: -----

Gender: F  M

**Checklist 1**

Please answer the questions according to your field of study.

Mark the metaphor(s) which indicate(s) your opinion about the professors of English/French/Arabic at the university.

parent	nurturer	entertainer	
mother	innovator	gatekeeper	
leader	artist	gardener	
provider	repairer	travel guide	
challenger	manufacturer	candle	
magician	book	preacher	
comedian	sunshine	policeman	
friend	researcher	moulder	
computer	shepherd	ladder	

Mark the metaphors(s) which indicate(s) your idea of an ideal university professor of English/French/Arabic.

parent	nurturer	entertainer	
mother	innovator	gatekeeper	
leader	artist	gardener	
provider	repairer	travel guide	
challenger	manufacturer	candle	
magician	book	preacher	
comedian	sunshine	policeman	
friend	researcher	moulder	
computer	shepherd	ladder	

**Checklist 2**

Please answer the questions according to your field of study.

**Mark the metaphor(s) which indicate(s) your opinion about the students of English/French/Arabic at the university.**

recipient	player	friend	
raw material	sheep	constructor	
computer	employee	partner	
plant	observant	traveller	
magic bean	building	viewer	
pottery	mechanic trainee	child	

**Mark the metaphor(s) which indicate(s) your idea of an ideal university student of English/French/Arabic.**

recipient	player	friend	
raw material	sheep	constructor	
computer	employee	partner	
plant	observant	traveller	
magic bean	building	viewer	
pottery	mechanic trainee	child	