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**FORCES STEERING IRANIAN LANGUAGE TEACHERS' WORK:
A GROUNDED THEORY**

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Abstract

More often than not language teachers working in public high schools in Iran complain about their work conditions. The purpose of this study is to develop a systematic explanatory theory of the macro-structures that steer language teachers' work. This grounded theory is based on a volunteer and theoretical sample of 5 experienced language teachers' contributions. The findings were triangulated against a theoretical sample of official documents. The iterative process of data collection and analysis yielded 'forces steering teachers' work' as the core category. This core category pulled together three other categories representing macro-structures, which are beyond language teachers' control. These categories shape teachers' pedagogic practice. The 'mandated national curriculum' controls input. The 'mandated national testing scheme' controls output. The circle of control is tightened by 'make the grade pressure'. In the face of these macro-structures and as a coping strategy, teachers consciously choose to follow an instrumental approach. Being a pure implementer of externally imposed initiatives and schemes, teachers' practice is deprofessionalised.

Background

My sensitivity to teachers' work was shaped by my theoretic knowledge of bureaucracies described by Max Weber, coupled with Habermas' (1987) concepts of system and lifeworld, theories of education and ideological struggle, and my understanding of the ideological conflicts between schooling and education.

For Max Weber (Gerth & Mills, 1958), bureaucracies represented positive Enlightenment values; they liberated humanity from the heavy yoke of irrational forms of knowledge, authority and social organisation such as feudalism. They became oppressive as they proliferated and as they promoted narrow definitions of reason and function that stifled creativity, effaced individuality, and denigrated values other than those related to efficiency and instrumentality (linking means to ends). The rigid adherence to rules disciplined the members of the organisation. The social spaces opened up in modernity that gave freedom to individuals were enclosed and delimited by social structures such the bureaucracy.

Habermas (1981, 1987) builds on Weber's dark vision of administrative and bureaucratic social forms which he argued, were ideological because they privileged technocratic or instrumental modes of thought and action, excluding goals pertaining to the good life such as happiness, peace, or justice, and non-technical forms of reasoning and interaction. Habermas (1987) describes the forms of reasoning and behaviours associated with administratively driven, bureaucratic forms of social organisation as the "system."

He contrasts the system with the lifeworld (which he believes is under constant threat of colonisation by the system). Lifeworld interactions are characterised by forms of communicative action; interactions where persons, governed by norms of reciprocity, are oriented towards understanding, the clarification of values, and ideally, consensus through dialogue, in situations relatively free from distortions of power (Habermas, 1989b). Communicative action differs from strategic action embedded in the social structures of bureaucracies. In these situations, speakers often interact to serve the goals of the organisation or their own interests (within the parameters of the organisation) with minimal consideration for others; they intentionally manipulate others to meet their own ends (Habermas, 1979). They are intent on getting their way (see Berger, 1996 for an extensive literature review of strategic interaction). They do not appreciate, respect, or empathise with others and little attempt is made to understand the world of others except for the purpose of gaining useful information from them. Others are treated as objects—a means to an end. The lifeworlds of schools where individuals are engaged as agents in negotiation with others can be colonised by system orientations and institutional practices. Schools can become accountable to “the bottom line.”

The shift from communicative action to strategic action is a gradual process. This process is directed by forces which constraints teachers' professional discretionary power over time. Managerial intervention is the most recurrent factor in literature. Schools are typically hierarchies. So "teachers find themselves in a responsive mode, reacting to the particular context established by administrators." (Gitlin, 1987, p. 109). As noted by Guthrie & Reed (1986), "decisions of the classic bureaucrat will be made in the interests of the organisation, while decisions of the idealised professional will reflect the best interests of the client or norms of the profession"(p.171).

In addition to administrative controls over teachers' work, culture has a lasting effect on teachers' practice. Situations and problems are defined and acted upon in similar ways by members of a culture because of their shared understanding of the meanings of those events within a framework of jointly constructed beliefs. If we acknowledge that individuals within a culture (e.g., the culture of teaching, see Feiman-Nemser and Floden, 1986) define situations in remarkably similar ways, we must take into account the influence of this culture on the "webs of significance" teachers construct and use in subsequent simplifications.

Culture creates recurrent patterns of practice. Smith (1980) points out that when teachers make decisions for situations that keep recurring, actions soon become habitual on the basis of past experience. Schank and Abelson (1977) hold that habituated patterns of action stem from scripts. Scripts are presumed to be a type of schema in which earlier social situations influence events that follow, i.e., people learn what acceptable behaviour is in given contexts and tend to behave according to those expectations (Schank and Abelson, 1977). Episodes that are contextually grouped in memory provide the scripts that condition the response. As Lightfoot (1983) reminds us, the teacher may resort to routine to minimise the onslaught of conflicting demands on her time and patience. Though the routine may be necessary for the survival of the teacher, it may be to the detriment of the children (p. 251).

Teachers' personal experience as a student and as a teacher learner can also condition teachers' work. Freeman & Freeman (1994) identify the following factors acting to influence individual teachers: (1) how they were taught themselves, (2) how they were trained and the content of that training, (3) their colleagues and the

administration, (4) new ideas coming into their vicinity, (5) materials available, (6) the kind of students they have, and (7) their view of learners and learning.

In addition, economic pressure and work overload can also affect teachers' work negatively. Since in almost all circumstances resources are limited, teachers soon end up competing with one other for them, or at least taking measures, which inhibit the sharing of both resources and knowledge. It hardly needs to be mentioned that in many situations where S/FLs are taught as part of a state education system, that system itself is often totally underfunded, so teachers are obliged to take second jobs to make ends meet and cannot afford any time on professional development activities. Under these conditions, of course, "teachers set survival ... at higher priority than pedagogic concerns" (Holliday, 1994, p. 87, citing Woods, 1984, and Hargreaves, 1984).

Although it is obvious that major increases in resource allocation could alter many educational programs for the better, it is most unlikely that they will materialise; consequently, again as a product of time pressures, large classes, and resource lacks, the teacher-student relationship, which should be at the heart of teaching, is threatened and weakened (Gitlin, 1987).

The contextual constraints reviewed force teachers away from professional practice. Except for culture, they are all micro-structures. Though impeding, the teacher may resist them or find a way out. There are some macro-structures, however, which are totally beyond teachers' control. It is these macro-structures which steer teachers' action and shape microstructures reviewed above.

Purpose and Significance

Following Habermas, this paper aims at exploring how the system, the macro-structures, colonise teachers' lifeworld. Using grounded theory, this paper attempts to theorise from the professional life of five experienced language teachers willing to share their experience with the researcher by exploring:

- the macro-structures that steer teachers' work (conditions);
- teachers' action in the face of these macro-structures (action);
- the consequence of teachers' mode of action (consequence).

This work is significant because it demonstrates how ideal-type institutions such as high schools, shaped by the narrow purpose of social control, enable us to trace ideological lines of power or patterns of meaning from organisational context to educational theory and practice. It is also significant in that it shows how persons, practices, and ideas are shaped by macro-structures over which they seem to have little control.

Research Strategy

Theoretical Sampling

According to Strauss & Corbin (1998) grounded theory requires that sampling is theory driven and as such developed in the field as the theory emerges. Sampling began as a 'common-sense' process of talking to Maziyar who was eager to share his experience and provide early information. This information was then analysed through the application of open coding techniques, or line-by-line analysis (looking for words and sentences in the text that have meaning), which helped to identify provisional explanatory concepts and categories. These concepts and categories were

then enriched, modified and verified by four other experienced teachers who showed interest in the research area. Following Brown (1999) this type of purposive sampling aimed at increasing the diversity of the sample and the richness of the concepts and categories. Thus in the subsequent interviews with Maziyar and the comparison group the researcher looked for concepts and categories that were relevant to the emerging theory. Theoretical sampling was cumulative, increased the depth of focus, noted variation, and occurred in all three phases related to coding. In line with the original rules of grounded theory, the researcher did not leave the field and stop sampling until saturation was reached, or when no additional information was found in the data. That is, theoretical sampling terminated once theoretical saturation was reached.

Interview

Interviewing in **grounded theory** has the specific intention of exploring teachers' experiences and placing them in context. Following Seidman (1991) the interviews were designed to acquaint the participant with the nature of the study, to establish rapport, to set a context for phenomenon, and then to obtain depth and details of the experience. Interviews were held until redundancy was reached. Interviews were transcribed to best represent the dynamic nature of the living conversation. Each of the verbatim transcripts was returned to the participant for his review so he can remark on the accuracy of the document. During the research, each participant was assured confidentiality through the use of pseudonyms in the reporting of data. They were also assured that once the data are coded, connection back to the individual participant is almost impossible to trace. Identification of the individual participant is not paramount, because the concepts generated by the participants—not the individual participants—are at the centre of study (Glaser, 1978).

Data Analysis

Grounded theory is a constant comparative methodology that combines data analysis with data collection, and the heart of data analysis in grounded theory is based on three types of coding procedures: open, axial, and selective (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The analytic goals of grounded theory are fivefold:

1. Build rather than test theory.
2. Provide researchers with analytic tools for handling masses of raw data.
3. Help the analysts to consider alternative meanings of phenomena.
4. Be systematic and creative simultaneously.
5. Identify, develop, and relate the concepts that are the building blocks of theory. (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 13)

Open Coding

Open coding occurs at the beginning of a study. The primary goals of open coding are to conceptualise and categorise data, achieved through two basic analytic procedures: making comparisons and asking questions of the data. Open coding begins the process of labelling many individual phenomena. In time, a number of individually labelled concepts are clustered around a related theme. The individual concepts are gathered together to form more powerful and abstract categories. Once categories are formed in open coding, they are fleshed out in terms of their given properties and dimensions. The properties are “characteristics of a category, the delineation of which defines and gives it meaning” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 101). Dimensions illustrate how each property can vary along a continuum. Open coding is achieved by examining the

transcripts by line, by sentence, or by paragraph, and sometimes by scanning the entire document.

Axial Coding

The second stage of data analysis is axial coding. Strauss and Corbin (1998) described axial coding as the process of relating categories to their subcategories . . . linking a category at the level of properties and dimensions” (p. 123). A coding paradigm involving conditions, actions and interactions, and consequences actualises this process. The focus of axial coding is to create a model that details the specific conditions that give rise to a phenomenon’s occurrence. In axial coding, four analytical processes are occurring: (a) continually relating subcategories to a category, (b) comparing categories with the collected data, (c) expanding the density of the categories by detailing their properties and dimensions, and (d) exploring variations in the phenomena.

Selective Coding

The final stage of data analysis in grounded theory is selective coding, which builds upon the foundation of the previous open and axial coding efforts. Selective coding is “the process of selecting the central or core category, systematically relating it to other categories, validating those relationships, and filling in categories that need further refinement and development” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 116). Strauss and Corbin (1998) stated that this central or core category should have the analytic power to “pull the other categories together to form an explanatory whole” (p. 146). In this study selective coding yielded "**forces steering teachers' work**" as the core category.

Trustworthiness

The concepts and categories identified by Maziyar were confirmed and corroborated by four experienced teachers' working within similar conditions. They were also triangulated by official documents such as textbooks, national testing scheme, and teacher evaluation schemes.

The researcher's extensive experience as a language teacher for 10 years working under the same conditions as Maziyar and the comparison group provided me with theoretical sensitivity to sift through the information and identify the prominent categories. Once I had determined the prominent themes, I reviewed an unmarked transcript, to see if any new concepts or categories emerged, and also to see if the categories I had identified made sense within the general context of the interview. I used the constant comparative techniques, developing meaning by altering between understanding and data. The provisional concepts and categories as well as the final version were confirmed and corroborated by the participants.

Limitations

Despite the participants' validation of the emerged concepts and categories and my attempts to triangulate the data against official documents, readers should proceed with caution as they read the findings. Qualitative researchers are the instruments for gathering data, and as human beings, they bring with them their own constructions of the world. However the rigorous analytic schemes of grounded theory helped me ground the findings in the data and avoid personal biases. Despite methodological

rigor, however, findings such as these are not a guarantee of truth, for truths are always partial (Clifford, 1986), and knowledge “situated” (Haraway, 1988). We also cannot ignore how interviewer and interviewee negotiate face or manage impressions (Goffman, 1959) in interviews. An interview is but a snapshot in time. Much is left unsaid about events and persons despite the intention of the interviewer to provide a holistic account. Of course, more interviews and stories would deepen our understanding of this exploratory study. Still, I am confident that the macro-structures identified represent a subset of a larger set of macro-structures governing language teachers' work in public high schools in Iran.

Results

Constant comparative technique, theoretical sampling and the analytic schemes of grounded theory yielded **forces steering teachers' work** as the core theoretical category, which pulled together three other categories. These categories are indicative of macro-structures, which are beyond teachers' control. First, **mandated curriculum** controls the input. That is instead of using his professional knowledge to select a textbook, which best serves his students' needs, teachers are obliged to teach the centrally mandated curriculum. The second category, **mandated national testing scheme**, controls the output. Instead of using his knowledge of language testing to develop tests, which have a positive backwash on teaching and learning, he should follow a fixed and centrally mandated testing scheme. Third, **make the grade pressure** controls the process of teaching and learning. Culturally, scoring well is much more important than learning well. In the face of these macro-structures and as a coping strategy, teachers consciously choose to follow an **instrumental approach**. Being a pure implementer of externally imposed initiatives and schemes, teachers worry that their practice is being deprofessionalised. More specifically, by responding to cultural constraints, they don't use their own professional knowledge and experience. Lack of use leads to atrophy. Thus, although promoting teachers to the top of career ladder, instrumental teaching leads to **deprofessionalisation**.

Mandated Curriculum

Theoretically, the teacher is the only decision-maker who is in tune with the heartbeat of the students, he should act as the gate keeper to his classroom, "deciding which curriculum and pedagogical strategies will be allowed to enter and to what degree" (Leuhamann, 2002, p. 8). Cuban argued, "The password that will unlock the classroom door remains in the teacher's head, understanding what teachers ask, and what criteria they apply is essential to unlocking that door" (Cuban, 1986, p. 71). Therefore the teacher is the person who has the final word on what is allowed into the classroom and to what degree. The reason is that he is the one who knows best his/her own limitations and abilities, the cognitive and affective makeup of the class, the abilities of the students, what could potentially be accomplished under the very real constraints of the local situation. The teacher is the one who is most responsible for the academic as well as motivational success or failures, accomplishments and limitations of the classroom experiences throughout the year. It is essential that this professional who has so much responsibility also maintain the power necessary to make the decisions, such as whether or not to use a syllabus.

In practice, however, the educational code and the nature of curriculum in Iran do not recognise this right for language teachers. Despite the fact that teacher preparation programs provide training in program design, the curriculum is not designed by language teachers, but is mandated from above or determined by the need

to deal with standardised tests. As such one of the most fundamental tools by which teachers can discharge their responsibilities is thus not within their control. Therefore the professional autonomy of teachers to exercise their judgement and act on it is an important source of strength in our public education system is not recognised. The truth-value of the content is taken for granted. In a panel discussion all the participants complained,

The books are not theoretically justified. They suffer from many problems. We are teaching books, which are professionally unjustified. Being aware of teachers' complaints, each year educational directives invite teachers to evaluate books. We have repeatedly voiced our complaints but they are never heard. Books are continually changing, but teachers' views are never taken into account. They change the books as they wish, irrespective of teachers' ideas and students' needs.

Thus the national curriculum by its very nature has overshadowed language teachers' professional life at high school level in Iran because teachers have no choice over the curricular content at all. One of the participants contends,

As a result of mandated curriculum, 95 percent of the time I as well as other teachers stick to the syllabus and their main concern is coverage rather than responding to students' needs. There are also strong mechanisms of surveillance, which compel teachers to stick to the prefabricated content. Lecturing is the dominant mode of teaching. Discussion may develop learners' ability but doing so entails not only lagging behind the schedule but also lead to generating knowledge not specified in the syllabus. Students shun discussions because they know that they carry no weight in the final exam.

Another participant contends that the national syllabus for language education is professionally indefensible because it suffers from lack of authenticity. That is, what students do with the language inside the classroom bears no resemblance to what they do with it outside the classroom. He explains:

Reading passages contain out-dated information and the truth-value of the information presented in the text is taken for granted. Students are asked to read the passage and find the *correct* answer. In real life we never read to find the correct answer. On the contrary, we try to evaluate the truth-value of the information based on our background knowledge. We read and agree, disagree, evaluate, analyse, synthesise, and criticise. In classroom we train students to take the truth of texts for granted.

This detaches students from their feelings, emotions and thoughts. Thus reading tasks alienates students and teachers from their mental and emotional resources by inculcating the idea that texts always present truth and that there is always a correct answer.

Another participant complains that developing texts only economic factors are taken into account. He believes that the professionally indefensible curriculum can only be justified by the logic of capitalism. One national curriculum is much less expensive than a plurality of curricula. Edwards et al. (2002) unravels the enigma of mandated curriculum by clarifying its economic rationale. "In order to curb expenditure, the government standardises and rationalises education, not only because it is cheaper but also to enable measures of comparability to be produced for schools and education providers" (Edwards et al., 2002, p. 26). Teachers are caught between the rationalising and centralising forces of curriculum and the diverse needs of students. Teachers have no choice but to sacrifice students needs stick to coverage as the only means of compliance with the mandated curriculum.

Mandated Testing Scheme

The testing scheme is fixed. The accuracy of the scheme is taken for granted. Teachers can't replace the scheme. This external given has overshadowed teachers' work. Teachers don't teach the book, they teach to the test. Moreover, it forces teachers to forget their knowledge of test development and follow the scheme point by point. Any minor change in the fixed format creates a lot of resentment in students, administrators and parents. It also entails failing a high proportion of the students. A participant states

In my second year of teaching I was assigned by the central bureau to develop the final exam. As a novice, I was not familiar with the givens of education system in Iran. Thus instead of following the given scheme, I relied on my professional knowledge to the final exam. A great majority of students in grade three high school failed. It led to chaos. In addition to various punitive actions, I was denied the right to develop final exams for many years.

Knowing the consequences, both teachers and students as well as other stakeholders resist any change. for decades, the national language testing scheme has been the same. No one dares to change the format, the question type, or the proportion of items in each subskill.

Participants complain that test development needs no expertise and its everyone's job. One of them contends that, in its current form, test development needs no professional knowledge. He ironically stated, "my students develop better language tests than I do." When he was enquired about the reason he stated,

what is needed is a sample test from the previous years, you can duplicate the format, form and number of items. Since the format has been the same for many years, one even does not need a sample. Every year the same scheme is sent to schools. Teachers are free as long as they move along the format.

In a group discussion, they complained that the national testing scheme has severely overshadowed their professional knowledge and practice.

We must rigidly follow syllabuses handed down to us by our superiors. We have little participation in defining the aims and objectives of the syllabuses or in determining their content and

method of treatment. The uniform scheme compels us to teach according to the syllabuses prepared for us.

This testing scheme has a negative impact on the pedagogic practice of teachers in high schools in Iran. Teachers no longer have professional autonomy about how best to teach the course; they have professional autonomy about how best to teach to the exam. As to its effect on teachers' pedagogic practice, one of the participants explains,

The centralised control of curriculum and assessment shapes my pedagogic practice. This superimposed scheme has homogenised language education at high school level throughout the country. I have taught in different cities. Everywhere the scenario is the same. When you observe teachers or seek their ideas, there is a general consensus as to what teaching is. It is as though there is only one teacher. Teachers give the meaning of words, explain grammar, reads passages aloud, make students understand texts by themselves, and students use commercial guide books and learn the translation of the text.

Participants believe that this homogeneity in teaching has been created by the homogeneity in testing. Since the scheme is the same nation-wide, no one can ever overstep this scheme. Teachers try to replicate the content and the format of the scheme. One of the participants succinctly describes the routinised process of testing as follows:

Putting the scheme in front of him, each teacher prepares question papers before the examination week, submits them to the head teacher for his/her approval, follows the school test timetable during the examination week, marks, and enters the marks in the examination register for the class. A little change in the format of the scheme or the type and number of items leads to severe uprising on the part of other colleagues and pupils.

Make the Grade Pressure

Since students' final score is taken as the only measure of success, you should act very strategically in order not to lag behind in competing with other colleagues. To help students make the grade, one is made to forget students' communicative needs. An experienced teacher who was promoted because of his high pass rate, comments,

This is what they want. Parents, managers, and students unanimously define success as the students' score in the final exam. I give them what they want. My teaching strategies are in tune with the stakeholders' likes and dislikes. I can't move against the current. Many of my skilful colleagues have been marginalised because they ignore what parents and students want and try to teach language. We are not here to teach language. We are here to improve students' final score.

Another participant says teachers who left high school for MA and PhD programmes can never compete with other teachers when they return. As for the reason he explains,

I know what the students need. I have taught the book for 12 years. I know what counts in the final exam. Although they are clearly more knowledgeable, I have mastered the content of the book and the efficient way it should be presented. Thus despite their knowledge, they can't compete with me. Although I am a BA holder, I received the highest evaluation score in the past five years.

A participant who thinks that teacher evaluation is very biased. He believes that teachers are forced to manipulate everything at their disposal to enhance their pass rate. He explains,

Teachers' success is contingent upon his pass rate. Managers evaluate teachers based on their students' performance in the final exam. The higher the pass rate and the grade point average of the students, the higher the teacher's evaluation scores. The situation is preposterous. Students should score 10 out of 20 to pass. 15 points are allocated to the final exam and 5 points is at teachers' disposal. When a student scores 5 out of 15, the teacher gives him 5 out of 5 without any evaluation. This is what I can't do. Thus my pass rate is low. As a consequence my evaluation score is always low.

The number of private language institutes is increasing everyday. Students who want to learn language go to these institutes. When students enter high school their main concern is first to pass and then to get a high school diploma. One of the participants explains,

My classes are very heterogeneous. In one class, there are some who can pass the final exam at the beginning of the year. They merely participate for the final exam. On the other hand, there are some who suffer from the constant fear of failing because they know they can't compete for the second group. These students are less concerned about learning English. Their main concern is to pass the final exam. To help students overcome their worries, I should tailor-make my teaching to the final exam.

Since stakeholders focus on the final scores, learning subordinates examination. Teachers can't be ignorant of this cultural value. Education aims at improving the product at the cost of the process. Thus the students, the teacher, and the students are slaves of the exam. Teachers complain that they are taken accountable for the final exam rather than students' communicative ability. In one of the participant's account,

What counts is students' score in the final exam. What you do for the students during the year is not important. If you don't teach to the test students don't score well. You should sacrifice learning well for scoring well.

As a coping strategy many teachers don't teach the book. They test-wise the students by working on sample tests from previous years. It works much better than

teaching the book. This is what successful teachers do. The following strategic movement is exemplary :

Last year the high school caretaker wanted to take the final exam for grade 2. I worked on three sample tests and he passed the test. Teaching English is one thing; teaching how to pass a test is a horse of a different colour. To pass, one doesn't need to learn. It is enough to know some test taking techniques. This is what the society wants. Doing otherwise entails your being stigmatised as an illiterate teacher.

The pressure on teachers to produce good examination results is pandemic to the education system as a whole. The ministry of education compares one department with the other and evaluates departments of education based on examination results. Likewise, departments and districts compare and evaluate high schools based on the examination results. Even the central bureau of education directly rewards teachers who have gained the highest pass rate. One of the participants sarcastically asserted that he is the most successful teacher in this city by presenting me with the certificate of gratitude issued by the central bureau. The certificate is as follows, "This certificate was issued by the central bureau as a token of gratitude to recognise your 100% pass rate. On behalf of all the stakeholders we sincerely thank you for achieving the highest pass rate in the city." Relying on the certificate, he concludes:

Such certificates encourage teachers to improve the product and sacrifice the process of teaching and learning. The certificate categorically indicates that what counts in Iran's public education is not learning well but scoring well. Even parents' main concern is examination results. When their children score well, their conscience is appeased even though their children learn nothing. No one cares about learning.

Instrumental Teaching

A great majority of teachers respond to culturally acceptable modes of thought and action about language teaching. Knowing that in our education system, making the score is more important to learning, they sacrifice learning well for scoring well. Thus instead of asking themselves, "Are they learning?", they choose to ask, "Can they score well? These teachers teach in tune with the heartbeat of the cultural conditions. Thus they are culturally taken as beacons of success. Analysis of the data revealed that non-responsive instrumental teaching is resorted to as a coping strategy. In tune with the macrostructure governing their work, instrumental teaching can take one or a combination of the following forms,

- Focus on coverage
- Provision of a booklet containing points which carry some weight in the final exam
- Teaching to the test
- Teaching the test.

Just as the macro-structures have colonised teachers' professional life, these coping strategies have colonised students life. Teachers and managers use students as

a means to improve their own position in the career ladder. In spite of being culturally valued, instrumental teaching has crippled students in high schools. The following comments are exemplary.

Despite the fact that nearly all students pass the tests, none of the students whose exposure is limited to language education in high school is communicatively competent. Since the final score is the only yardstick of success, no one cares about students' communicative incompetence.

Teachers consider the foregoing strategies as legitimate because they optimally improve the product, i.e., the final score. Students prefer these strategies because they enable them to live up to their parents' expectations. These strategies dominate language teaching in high schools because they are inline with the stakeholders' views and folkways of teaching.

As to the teachers' reasons for following these non-responsive strategies analysis revealed the following:

- Time pressure to cover the syllabus in the specified timeline;
- Principals' zeal to improve the product;
- The competitive atmosphere among language teachers; and
- Pass rate and the final score as the cultural measures of success

Within these pressures, teachers forget responsive teaching and act instrumentally to accommodate the stakeholders' views. From the instrumental perspective, teaching becomes the management of standardised ends and means; learning becomes the consumption of pre-packaged bits of information and parts of skills; and success becomes teachers and students doing as directed. With student achievement as the objective, the instrumental approach focuses on tools, resources, environments, techniques, teachers, and students as the means to that given end. Education system is viewed as input-output systems, where resources and raw materials enter at one end and the finished product, achieving “educated” student, issues from the other. Within this delivery system, educational problems are viewed as blockages, caused by inappropriate teacher behaviours, student inadequacies, or inefficient resource uses.

Deprofessionalisation

Being immersed in a culture of compliance, many teachers have lost their language teaching skills. Instead they have learned some teaching folkways which are culturally valued and recognised. When I visited Yazd for data collection, students and language teachers unanimously advised me to see Maziyar as the most popular language teacher. When I met him I said, "language teachers and students believe that your professional ability in language teaching is second to none, what do you think about this outstanding genius? To my amazement, he commented:

It is unfortunate to note that I have lost my proficiency and language teaching ability in its totality. I have stopped language teaching for ages. What I actually do is to prepare students for the tests. It is this ability that they commend. Since I am limited to the content of the books, a few sample tests and test taking techniques, I find no

chance to use my professional knowledge and command of English. Well you can't have something for nothing. I have gained recognition at the cost of my professional knowledge and expertise.

Another participant complains that it doesn't take a language teacher to teach English. He explains

Everything is planned and handed down to us. We don't need our professional knowledge. In this high school there is a geography teacher who teaches English. I am a BA in TEFEL. There is a PhD candidate. We all do the same thing. Teacher evaluation scheme and the principal do not discriminate among us. What counts is not what you know or what you do in the classroom. Only the pass rate and final scores count. Thus it happens that the evaluation score of the geography teacher teaching English is higher than the PhD candidate in TEFL. I told you, it doesn't take a language teacher to teach English.

Instead of encouraging teachers to use their knowledge of language testing to evaluate the validity of the national testing scheme and improve it, they are forced to take the scheme as a reference and prepare students for the test. Thus they never use the knowledge and skills of test development they acquired in the pre-service training programme. Lack of use leads to atrophy. Thus teachers work involves deskilling in that teachers lose their professional knowledge. It involves reskilling in that they learn cultural norms of success.

Conclusion and Discussion

In response to the macro-structures governing their work teachers follow an instrumental approach. The coping strategies followed by teachers is reminiscent of the 'pedagogy of instruction' (Adelman, 1988). Teacher strategies whether termed 'survival' or 'coping', are essentially meaningful and creative responses to the world in which the work of teaching gets done' (Hatton, 1988).

A number of assumptions emerge from data on teachers' pedagogic practice, which help to interpret the observed coping strategies and their pedagogic practice generally from their point of view. Analysis indicate that study teachers assumed:

- that their role involved teaching the book rather than the students,
- that emphasis on pass rate and final score has severely overshadowed their pedagogic practice;
- that they are expected to implement the given curriculum by maintaining tight control over what, when and how the pupil learns;
- that the education system provides certain givens which provide parameters to work within;
- that one of the macro-structural factors that makes teaching difficult is the cultural definition of success as the final score; and
- that the community holds certain expectations which creates folkways of teaching and it becomes their role to come to terms with and operationalise these folkways.

So while at first glance it is somewhat puzzling to find teachers allowing macrostructure to dominate their pedagogic practice, it is not puzzling when you see

that these macro-structures are in line with community expectations. Teachers don't just teach; they teach for a community. Thus they can't be ignorant of community expectations regarding schooling. These expectations create folkways of teaching, which homogenises teaching. Relying on these folkways at the cost of their professional knowledge leads to deprofessionalisation. Since teachers no longer use their professional knowledge and skill, they atrophy over time.

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Seyyed Ali Ostovar Namaghi was born in 1969 in Kashmar, Iran. Having received his high school diploma in 1990, he entered Sistan and Baloochestan University. He got his BA in TEFL in 1994 and then taught for one year in Public high schools in Iran and then started the MA programme. In 1997 he received his MATEFL from the University of Tehran. He received his Ph.D. in 2005 and joined the Ministry of Science, Research and Technology. He currently teaches EAP at Shahrood University of Technology.

Forces steering Iranian language teachers' work: a grounded theory. Save to Library. Download. by Seyyed Ali Ostovar-Namaghi. [â€¢ A Data-Driven Conceptualization of Teacher Evaluation](#). Save to Library. Download. by Seyyed Ali Ostovar-Namaghi. [â€¢ A Data-Driven Conceptualization of Language Teacher Identity](#). Save to Library. Download. by Seyyed Ali Ostovar-Namaghi. [â€¢ Differentiated Error Correction: A Grounded Theory](#). Save to Library. Download. [â€¢ Theorizing Language Teachers' Perceptions of the Rationales and Methods of Classroom Observation](#). Save to Library. Download. by Seyyed Ali Ostovar-Namaghi. [â€¢ Theorizing Language Teachers' Perceptions of the Rationales and Methods of Classroom Observation](#). Save to Library. Download. Among the research articles are Forces Steering Iranian Language Teachers' Work by Namaghi (2006), Adventuring: A Grounded Theory Discovered through the Analysis of Science Teaching and Learning by Maloney (2005), Substantive-level Theory of Highly Regarded Secondary Biology Teachers' Science Teaching Orientations by Friedrichsen and Dana (2005), Social Studies Teachers' Conceptions of Discussion: A Grounded Theory Study. [â€¢ Forces steering teachers' work is the core theoretical category, which pulled together three other categories. These categories are indicative of macro-structures, which are beyond teachers' control. First, mandated curriculum controls the input. Constructing and reconstructing language teachers' perceptions of DA requires the integration teachers' theoretical knowledge of assessment with the knowledge of teaching methodology they gain through education. That is, research primarily incorporates investigating the effects of DA on teaching and learning processes \(e.g. Alavi, Kaivanpanah, & Shabani, 2012; Mardani & Tavakoli, 2012; Najafi Far, 2011; Nezakatgoo, 2011; Shabani, Khatib, & Ebadi, 2010\). In line with this, the present study aims at exploring Iranian EFL teachers' perspectives regarding DA as a function of their academic credentials and length of service. Appraising preservice EFL teachers' assessment in language testing course using revised Bloom's taxonomy. IJALEL, 4\(4\), 8-20. Morgan, D. L. \(1998\). \[â€¢ Marjan Moivaziri; Seyyed Ayatollah Razmjoo. "Teachers-To-Be Voices: A Grounded Theory Approach Towards Challenges Facing Iranian EFL M.A. Candidates". Journal of Research in Applied Linguistics, 7, 1, 2016, 54-74. doi: 10.22055/rals.2016.11777. Famous Iranian language testing and teaching specialists, such as Farhady, Jafarpoor, & Birjandi \\(1994\\), have already confirmed that even Iranian students at the university level are not able to use the English language for communicative purposes as they are expected to. According to Hosseini \\(2007\\), oral English language teaching in most of the Iranian academic situations seems to be ineffective and impractical as a result of strong examination washback. Little attention is given to oral language in the final examinations. Almost all Iranian English teachers are aware of the fact that the ins...â€¢ Forces steering Iranian language teachers' work: A grounded theory. The Reading Matrix, 6\\(2\\), 90-105. Pallant, J. \\(2007\\).\]\(#\)](#)