Communicative Strategy vs. Reconstructive Strategy: A Descriptive Exploratory Study

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Abstract

The present study attempts to follow a systematic procedure to diagnose the most appropriate teaching strategy, out of the strategic framework proposed by Waldemar Marton, best suiting Iranian educational system. In doing so, a couple of teaching strategies, that is, communicative strategy and reconstructive strategy were selected for investigation. In parallel with the major purpose of the study, the underlying aim this study seeks to achieve is to identify and analyze the characteristic features and particularities of the Iranian educational system through fairly all-inclusive examination of a couple of imperative contextual factors, that is, learner and teacher. For that reason, the researchers take best advantage of the experienced teachers' belief system to identify the features of two contextual factors, that is, learner and teacher as well as examine a couple of strategies at issue. The instruments utilized were four distinctive multi-purpose and well-organized questionnaires. A sample population of 40 skilled teachers, both male and female practicing teachers of the province of Khuzestan-Iran, was recruited on a voluntary basis with an average of at least ten years of teaching experience in public schools. Considering the majority as the criterion and decisive factor, with respect to the type of Iranian EFL learners (careful students) and EFL teachers (with poor proficiency and stamina), a non-intensive teaching curriculum and large amount of classes, the best strategy that can correspond with all these conditions and yet result in the successful development of L2 competence was detected to be reconstructive strategy.

Keywords*: Postmethod pedagogy, Strategic framework, Contextual Factors, Learner variable, Teacher variable, Teacher education.*

Introduction

By the end of the twentieth century, mainstream language teaching no longer regarded method(s) as the pivotal dynamic in accounting for success or failure in language teaching. Thanks to recently critical studies and profound insights in the field of L2 education enterprise and as a result of long-felt discontented responses to the restricted and restricting notion of the method, the profession of language teaching has initiated a movement towards fundamental reshaping and restructuring in organizing principles for L2 teaching/learning and teacher education. The explorations by professional figures in the domain of English language teaching have obviously confirmed the fact that even as the methodological theorists recommend the practitioners to follow a specific path, the practicing teachers have been moving toward a different direction (Nunan, 1989; Legutke & Thomas, 1991; Kumaravadivelu, 1993). These pedagogically well-grounded arguments have now made us step in the novel realm of

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what Kumaravadivelu (1994) first coined and later referred to by Brown (1997) and Richards and Rodgers (2001) as the "Post-method era".

The limitations of the notion of method has paved the ground for the emergence of this heightened fast-creating awareness that "the term method is a label without substance" (Clarke, 1983:109), that it has "diminished rather than enhanced our understanding of language teaching" (Pennycook, 1989:597), and that "language teaching might be better understood and better executed if the concept of method were not to exist at all" (Jarvis, 1991:295).

Considering postmethod pedagogy, this study is intended to conduct an exploratory-analytical survey to examine the effectiveness and appropriateness of two strategies proposed by Marton (1988) within Iranian educational system, that is, *communicative* strategy and *reconstructive* strategy. Prior to the inquiry over the efficacy of two strategies, a primary crucial study is also conducted to investigate the characteristics of two contextual variables, most often emphasized upon within the postmethod paradigm, that is, *teacher* and *learner*. In fact, since particular procedures must be followed to arrive at the conclusion to adopt the most appropriate and functional strategy, the major portion of this research project is inevitably assigned to the relatively comprehensive analysis of the contextual factors. Due to the indispensable role relationships these two important contextual variables play within the framework of a successful postmethod paradigm, exploring the characteristics of these two factors directs us to opt for implementation of the most appropriate strategy that is best location-sensitive, situation-specific, system-responsive and consequently most successful and realizable in the Iranian educational structure.

Selected Literature Review

Initial stages of taking purposeful measures in the field of second/foreign language teaching are found to be rather completely short of any theoretical pedestal. The twentieth century has seen the fall and rise of a variety of methods and approaches from the Series Method (Gouin, 1880) to Audio-Lingual method (e.g., Fries, 1945), then the Designer Methods (Brown, 2001: 24-32), and later on to Communicative Language Teaching (e.g., Wilkins, 1976; Brumfit & Johnson, 1979).

In the late 1980s and the beginning of 1990s, educationists, professional second/foreign language researchers and thinkers came to seriously appraise the limitations of the concept of method and critique its validity and acceptability. As a consequence of such critical attitudes towards the profession of language pedagogy, the innovative paradigms came to light. For example, Marton (1988) proposed his pedagogically well-founded strategic scheme. In consistent with Marton's principles, Kumaravadivelu (1994) also introduced his strategic framework in the postmethod era. In order to better keep track of the cycles and changes the language pedagogy profession has undergone, the researchers split up the history of English language teaching into three separate categories, that is, method-wise era, calculated-detachment-from-method era, postmethod era. The last era is expanded upon due to its immediate relevance to this study.

Postmethod era

By the end of the 1980s, the profession of language pedagogy had grasped its past wanderings (Brown, 2001:39) and endless cycles of life, death, and rebirth (Kumaravadivelu, 2003:32) methods go through. The gradual emergence of critical thoughts and its speeding-up during the last decade called the nature and scope of method into question. Besides, the appearance of these innovative ideas refigured our understanding of the notion of method. Since the end of 1980s, language teaching pedagogy has reached the "point of maturity" (Brown, 2001:39) and a "state of heightened awareness" (Kumaravadivelu, 2003:32) that now it is high time to get rid of the complexity of never-ending quest for finding the best alternative out of the maze of method. As a result of this newly sharp awareness, an outstanding and marked era seemed indispensable to come up, that is, a "postmethod condition" (Kumaravadivelu, 1994). Among significant available proposals, there exist three important and unique ones in the realm of TESOL.

The three proposals being discussed here revolve around the conceptual axis of strategic framework and scheme. Brown (2001) in his book under the title of *Teaching by Principles: An Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy* devotes particularly three chapters of the book to elaborate upon his proposal. The chapters, in order of appearance, are *The Present: An Informed "Approach"*, *Teaching by Principles*, and *Strategies-based Instruction*. Kumaravadivelu (1994) also proposes a strategic

framework in his famous and thought-provoking article entitled *The Postmethod Condition*: *(E)merging Strategies for the Second/Foreign Language Teaching* published in *TESOL Quarterly*. Waldemar Marton (1988) suggests another profound, well-grounded strategic framework and options in his prominent book. The Kumaravadivelu's and Marton's strategic frameworks are touched upon in the following sections.

Strategic framework: macrostrategies and microstrategies

As already stated, the emergence of postmethod has been as a reactive response to the inadequacy and the rigidities of the concept of *method*. Kumaravadivelu (1994, 2001 & 2003) explains about the postmethod condition by pointing to its three interconnected features. In a nutshell, as he asserts, the postmethod condition signifies three important characteristics. First and foremost, it signifies a search for *an alternative to method* rather than *an alternative method.* Secondly, the postmethod condition suggests *teacher autonomy*. The last and not the least characteristic feature of postmethod pedagogy is *principled pragmatism*. The three major characteristics of postmethod condition outlined above provide the foundation on which a pedagogic and strategic framework is constructed. To put in practical terms, such a framework is supposed to enable teachers to develop the knowledge, skill, attitude and autonomy necessary to devise for themselves as systematic, coherent and relevant alternative to method that is informed by principled pragmatism (Kumaravadivelu, 1994:31, 2003:40).

The proposed strategic framework consists of macrostrategies and microstrategies. Macrostrategies are universal tactics derived from theoretical, empirical and experiential knowledge grounded in classroom-oriented research. In fact, a macrostrategy is a general principle on its basis practitioners can generate their own situation-specific, context-sensitive, need-based microstrategies or classroom techniques. In simple words, the macrostrategies get realized through microstrategies in an educational setting.

The framework comprises ten macrostrategies (Kumaravadivelu, 2003:44-315):

- *Maximize learning opportunities*

- *Minimize perceptual mismatches*

- *Facilitate negotiated interaction*

- *Promote learner autonomy*

- *Foster language awareness*

- *Activate intuitive heuristics*

- *Contextualize linguistic input*

- *Integrate language skills*

- *Ensure social relevance*

- Raise cultural consciousness

Kumaravadivelu (2001) enriches the postmethod condition by proposing a three-dimensional pedagogic system, that is, pedagogy of *particularity*, *practicality* and *possibility*. Ironically speaking, another particular, practical and possible framework is also proposed by Marton (1988) which is the main line of argument throughout the current research.

Marton's strategic framework

According to Marton (1988:xiii), "teacher training programmes should provide trainers with some form of theoretical scaffolding or general schema which will help them to plan their teaching at the beginning of their careers and to interpret their experiences in a principled and coherent way". This schema is directly connected with the essential issue in language pedagogy, i.e. to the question of how to make teaching so efficient that it would support only genuine and successful learning experiences.

From a technical standpoint, Marton's strategic framework, possessing its own macrostrategies, is hypothetically in line with postmethod pedagogy and fundamentally parallel to its underlying notions and is yet closely interwoven with strategy-wise era. With respect to the notion of *possibility* and *practicality* of a framework which are also highlighted by Kumaravadivelu (2001:540-544), Marton points out *possible options and strategies* (1988:xiii) and *operationally definable strategy* (1988:2) leading to

successful development of L2 competence as well. He further nicely refers to a subtle point in such a way that having followed such a strategy-loaded framework, "on the basis of the knowledge provided by the programme and after gaining some practical experience", creative and enlightened teachers will be able to construct their own [of course, ongoing and dynamic] teaching theory (xiii). It is precisely consistent with what Kumaravadivelu (2001) explicitly and frequently indicates that the parameter of *practicality* seeks to enable and inspire teachers to theorize form their practice and practice what they theorize.

Main thesis of Marton's framework is that there are fundamentally and essentially three such options and strategies; listening to or reading texts in the target language (receptive strategy); attempting to communicate via this language (communicative strategy); reproducing, reconstructing and transforming model texts in the L2 (reconstructive strategy). These are three successful language learning procedures logically lead to the idea of three basic teaching strategies, i.e. specific strategies consisting of several macrostrategies signified by the advocates of postmethod pedagogy, by which they can be promoted. Marton (1988:xiv) further claims that these three strategies can be combined with one another (only consecutively); the various combinations making a fourth strategy-eclectic one. By considering the parameter of *particularity* as accredited in postmethod era and due to the specific features such as age factor, time-constraints, and level of language study, the receptive strategy and eclectic one seem one way or another unsuccessful and far away from practical sense in Iranian educational settings. In doing so, the other two significant strategies, *communicative* and *reconstructive* strategies, which appear to be more applicable and have more likelihood of being successful in Iranian educational contexts (of course, within public settings and classrooms; in public schools) are selected and explored in the present study.

Communicative & reconstructive strategy

 The communicative strategy is a language teaching promoting a specific learning strategy that can be materialized as attempted communication in the target language. The nature of this process is best understood as to consider it fundamentally similar to the process of first language acquisition (Marton, 1988:34). In order for communicative strategy of language teaching to be actualized, the procedure is to replicate the natural acquisitional process in the classroom in a deliberate and intentional attempt. The skeleton of this strategy is grounded on the crucial assumption that learner should be meaningfully exposed to the target language for the reason that without a certain amount of meaningful input there cannot be any acquisition at all.

To steer clear of any potential misunderstanding, it should be noted that the notion of the communicative strategy of language teaching is not equivalent to the concept of the communicative approach. The communicative strategy of teaching, as proposed by Marton, is nothing but a certain generically conceived teaching procedure which is supposed to activate a specific, psycholinguistically definable strategy of language acquisition. On the other hand, the communicative approach is a more wide-ranging notion because it covers not only a definite teaching strategy but also a certain cluster of objectives, particular kind of syllabuses and curriculums, a variety of methodological principles and specific teaching techniques.

The reconstructive strategy prompts a distinctive strategy of language learning encompassing a very controlled and gradual development of competence in the target language through the learners' prolonged participation in reconstructive tasks. Reconstructive strategy is depicted as "skill learning, totally compatible with psychological schema of information processing" (Marton, 1988:57). The essential component and integral part of the reconstructive strategy is that activities are always on the basis of a text, spoken or written, in the target language. The source text provides the learner with the linguistic resources in the form of syntactic structures, lexical items, collocations, phrases, etc. considered necessary for the successful and correct performance of a productive task assigned to him/her by the teacher. All types of texts, irrespective of their functions, can serve as the main and source text. An important point to be highlighted is that the task selected has to be connected with the main text, thus for example, it may involve re-narrating the text, summarizing it, retelling it from a different viewpoint, adopting it to the learner's ideas, thoughts, feelings and experiences. The underlying principle of such a strategy lies in the fact that on executing the reconstructive activities, the learner has to produce only well-formed sentences and should not employ any communication strategies.

Methodology

Research Questions

the basis of proposed issues regarding the characteristics of the contextual factors, i.e. learners and teachers, and also the two strategies in question, i.e. communicative and reconstructive strategies, the following research questions are put forward:

1. What are the characteristics of an Iranian typical leaner in reference to the significant notions such as fragility, inhibition, defensiveness, error-tolerance, risk-taking, and extroversion/introversion?

2. Based on the first question, is an Iranian typical student a *careful* type or an *adventurous* type of learner (Marton, 1988)?

3. What are the characteristics of an Iranian typical teacher in terms of essential notions of *proficiency* and *stamina* (Marton, 1988)?

4. Which strategy (*communicative* or *reconstructive*) does best suit Iranian educational system?

Participants

A sample population of 40 knowledgeable and skilled teachers was recruited on a voluntary basis with an average of at least ten years of teaching experience in public schools (approximately one-third of the sample had over twenty years' teaching experience). The selected teachers were both male and female teachers of the province of Khuzestan-Iran.

Instrument

The survey instruments utilized in this study were two mainly distinctive multi-purpose and well-organized questionnaires developed by the researchers. The questionnaires were meticulously designed on the basis of deep examination and critical study of the specialized and applied resources so as to get the survey authenticated and validated. They are, in fact, four separate questionnaires. Actually each main instrument encompasses two sub-categories embedded in one questionnaire. The first two embedded categories (which are referred to as the first questionnaire for ease of reporting) were designed to examine the contextual variables. In other words, the first questionnaire (questionnaires of learner and teacher variables) was developed for the investigation of these two contextual factors (Appendix 1). The second questionnaire (questionnaires of communicative and reconstructive strategies) was developed for examination of the practicality and successfulness of these two strategies so as to complement and even warrant the findings of the first questionnaire (Appendices 2 & 3).

In order to gather quantitative data out of the questionnaires, a type of psychometric response scale got utilized. Accordingly, each item was assigned a polytomous value and assessed on a four-point Likert scale.

Alpha option (Cronbach's Alpha) provides an effective tool for measuring the internal consistency which is a numerical coefficient of reliability. Schommer (1993) points out that the reasonable internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) can range from 0.63 to 0.85. Calculated by the Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS for windows, version 15.0), the Cronbach's alpha test of reliability yielded a coefficient of 0.78 for the questionnaire of the learner variable (extremely reliable), 0.67 for the questionnaire of the teacher variable (reasonably reliable), 0.71 for the questionnaire of the communicative strategy (highly reliable) and 0.63 for the questionnaire of the reconstructive strategy (reasonably reliable).

Materials and data collection procedures

Back to the components of the instruments of the research, the first questionnaire consists of two main categories, fourteen questions in total. The first part includes ten questions as related to the *learner variable*. The other four ones concern the *teacher variable*. The first questionnaire was actually developed to appraise two contextual factors, that is, learner variable and teacher variable. The items are formulated and constructed on the basis of the specialized materials and in reference to applied resources (Gardner & Lambert, 1972; Guiora, 1972; Heyde, 1979; Busch, 1982; Strong, 1983, 1984; Ely, 1986a, 1986b; Marton, 1988; Stern, 1991; Brown, 2001, 2002; Ellis, 2008, among others).

The second questionnaire concerns the evaluation of the degree of possibility, practicality and suc-
cessfulness of two strategies pertinent to the topic under discussion; that is, communicative strategy
and reconstructive strategy. The items are, in fact, the particular teaching techniques or teaching mi-
crostrategies unique to each single strategy, extracted from Marton's book. Considering the basic as-
sumptions such as Iranian educational system, a typical Iranian teacher's stamina and proficiency and
also a typical Iranian learner at present, the participants were required to rate the extent of possibility,
successfulness and practicality of each mentioned technique on a four-point scale ranging from 1 (un-
successful) to 4 (very successful).

Data analysis

From a technical standpoint, due to the fact that this study is a descriptive exploratory survey in na-
ture, the most convenient and effective means for analyzing the data is to draw on descriptive statis-
tics. In this way, the obtained data will be interpreted and analyzed with the aid of descriptive statistic-
al procedures.

Results and Discussion

The present exploratory survey is intended to work out one of the most important proposed strategy-
wise framework in the domain of postmethod pedagogy. Among available considerable proposals, this
study lays stress on Marton's strategic framework. Contextual factors play crucial parts in getting a
postmethod program successfully actualized. The central features such as being context-sensitive
and location-specific demand a focal attention to *particularity* parameter in this paradigm. As a result,
first and foremost, this investigation attempts to depict the particularity of two imperative contextual
factors, that is, teacher and learner. The learner variable is studied on the basis of personality factors,
as it is the criterion for Marton to place a learner in one of his proposed dichotomous category, *careful*
or *adventurous* types of learner. The teacher variable is also examined in terms of two parameters,
that is, *proficiency* and *stamina*.

Contextual factors: learner variable and teacher variable

Correct recognition of the particularities of the contextual factors is frequently referred to as the deci-
sive factor of success of a strategy-wise plan in the postmethod literature. Kumaravadivelu (1994;
2001; 2003; 2006) suggests the parameter of *particularity* to expand upon the specificity of a context
in which a teaching program is supposed to be conducted. Richards (1990) refers to the situational
needs or the context of teaching and Brown (2002:14) introduces the concept of *diagnosis* in his prin-
cipled approach to elaborate on the significance of context. Specifically speaking, Marton (1988) main-
tains that effectiveness of his proposed strategies is just subject to the personality of learner and the
teaching context.

Learner variable

Marton (1988:17-20) introduces two basic types of learner, *careful* type and *adventurous* type of
learner. The most important point to be noted is that he demonstrates these learners from a general
perspective and discusses on them in terms of dichotomous contrasting pairs. He tends to refer to an
adventurous type of learner within the scope of affective domain by resorting to notions such as rela-
tively permeable language ego, risk-taking, extroversion, sociable, large emphatic capacity and cer-
tainly not very ethnocentric. On the other hand, the careful type is characterized by traits and tenden-
cies opposite to the adventurous type.

The personality traits examined in this study are as follows (See appendix 1 for the initial part of the
first questionnaire – learner variable):

- **Language ego involvement/permeability** (its important facets are sense of *fragility*, sense of
  inhibition and sense of *defensiveness* while learning a new language) – Questions 1, 2 and 3.

- **Risk-taking** – Question 4

- **Error-tolerance** – Questions 5 and 6

- **Self-confidence** – Question 7

- **Extroversion/Introversion** – Questions 8, 9 and 10.

Table 4.1: The summarized results of the beliefs in personality traits of the majority of Iranian EFL learners

Personality Traits		Predominantly careful	Predominantly adventurous
Language ego involvement (permeability)	Sense of Fragility	82.5	17.5
	Sense of Inhibition	90	10
	Sense of Defensiveness	70	30
	Mean	80.83	19.17
Risk-taking		72.5	27.5
Error-tolerance			
Sense of fear and hesitation (Aspect A)		82.5	17.5
Apprehension of being humiliated and ridiculed (Aspect B)		77.5	22.5
Mean		80	20
Self-confidence		80	20
Extroversion/Introversion			
Individual work		50	50
Non-argumentative position		70	30
Difficulty in expressing thoughts		77.5	22.5
Mean		65.83	34.17
Total Sum & Mean		Sum = 379.16 Mean = 75.83	Sum = 120.84 Mean = 24.16

- Note: Values represent percentages.

From a holistic point of view, over 75 percent (a high percent) of teachers implied that the Iranian EFL learners have characteristic features of a careful type of learner and as result are classified in this personality category (Table 4.1).

Teacher variable

A postmethod proposal should be cognizant of the characteristics of the teachers available in the educational settings as well. Generally speaking, Marton (1988) explores the characteristics of the teachers from two important interrelated viewpoints. The first element refers to teacher proficiency, that is, whether a teacher is high-proficient or not. The second one is about teacher's stamina. The notion of stamina can be better understood through two interconnected concepts of *time* and *energy* a teacher employs for teaching purposes.

Four questions were developed to survey the characteristic features of the majority of Iranian EFL teachers (See appendix 1 for the second part of the first questionnaire – teacher variable). Questions ten and eleven were devoted to the concept of proficiency and their total scales were taken as indicator of teacher's proficiency. The two last questions (thirteen and fourteen) surveyed the feature of stamina with the aid of its integral notions which were time and energy. The teachers' responses to

these four questions are in fact reflective assertions of what they figure out as real and true within the educational setting in reference to the abilities of teachers. Besides, they are actually invisible confessions teachers make, possessing clear and important signals for teacher education programs and policies in our country.

Table 4.2: The summarized results of the beliefs in attributes of the majority of Iranian EFL teachers

Attributes	High	Low
Proficiency		
Proficiency in general	17.5	82.5
Proficiency in particular/practice	32.5	67.5
Mean	**25**	**75**
Stamina		
Time	27.5	72.5
Energy	42.5	57.5
Mean	**35**	**65**

* Note: Values represent percentages. Percentages have been rounded to the whole number and thus add up to 100.

Three-fourths of the teachers believed that the majority of Iranian EFL teachers have low proficiency in English language. The findings of this part, place the teacher in the category that Marton tends to call "teacher with poor proficiency". As one of the most important implications of this study, existence of teachers with low proficiency or in other words educating and training teachers with poor proficiency definitely do not seem to be an index of a successful educational program. This fact should be taken into account that there is in fact weaknesses and shortcoming in the teacher education and training program in Iran. 65 percents of respondents believed that the majority of Iranian EFL teachers have poor stamina. It is another challenging issue that needs to be considered carefully in a teacher education program. In sum, the majority of respondents confirmed the fact that most of the Iranian EFL teachers seem to be with low proficiency and poor stamina (Table 4.2).

Several contextual factors

The other relevant contextual factors are the intensity of teaching, size of classes, and level of language study. On the basis of a general observation of a typical classroom, it is not hard to capture appropriate information regarding these factors.

Marton (1988:22) considers a program as an intensive teaching course in which from twenty to over thirty hours per week are assigned to classroom instruction. Since in the Iranian educational system the language teaching program has been designed for a long-term period, it is evident that the existing curriculum has been developed to seek a non-intensive teaching course. As for the size of the classes, it seems that we, with about over twenty students in a typical classroom, have got large classes. The level of language manipulated for teaching, and accordingly corresponding to the level of language utilized for language learning, seems to range from beginning to optimistically (upper-) intermediate.

Table 4.3: Learner and contextual factors marked with respect to favoring the choice of the communicative & reconstructive strategies and also in Iranian educational system

Factors	communicative strategy	reconstructive strategy	Iranian educational setting

A. Learner factors
1. Personality/affective variables
  (a). the careful type
  (b). the adventurous type
	-
	+
		+
		0
			+
			-

2. Age
  (a). children
  (b). adults
	+
	{ +
	  - } (depending on personality type)
		+
		+
			+
			+

3. Aptitude
  (a). high-aptitude learners
  (b). low-aptitude learners
	+
	0
		+
		+
			+
			+

B. Contextual factors
1. Intensity of teaching
  (a). intensive teaching
  (b). non-intensive teaching
	+
	-
		+
		+
			-
			+

2. Size of class
  (a). small classes
  (b). large classes
	+
	{ -
	  + } (depending on whether group work is used)
		+
		+
			-
			+

3. Level of language study
  (a). beginning learners
  (b). intermediate and advanced learners
	+
	+
		+
		+
			+
			+

4. Teacher characteristics
  (a). teacher with poor proficiency
  (b). teacher with poor stamina
	-
	0
		+
		+
			+
			+

In the above table, the plus sign marks a given factor as positively recommended, i.e. as distinctly favoring the choice of that strategy; the minus sign marks it negatively as being counter-indication concerning the implementation of that strategy; and zero marks the factor as neutral.

By comparing the proposed outline of the identified features of relevant variables in the Iranian educational system with the characteristics of the two sketches of both communicative and reconstructive strategies, the reconstructive strategy appears to best suit Iranian educational system (Table 4.2). Taking the factors of language aptitude, age and level of language study as being generally equal in both strategies, the crucial roles of learner, teacher, intensity of teaching and size of classes come to shape the focus of a critical study. Thanks to the long-run teaching program, continuously from guid-

ance school to the end of pre-university, and average number of students attending a class, it is so much obvious that Iranian educational system seeks to pursue a non-intensive teaching with a large class in terms of the number of students.

Table 4.4: Frequencies and cumulative percent on the success of each technique (communicative/reconstructive strategy)

Items (Techniques)	Communicative Strategy		Reconstructive Strategy	
	S	U	S	U
1	25	75	47.5	52.5
2	7.5	92.5	57.5	42.5
3	10	90	60	40
4	7.5	92.5	77.5	22.5
5	10	90	90	10
6	27.5	72.5	75	25
7	75	25	55	45
8	65	35	70	30
9	32.5	67.5	62.5	37.5
10	60	40	72.5	27.5
Total sum & Mean	Sum = 320 Mean = 32.0	Sum = 680 Mean = 68.0	Sum = 667.5 Mean = 66.75	Sum = 332.5 Mean = 33.25

Note: Values represent percentages. Percentages have been rounded to the whole number and thus add up to 100. S=collapsed scores for relative successfulness and successful; U=collapsed scores for little successfulness and unsuccessful.

On the basis of the total score, 68 percent of the respondents pointed out the fact that, at least with regard to the present condition, the specific techniques of communicative strategy won't be practical, possible and successful in the Iranian educational setting. On the other hand, 66.75 percent of the respondents believed that the above mentioned techniques of reconstructive strategy will be practical, possible and successful in the Iranian educational setting (Table 4.4).

Considering the obtained results out of the second questionnaire, not only do the results complement the findings of the first questionnaire but also warrant the prospective use of reconstructive teaching framework as an appropriate strategy. The results indicate that over 66 percent of practicing teachers found the reconstructive techniques possible, practical and successful to be implemented in the classroom with regards to the current condition of the Iranian educational setting, considering all intervening variables (teacher, learner and whole educational system). On the other hand, just 32 percent of the teachers stated that the communicative teaching techniques are appropriate, practical and successful in the educational system. A high percent of agreement with the practicality and successfulness of reconstructive techniques and tasks is the other side of the coin of this investigation that guarantees the success of this teaching program.

Conclusion

The core function of this study was a postmethod-oriented endeavor to arrive at a reasonable conclusion concerning the adoption of the most appropriate teaching strategy out of the strategic framework proposed by Marton (1988), best suiting Iranian educational system. In doing so, two teaching strategies, that is, communicative strategy and reconstructive strategy were selected to be investigated. The pedagogically ultimate purpose of both strategies is maintained to be similar. They both set up a

process through which L2 competence is supposed to successfully develop. The superiority of any of them over another is entirely subject to the particularities of the context.

Specifically speaking, in parallel with the core function of the study, the underlying objective this study sought to accomplish was to diagnose and analyze the characteristic features and particularities of the Iranian educational system through fairly comprehensive exploration of two imperative contextual factors, that is, learner and teacher. This critical diagnosis of the distinctive features of the existing teaching/learning context is precisely and hypothetically consistent with the parameter of *particularity* in the postmethod paradigm. The possibility and practicality of an educational scheme will be in fact dependent upon the appraisal and identification of the particularities. As a result, the focal and main line of this exploratory-analytical research was assigned to the quest for assessment and detection of the particularities (characteristic features of contextual elements).

Moving along a postmethod course to reach a logical and practical conclusion in order to prefer employment of one strategy, the researchers knowingly intended to take a calculated and research-oriented measure to theoretically keep pace with the sharp and heightened awareness currently prevailing in the profession of language teaching pedagogy, that is, postmethod condition, and also make an in-depth and detailed analysis of the teaching/learning context in the Iranian educational setting so as to capture invaluable information for the success of English language teaching/learning program in the country. Considering the majority as the criterion and decisive factor, with respect to the type of learners (careful students) and teachers (with poor proficiency and stamina), a non-intensive teaching curriculum and large amount of classes, the best strategy that can correspond with all these conditions and yet result in the successful development of L2 competence was detected to be reconstructive strategy.

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Appendix 1

Learner & Teacher Variable

Dear teacher, the present questionnaire is supposed to conduct a descriptive-analytical survey on the state of educational structure of the country in the mould of this opinion poll. In this way, it attempts to study several factors effective and connected with educational system so as to be able to present an efficient and useful strategy for teaching English language in the country. This questionnaire has been developed in four parts (variables of student and teacher – communicative and reconstructive strategies). Teachers are expected to   rate the items on the basis of their experiential knowledge, observations and reasonable evaluation and analysis. Meticulousness and precision in responding definitely helps the researcher in drawing a realistic conclusion and judicious evaluation.

With special thanks

Full name (optional): …   Place of teaching: city/town…

Teaching experience: …   Gender: …

Please, indicate the degree of your agreement with the following statements by placing a tick in the appropriate column. It is worth mentioning that in evaluating the variables, factors and proposed issues, the majority is as criterion and decisive factor, therefore the special and exceptional cases are not in question.

Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly Agree

* Learner Variable

1. The student feels afraid and finds himself vulnerable and weak on expressing himself in the target language (English); as a result, instead of speaking in the target language, he prefers to remain silent.

2. The student, due to the lack of adequate and perfect command of target language (English), has inhibitions and feels concerned for venturing into expressing his thoughts and feelings in English language; as a result, the core of his personality tends to use and rely on the mother language (Farsi).

3. In the process of learning the target language (English), a new identity is constructed under the influence of such a learning of language – language ego. It places student in a conservative and even defensive position; thus it doesn't allow him to express himself easily and without susceptibility.

4. Students, in classroom activities (answering the questions, solving the exercises and expression of thoughts) are less willing to take a risk; as a result, they prefer to wait for the others to be volunteered to reply and then after hearing volunteers' responses, they make their mind to respond.

5. The student feels afraid of committing errors on answering the questions, and he does not kind of tolerate such a condition; hence he hesitates over the responding (often after the others) and attempts to rehearse the answer in order for ensuring the accuracy.

6. The student prefers not to take a risk and keeps silent with respect to the belief that committing errors on using the target language (speaking, writing, reading and listening) might cause others to humiliate and make a fool of him.

7. Our students have no profound and deep self-confidence of their real capacities in learning the target language (English). As a result, in the educational context, they have not adequate and necessary self-confidence to function and interact effectively and in a goal-oriented manner with the teachers and other students to prove their abilities and the competence of their talents.

8. The students, in the classroom situation, prefer to work individually and alone rather than group work and interacting with others (their prevailing assumption is that the degree of efficiency and successfulness is higher in individual work)

9. While discussing about a topic (or getting into an argument), students prefer to remain silent (hoping the issue will resolve itself); and as a result they don't participate in expressing their thoughts and getting into the argument with the teachers and the class.

10. When tending to put their important thoughts and ideas into words in the classroom, they don't do it so fairly easily and find it difficult; as a result they remain silent.

* Teacher Variable

1. Our teachers possess a high proficiency (near-native or native-like) in the target language (English) in a way that the accuracy and correctness of their functions stands at a very high level, for example in pronouncing the words, stress, intonation and use of correct grammatical structures and proper lexical items.

2. Teachers, relying on their high proficiency in the target language (English), are ready for handle any unpredictable and emergency communicative activities and are able to manage them successfully and satisfactorily.

3. In order to teach successfully and implement pertinent principles and techniques, our teachers spend **much time** to study and get themselves prepared before attending the classroom.

4. Our teachers, by spending **much energy** in the classroom, are able to patiently follow up their teaching and correct all students' errors.

Appendix 2

Communicative Strategy

Please, indicate the degree of your agreement with the *successfulness*, *practicality* and *possibility* of the following techniques by placing a tick in the appropriate column. It is worth mentioning that in evaluating the variables, factors and proposed issues, the majority is as criterion and decisive factor, therefore the special and exceptional cases are not in question.

Unsuccessful, Little Successfulness, Relative Successfulness, Successful

1. Most of the class time should be spent on speaking activities.

2. Only the target language should be used in the class.

3. Most of the speaking activities practiced in class should involve spontaneous exchanges in real and unplanned discourse. In other words, the modeled language use and dialogues should not be utilized for communicative language use.

4. The focus of all classroom activities is on negotiation of meaning and exchange of information and not on the language and its forms.

5. The structure of the target language should not be taught explicitly. Therefore, there are no grammar explanations and exercises, no drills of any kind, no grammar tests.

6. Speaking activities should be structured in such a way that students can overcome an information gap or solve a problem. For instance, they may be given a set of maps and timetables and told to find the most economical way of reaching a certain destination by a certain fixed time.

7. Games and recreational activities should be used in the classroom (role-plays, simulations,…).

8. Class activities should be organized in a way that get students emotionally-mentally involved and they can express their own ideas, values, feelings and experiences.

9. As far as meaning is transferred (message is comprehensible), teacher's feed back is positive and there is no need of occurred errors. But in case errors make a block in effective communication and stream of meaning-transfer process, teacher's feedback is negative and the error should be corrected.

10. Teacher, for correcting an error, uses a special technique (expansion). He should repeat the learner's erroneous utterance in a completely correct structure with minor additional changes. For example,

Teacher: Where did you go on Monday?

Student: I go cinema.

Teacher: Oh, I see. You went to the cinema on Monday.

Appendix 3

Reconstructive Strategy

Please, indicate the degree of your agreement with the *successfulness*, *practicality* and *possibility* of the following techniques by placing a tick in the appropriate column. It is worth mentioning that in evaluating the variables, factors and proposed issues, the majority is as criterion and decisive factor, therefore the special and exceptional cases are not in question.

Unsuccessful, Little Successfulness, Relative Successfulness, Successful

1. A large amount of activities should be done by student outside class (often at home).

2. When student uses a wrong structure, the teacher quickly lets him know of his error and asks him to self-correct the error immediately and seriously.

3. In case student is not able to self-correct the error, the teacher should certainly correct it. In general, all students' errors (major or minor) should be corrected.

4. A specific time during the class should be devoted to teach and explain pedagogical grammar rules explicitly.

5. The teacher should place a special emphasis on his pronunciation because he is the main source of modeling and learning of correct pronunciation in the classroom.

6. In the beginning stages of learning, students are asked to read or listen to a text (very simple and short) in advance and then reproduce a part or whole of it in the class by heart. They are required to get themselves prepared for answering to would-be raised questions from the text or even the translation of some words or phrases (English to Farsi and vice versa).

7. Students are asked to apply only the structures and sentences out of the source text, of course in a completely correct form. In this way, the use of compensating strategies such as communication strategies in order to evade applying pertinent structures and phrases should be avoided.

8. A text is given to students to study it well in advance (with a tape or the text is read aloud by teacher to assure the correct pronunciation of words), then teacher provides sentences in Farsi (these sentences are novel combinations constructed with the aid of elements of the source text) and students are asked to translate the new sentences in English. The other techniques are the use of visual tools (image – film) to prompt students to create novel recombinations in response to them.

9. A text (fairly long) is given to students and they are asked to re-narrate or give a summary of it in the class. They have to use novel utterances and phrases in summarizing or re-narrating the source text.

10. A text (long) is given to students in advance, and then in the class, they are asked to: 1) retell the source text from a different viewpoint. 2) retell the source text to another situation (for example, changing a dialogue in a railway station to a conversation at an airport). 3) discuss about the subject of text, adapting his personal experiences. 4) change the rhetorical structure and functional type of the source text to retell it in another mould (for instance, a narrative text can be expanded and transformed into a dramatic activity [role-play]).