



# The TFLTA Journal

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# *The TFLTA Journal*

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*The TFLTA Journal* is a online, peer-reviewed publication of TFLTA, the Tennessee Foreign Language Teaching Association, an affiliate of ACTFL. The journal publishes original scholarly articles (i.e., research studies, innovative instructional methods and techniques, new curriculum paradigms, assessment trends, policy and accountability issues, and linguistic and cultural issues) that are of interest to modern, classical and second language educators in the K-16 global arena. Submissions are accepted year-round and inquiries to the Editor are most welcome (pdwiley@utk.edu). Please refer to Submission Guidelines for specific criteria for potential manuscripts for this publication.



# *The TFLTA Journal*

Fall 2011/Spring 2012



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## Message From the Editor

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The Fall 2011/Spring 2012 issue of the peer-reviewed, online *TFLTA Journal* presents articles treating four very unique issues in the second language arena. Two were submitted from world language educators hailing from the southern United States and two from colleagues on the other side of the world, Iran and Nigeria.

The first article, written by Keith Corbitt from East Carolina University, presents an empirical research study focusing on the differences in perceived strategy use and preferred learning styles among students studying Spanish in a Modified Foreign Language Program and in a non-Modified Foreign language Program. His research challenges those who feel that learning-disabled students are not good candidates for acquiring a second language.

Abby Eakin, classroom high school French teacher in Knox County Schools, Knoxville, Tennessee, offers the second article in our current journal issue. She explores the impact of integrating SKYPE lessons into daily instruction in her French 3 classroom, in which her students communicated on a regular basis with native French speakers.

Next, in the Fall/Spring issue, comes our third scholarly article, written by Kamal Heidari Soureshjani and Hossein Ghanbari, from Islamic Azad University, Iran, who conducted research in their EFL classrooms, specifically looking at what factors may contribute to an effective oral presentation in a second language classroom.

Our final article, submitted by Adenike Akinjobi and Akindele Julianah Ajoke, from the University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria, and Osun State University, Osogbo, Nigeria, respectively, offers a look at the challenges that speakers of English in Nigeria (whose country has more than 400 official languages in addition to English) experience as they learn proper stress patterns in English.

We who serve on the Editorial staff and Board of *The TFLTA Journal*, and those who are members of the TFLTA Board of Directors, hope that you will enjoy our current issue. Please share it and previous *Journal* issues, in addition to the Call for Papers and Submission Information for Authors, with your colleagues in the field.

Patricia Davis-Wiley  
Editor

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## Call for Papers and Submission Information for Authors

### *The TFLTA Journal* Volume 4 Fall 2012/Spring 2013

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The Editorial Board of *The TFLTA Journal* would like to invite you to submit scholarly articles (i.e., research conducted in the classroom; language approaches/strategies; meta-analyses; assessment issues; integration of authentic literature into the classroom; context and content-based instruction; digital literacies; assessment measures; cultural issues; position papers) of interest to K-16 world language (modern, classical and second languages) educators.

*The deadline for the Fall/Spring issue of the journal is December 1, 2012*, to allow ample time for a blind review of submitted manuscripts and the editing of accepted articles. Earlier submissions are most welcome. Upon receipt of manuscripts, the authors will be notified as soon as possible by the Editor.

*Submission guidelines to be followed appear below.*

1. Submit your manuscript electronically to Dr. Patricia Davis-Wiley, Editor, *The TFLTA Journal*, at: [pdwiley@utk.edu](mailto:pdwiley@utk.edu).
2. Put *TFLTA Journal article submission* in the subject line of your email and include your name, title, school/office affiliation, email address, contact phones numbers and working title of the manuscript in the body of the email.
3. Manuscript maximum length (double-spaced) is 20 pages with 1" margins all around.
4. Create a Microsoft WORD document, using Times Roman 12 font.
5. Follow APA '09 (6<sup>th</sup> edition) format for headings, references, figures and tables.
6. Include a title page *with* your name and affiliation and a title page *without* your name; this will expedite the review process; do not use running heads; paginate the article.
7. Use [insert Table X here] or [insert Figure Y here] in the body of the text where tables and figures need to be placed; insert separate pages for tables and figures *at the end of paper*, following references; tables and figures may need to be re-sized in the final manuscript so be sure to save them as high resolution *jpeg* or *.docx* files.
8. Include a brief (150-word maximum) abstract of the article (to be placed following the title) and a 75-word maximum biographic statement for each author (at end of the article).
9. Manuscripts are accepted year-round, and authors are encouraged to submit their manuscripts well ahead of the deadline for the Fall 2012/Spring 2013 issue.
10. Inquires concerning proposed submissions are welcome and should be addressed to the Editor of *The TFLTA Journal* at: [pdwiley@utk.edu](mailto:pdwiley@utk.edu). Please be sure to put *TFLTA Journal article* in the subject line of your email.

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## The Preferred Learning Styles and Perceived Strategy Use of Students in a Modified Foreign Language Program

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Keith Corbitt  
*East Carolina University*

*The differences in perceived strategy use and preferred learning style among students in a Modified Foreign Language Program and students in a non Modified Foreign language Program of Spanish as a foreign language were investigated. Students completed the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (Oxford, 1989) and the Learning Style Survey: Assessing Your Learning Styles (Cohen, Oxford, & Chi, 2002, pp. 15-18). The data were subjected to statistical analyses (Statistical Package for Social Sciences 17.0) to determine mean differences between the two groups. All assumptions were met and several findings were statistically significant ( $p > .05$ ). The results indicated that the two groups significantly diverged in terms of their perceived strategy use and preferred learning style. Additionally, the findings suggest that men, while behaving differently than women, are not more likely to register for a MFLP class than women, as one might hypothesize from previous research (Hallowell & Ratey, 1994; Heward, 2006; Shaywitz, 2003). Pedagogical implications and suggestions for future research will be discussed.*

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### Background Information

Since 1985, the number of incoming college freshmen with learning disabilities has increased steadily. According to Jonathan Arries (1994, p. 110), the percentage of freshmen with a diagnosed learning disability doubled from 1985 (1.1%) to 1991 (2.2%). Recent studies show the percentage of freshmen with diagnosed learning disabilities to be closer to 10% to 11% (Berberi, 2008); and, it is expected that these numbers will continue to rise. According to Heward (2006), "Postsecondary education is no longer a fantasy for individuals with disabilities; it is a reality occurring with greater frequency" (p. 616). Concomitantly, 80% of these students choose fields of study that have a one to two-year foreign language requirement (Arries, 1994, p. 111). In summary, the projected increase in the number of students with learning disabilities attending a college with a foreign language requirement is, for the first time, making educators and researchers take notice.

Arries (1999) states that, "In the last decade, the faculties and administrators of many four-year colleges have been astonished by sudden and dramatic increases in the enrollment of students with learning disabilities" (p. 98). Consequently, traditional means (e.g. waivers, course substitutions, exemptions, etc.) of addressing the academic needs of students with learning disabilities are no longer practical for many post-secondary institutions. By allowing waivers, course substitutions and/or exemptions, administrators are establishing a precedent that would, due to the expected and continued increase in the sheer number of students with learning disabilities, create a logistical conundrum (Sparks & Ganschow, 1999, p. 179). Attempting to



preclude the aforementioned, four-year colleges and universities are less inclined to offer waivers, course substitutions and/or exemptions. Instead, administrators require that foreign language departments work collaboratively with their respective Office of Disability Services for Students to ensure that all students' needs are met. This usually takes one of two forms. Foreign language departments offer a combination of in-classroom accommodations and/or out-of-classroom support. In some cases, the schools create a parallel program for these students – a Modified Foreign Language Program (henceforth referred to as MFLP).

In August of 1990, the University of Colorado at Boulder launched what has become a very successful MFLP (Barr, 2012; Lazda-Cazers & Thorson, 2008; Sheppard, 1993). Its faculty's ample conference presentations, article and book publications, sponsored workshops and general student success stories are helping to advance the popularity of the MFLP. Consequently, the faculty at the University of Colorado at Boulder have participated and/or advised in the construction of similar programs on other post-secondary campuses. Qualifying students at these institutions may now choose between a self-contained Spanish class (the MFLP) and an inclusion class (traditional foreign language class).

The process by which one completes his or her university foreign language requirement program varies as a result of the foreign language department and its policy, the chosen language of study, and the students' background knowledge of the language. Regardless, most students must successfully complete the fourth semester foreign language course in order to fulfill their foreign language requirement. Depending on one's placement scores or previous knowledge of the subject matter (i.e., High School Advanced Placement scores), students may place directly into the fourth semester course, a lower level course (i.e., the second semester course or the third semester course), or begin anew with the first semester introductory course. With respect to the latter, most students take four semesters, or two academic years, of their chosen foreign language. MFLPs, however, follow a slightly different path. MFLPs will occasionally place a student into the second or third semester, but it does not happen often. Students in a MFLP typically begin their program together, end together and have the same instructor throughout their four-semester course sequence. Despite these differences and the difference in methodological approaches –MFLPs typically follow a multi-sensory approach whereas their non-modified counterpart does not have such a mandate – the two programs are quite similar in that students typically use the same book, are assigned the same homework and take the same tests that cover the same subject matter.

### **Literature Review: Multi-Sensory Language Learning**

According to researchers (Sheppard, 1993; Sparks & Ganschow, 1999), at-risk learners that historically and habitually have had grave difficulties in learning a foreign language are capable of learning a foreign language in a self-contained Modified Foreign Language Program. In describing the benefits of the University of Colorado at Boulder model, Sheppard (1993) writes, "We are confident that many learning-disabled students and students who for an unidentified reason have severe difficulty with foreign language can be successful in a modified environment" (p. 104). MFLPs, although few in number, share a common goal and a common be-

lief as to how to facilitate success for their students— instructors should use strategies and methods based in Multi-sensory Structured Language (Lazda-Cazers & Thorson, 2008, p. 123).

According to the University of Colorado at Boulder’s Modified Foreign Language homepage, the following characteristics are inherent to Modified Foreign Language Program instruction: Attention to affective issues and anxiety reduction, frequent repetition and review, adjusted content, adjusted pace of introduction of new material, explicit instruction in grammar of the language, explicit instruction in phonology of the language, a multi-sensory approach (henceforth referred to as MSL) to language learning (Department of Speech, Language and Hearing Sciences, 2011).

The MSL advocates for a structured and sequential approach to learning that addresses the students’ varied Sensory/Perceptual learning styles. According to Sparks and Miller (2000), the MFLP’s multi-sensory approach emphasizes direct and explicit teaching of phonology (phoneme – sound)/orthography (grapheme – spelling) and should be used at the beginning of each class immediately after completing a quick three to four minute warm-up in the target language. The authors recommend the Orton-Gillingham approach which requires that teachers first model the sound while writing the graphemes on the board or an overhead projector. Students are instructed to write the letter while simultaneously listening to the sound. In accordance with the Orton-Gillingham approach, students create a flash card deck that they can both refer back to and add to as more phoneme/grapheme relationships are presented. Instructors are also encouraged to begin with similar sounds and then transition into non-native phonemes. Upon completing the phonological/orthographical activity, the instructor transitions into a bottom-up, explicit grammar presentation in the first language. The rules of the target structure (e.g., verb tense morphology) should be explained and the corresponding structures modeled to facilitate acquisition. Next, the instructor has students manipulate the structure via multi-sensory drills (i.e., touching, pointing, and circling).

### **MSL and the Linguistic Coding Differences Hypothesis**

The MSL approach is predicated on Sparks and Ganschow’s Linguistic Coding Differences Hypothesis (henceforth LCDH). The LCDH attempts to explain FL learning difficulties and posits “native language difficulties as a possible cause of FL difficulties” (Sparks & Ganschow, 1993, p. 289). The LCDH takes as its point of departure Vellutino and Scanlon’s research on native language reading disabilities which suggest that poor readers have difficulty with phonological coding and syntax. That is not to say, however, that poor readers are deficient in syntactic knowledge. “A study by Fowler (1988) finds that basic syntactic knowledge is not lacking in poor readers; instead, poor readers have an underlying deficit in phonological processing that has an impact on their ability to perform syntactic tasks” (as cited in Sparks, 2005, p. 193). Moreover, Sparks, Ganschow et al.’s myriad research (1986; 1991; 1995a; 1995b; 1999a; 1999b; 2000a; 2000b; 2005; 2011) suggests that while the FL-problem learner does not have global or general language problems s/he does have phonological coding difficulties and that those difficulties are a result of native-language difficulties. According to Sparks that those difficulties are a result of native-language difficulties. According to Sparks and Gan-



schow (1993), the Assumption of Specificity and Modularity support the hypothesis that posits a L1/L2 link.

Sparks and Ganschow (1993; 1995) believe that phonological processing is a cognitive deficit that is specific to the task of learning language and thus meets the Assumption of Specificity. This is not a novel hypothesis, however. In 1986 Stanovich stated:

There do appear to be a variety of cognitive functions that are associated with reading failure. A careful consideration of this variety leads naturally back to the assumption of specificity: the idea – almost always implicit if not explicitly stated – that the concept of a specific reading disability requires that the deficits displayed by the disabled reader not extend too far into other domains of cognitive functioning. (p. 110)

Additionally, Stanovich's work suggests that phonological processing also meets the requirements for modularity because, as a cognitive skill, it neither directs nor is dependent upon global language (as cited in Sparks, 1995, p. 207). Research (Ganschow & Sparks, 1986; Ganschow et al., 1991; 1994, Javorsky, Sparks, & Ganschow, 1992; Sparks et al., 1992a, b; Sparks, Ganschow & Pholman, 1989) seems to corroborate the aforementioned, for it suggests that students that have struggled in foreign language generally do well in their other courses.

In sum, the LCDH assumes that poor phonological processing skills in the first language impede perception of novel phonological strings, spoken language comprehension and reading abilities which in turn contribute to deficits in listening comprehension, oral expression, reading comprehension, syntax, general knowledge and verbal memory in the foreign language only (Sparks, p. 209). Inherent in the MFLP is the belief that these impediments can be attenuated via MSL. Sparks, Ganschow et al. do not allow for alternative views, however. It is their belief that the LCDH is the only theory capable of explaining why students who, due to no fault of their own, cannot learn a FL (Horwitz, 2000, p. 258) .

In 2005, Castro and Peck challenged Sparks and Ganschow's theory and questioned the LCDH as the only possible reason for difficulties in FL learning. In an attempt to identify what other elements, besides the LCDH, could possibly explain foreign language learning difficulties, Castro and Peck (2005) conducted a study involving students enrolled in a traditional Spanish class (n = 56) and Modified Spanish class (n = 43) at a large U.S. university. Their research questions were: "Do learning styles play a role in foreign language learning difficulties and is there a learning style favored by successful/unsuccessful foreign language learners?" (p. 403). The Kolb Learning Styles 1993 LSI II-A: Self Scoring Inventory was administered to both sets of students. The data were collected and subjected to statistical analyses. The findings were as follows: 1) There is no statistically significant correlation between learning styles and grades. 2) There are no statistically significant differences between learning styles amongst first and third semester classes. 3) There was a statistically significant ( $p < 0.0001$ ) negative correlation between Abstract Conceptualization and Reflective Observation on the Kolb Learning Style survey. 4) "There were higher counts for Concrete Experience in the modified class than

in the regular class” (p. 406).<sup>1</sup> “Accommodators appear in slightly higher numbers in modified classes” (p. 407).<sup>2</sup> These results lead the authors to answer their research questions affirmatively stating:

We found that learning styles do play a role in foreign language learning difficulties: A highly specialized learning style is not conducive to language learning where the ability to rely on different learning styles is more advantageous. . . . Students who are not successful in regular language classes are mostly convergers and assimilators, while accommodators and divergers end to be more successful. (p. 407)

The researchers concluded by stating that, “regardless of their (students’) specific language learning deficit or difficulty, the learner’s preferred learning style can hinder or help success in foreign language learning” and that the “findings also indicate that learning style testing should be included in testing measures designed to diagnose foreign language learning difficulties (2005, p. 408). Needless to say, these findings and this paper were met with an immediate rebuttal by Sparks (2006).

Citing a litany of previous research (Arter & Jenkins, 1979; Curry, 1990; Larrivee, 1981; Snider, 1992; Stahl, 1988; Tarver & Dawson, 1978; Willingham, 2005), Sparks claims that teaching to students’ learning styles does not result in greater achievement than not teaching to their style and that awareness of one’s leaning style does not enhance the quality of one’s learning (2006, p. 522). Additionally, Sparks claims that there are serious concerns regarding the validity and reliability that are inherent to all learning styles inventories. To this, Castro (2006) cites research (Veres, Sims, & Shake, 1987; Sims, Veres, Watson & Buckner, 1986; Veres, Sims, & Locklear, 1991; Kolb, 1999) in support of the test-retest reliability and face validity of the Kolb Learning Styles Inventory thus seeming to debunk Sparks’s claims. However, Sparks claims are valid. Validity and Reliability are major concerns when collecting questionnaire data, for the data represent what the students think they do which is not necessarily what they actually do. My research is an attempt to control for several of Sparks et al.’s claims. It uses inventories that have been statistically analyzed for validity and reliability. That does not mean this study does not have its concerns; they will be addressed at the end of the paper.

### **Research Questions**

According to Griffiths (2008), successful and unsuccessful language learners diverge in both their frequency of strategy use and the number of strategies that they use. There appears to be specific language learning strategies used exclusively by students at the higher levels of language attainment. Similarly, there are specific strategies associated with unsuccessful learners (Vann & Abraham, 1990). Students in a MFLP are unsuccessful language learners (DiFino & Lombardino, 2004). The purpose of this study was to explore the perceived strategy use and the preferred learning styles of MFLP students. The research questions for this study are:

1. Do MFLP and non-MFLP students differ significantly in regard to their perceived FL Strategy use?
2. Do MFLP and non-MFLP students differ significantly in regard to their preferred learning styles?
3. To what degree do the MFLP students preferred learning styles mesh with a Multi-Sensory Language Learning approach?
4. What happens when one controls for gender?

## Participants

Seventy-nine students of Spanish at a large southeastern university volunteered to participate in the study. Of the 79 students, 67 (MFLP, n=22; non-MFLP, n=45) completed the *Strategy Inventory for Language Learning* (SILL) and 68 completed the *Learning Style Survey* (LSS) (MFLP, n=26; non-MFLP, n=42). Sixty-seven students (MFLP, n=22; non-MFLP, n=45) completed both surveys. There were 44 females (MFLP, n=13; non-MFLP, n=31) and 23 males (MFLP, n=9; non-MFLP, n=14) who participated in the study. The sample was comprised of students from four classes (MFLP, n=2; non-MFLP, n=2) of Intermediate Spanish IV (fourth semester). Students in this course either placed directly into the course or had already successfully completed Spanish III. The study controlled for teaching style variations associated with having multiple teachers; all four courses were taught by the same teacher.

## Methods and Procedures

The participants in the study completed an Institutional Review Board consent form, a biographical questionnaire, the *SILL* (Oxford, 1990) and the *LSS* (Cohen, Oxford, & Chi, 2002). Data were collected on Monday, April 12, 2010 and Wednesday, April 14, 2010. On day one, students read and signed the consent form and completed the LSS. On day two, the students completed the biographical questionnaire and *SILL*.

The *SILL* uses a 5-point interval scale to measure participant responses. Previous research (Ehrman & Oxford, 1989, p. 12; Lee, 1998, p. 80; Nyikos & Oxford, 1993, p. 14) has shown the *SILL* to be quite reliable with a Chronbach's Alpha ranging from .92 to .96. Similarly to the *SILL*, the *Learning Style Survey* has been subjected to statistical analysis. To determine the different aspects of one's learning style as defined by the inventory, Andrew Cohen (personal communication, April 28, 2010), the coauthor of the *Learning Style Survey*, conducted a factor analysis involving a sample of 350 inventories. An analysis of internal consistency was not needed for this study, for the *LSS*'s items are not designed to co-relate in a manner that would make internal reliability meaningful (Cohen, personal communication, April 28, 2010).

The students wrote all responses on an ACCU-SCAN general purpose answer sheet. The answer sheets were then coded for all relevant independent variables (sex, class, MFLP or non-MFLP) and delivered to the Bloomington Evaluation Services and Testing office for digitization via the Multi-Op system. The raw data were then uploaded using the Statistical Package

for Social Sciences, converted to a delimited file and then subjected to various statistical analyses. Descriptive statistics were analyzed and assumptions were checked and found to be acceptable.<sup>3</sup>

### Findings and Conclusions

To address Research Question Number One, “Do MFLP and non-MFLP students differ significantly in regard to their perceived FL Strategy use?” the data were subjected to an Independent Samples T-test. Table 1 reports that MFLP students were significantly different from non-MFLP students on *Learning with Others*, ( $p = .005$ ). Inspection of the two groups’ means indicates that the MFLP group’s strategy of *Learning with Others* ( $M = 3.55$ ) is significantly higher than the non-MFLP group’s strategy ( $M = 2.99$ ). The difference between the means is .51 points on a 5-point interval scale. The finding that MFLP students prefer to learn in pairs or groups gives credence to those who might support a curriculum informed by Social Constructivism, Sociolinguistic Theory, or any other theory that believes students learn “as a result of social interactions with others” (Tracy & Morrow, 2006, p. 108). Consequently, teachers may want to incorporate Cooperative Learning in their classrooms (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Additionally, researchers, following a Comparison Group Design (Mackey & Gass, 2005), may want to investigate whether MSL or Cooperative Learning yields better L2 learning for this population.

The MFLP group and non-MFLP group also differ significantly in perceived strategy use associated with *Remembering More Effectively*, *Using Your Mental Processes*, *Organizing and Evaluating your Learning*, *Managing Your Emotion*, but not *Compensating for Missing Knowledge* (see Table 1). The non-MFLP group reported more frequent use of strategies designed to compensate for knowledge in the target language, but the mean difference ( $M = .10$ ) was not statistically significant ( $p = .427$ ). These data are informative for two reasons. The data suggest that MFLP students, who by their very nature are less proficient students (Downey, Snyder, & Hill, 2000), report more perceived foreign language learning strategy use than non-MFLP students. The finding that less proficient students report the use of a great many strategies seems to be in accordance with previous research (Porte, 1988; Vann & Abraham, 1990; Griffiths, 2008). Future studies will want to investigate the extent to which these students couple their foreign language strategies with metacognitive strategies, for the literature suggests that the true difference between less proficient learners (e.g., MFLP students) and more proficient learners (e.g., non-MFLP students) lies in the ways in which they combine metacognitive strategies, such as *Organizing and Evaluating your Learning*, with other strategies to tackle a single task (Martha Nyikos, personal communication).

The data obtained to answer Research Question Number Two, “Do MFLP and non-MFLP students differ significantly in regard to their preferred learning styles?” were subjected to an Independent Samples T-test. Descriptive statistics were analyzed and all assumptions were met. The MFLP group significantly diverged from the non-MFLP group on only 2 of the 24 *Learning Style Survey* variables: *How I deal with response time B* ( $p = .028$ ) and *How I deal with ambiguity and deadlines A* ( $p = .001$ ). Interesting is the fact that the two groups’ preferred

Table 1  
*Mean Comparison of MFLP and Non-MFLP Students' Perceived Strategy Use*

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Learning with others			-2.93	65	.005
Non-MFLP	2.99	.75			
MFLP	3.55	.72			
Remembering more effectively			-3.31*	32 *	.002
Non-MFLP	2.84	.45			
MFLP	3.37	.63			
Using your mental processes			-2.12	65	.038
Non-MFLP	3.00	.59			
MFLP	3.31	.51			
Compensating for missing knowledge			.799	65	.427
Non-MFLP	3.62	.56			
MFLP	3.51	.53			
Organizing and evaluating your learning			-3.05	65	.003

sensory-perceptual learning style (Visual, Auditory and Tactile/Kinesthetic) did not significantly diverge ( $p = .813$ ). One might therefore conclude that the MFLP group and the non-MFLP group, despite having statistically significant diverging perceived foreign language strategy use, are quite similar in terms of their preferred learning styles. That is to say, these two groups “do not differ from one another in the ways in which they process information from the environment” (Nell, 2008, p. 49). This is informative, for it suggests that two students, one being a MFLP student and one being a non-MFLP student, who are studying the same language at the same level with the same teacher and who have the same preferred style of learning (e.g., visual) will report to use different foreign language learning strategies. Research on differences in learning styles amongst *good* and *poorer* foreign language students is inconclusive (Nell, 2008). Future research should seek to describe the relationship between the students' preferred learning styles and their perceived use of learning strategies. According to Cohen and Weaver (2006), “Language learning strategies need to be viewed through the perspective of the style preferences of the learners (p. 4).

Research Question Number Three investigated the degree to which the MFLP students' preferred sensory-perceptual learning style meshed with the central purported tenet of the Multi-Sensory Language Learning Approach: instruction must speak to the varied learning styles of the learners. A Repeated-Measures ANOVA was conducted to determine if there were differences between the two groups (MFLP and Non-MFLP) and three sensory/perceptual learning styles (Visual, Auditory and Tactile/Kinesthetic). The assumption of sphericity was not violated ( $p = .054$ ). In other words, the variances of the differences between all combinations of the groups are equal. In addition, the test of Between-Subjects Effects showed no significant difference between the MFLP and non-MFLP ( $p = .813$ ). The results indicate that the MFLP participants did rate the three sensory-perceptual learning style preferences differently and that the difference was statistically significant,  $F = (2, 120) = 7.822, p < .001$ . The means and standard deviations for the three sensory-perceptual learning styles (Visual, Auditory and Tactile/Kinesthetic) are presented in Table 2. An examination of the means suggests that the participants possess one preferred learning style, which was Visual. One may argue that teachers working with this population should consider the students' preference for visual stimuli whenever possible. Cohen and Weaver (2006) state, "Students tend to learn better when the classroom instructor nurtures their learning style" (p. 7). In this case, it is a visual style, and not a multi-sensory style, that arguably needs nurturing.

In addition to providing abundant visual stimuli, teachers might want to help their students "stretch their styles" through Styles and Strategies Based Instruction (Cohen & Weaver, 2006, p. 9). SSBI is defined as, "A learner-focused approach to language teaching that explicitly highlights within everyday classroom language instruction the role of the learners' styles and strategies in performing instructional activities" (Cohen & Weaver, 2006, p. 3). Researchers may want to investigate whether MSL or SSBI yields better L2 learning for this population.

Research Question Number Four investigated the significance of gender as a variable of study. Research in the field of special education and foreign language learning respectfully suggests that gender is a complex variable worth investigation. According to Hallowell and Ratey (1994, p. 14), in fact, males are three times more likely to be affected with Attention Deficit Disorder – a commonly found syndrome amongst MFLP students. Diagnosis divergences between the two groups are even greater. Heward (2006) states, "Boys are 3 to 10 times more likely to be diagnosed with ADHD than are girls" (p. 439). Research regarding dyslexia, a common disorder found amongst MFLP students and one that the Multi-Sensory Language Learning Approach seeks to attenuate, purports similar findings. Shaywitz (2003) states that the "ratio of boys to girls with a reading disability has varied from 2:1 to 5:1" (p. 32). In speaking generally of all LDs, Heward (2006) states that males with LDs outnumber females by 3:1 (p. 191).

Studies investigating the impact of gender on the learning of foreign languages are similarly informative. Quantitative research findings have consistently shown divergence behavior amongst boys and girls (Nyikos, 2008, p. 73). "Women almost invariably use more language learning styles than men and make greater use of general study strategies and formal rule-related practice strategies than men" (Nyikos, p. 76). Taking the aforementioned into account, one might logically hypothesize the following: 1) More men register for MFLP classes than women but 2) women use more language learning strategies than men.

Table 2

*Means and Standard Deviations of the three Sensory-Perceptual Learning Styles for MFLP*

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Visual	3.52*	.425
Auditory	3.02*	.345
Tactile/Kinesthetic	2.64*	.528

\*Mean differences are significant at  $p < .05$ .

Of the 26 MFLP students who participated in this study, 16 were female and 10 were male. To investigate who is more likely to enroll in a MFLP course, males or females, a chi-square statistic was used. Assumptions were checked and were met. Table 3 shows the Pearson chi-square results and indicates that males and females are not significantly different on whether or not they take MFLP classes ( $\chi^2 = .718$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $N = 68$ ,  $p = .397$ ), despite women outnumbering men nearly 2.5 to 1. These findings are noteworthy for they seem to run counter to previous findings (Hallowell & Ratey, 1994; Heward, 2006; Shaywitz, 2003). However, one must keep in mind the small sample size when interpreting the results to these findings. It is quite possible that a larger sample size ( $n = 30$ ) would yield statistically significant findings.

To assess whether females or males in a MFLP class and a non-MFLP class have different perceived foreign language strategy use, and whether there was an interaction between gender and class classification (MFLP and non-MFLP), a multivariate analysis of variance was conducted. All assumptions were checked and met.<sup>4</sup> Although the interaction approached significance, it was not statistically significant, Wilk's  $\Lambda = .816$ ,  $F(6, 58) = 2.18$ ,  $p = .058$ , multivariate  $\eta^2 = .184$ . However, the main effects for gender (Wilk's  $\Lambda = .699$ ,  $F(6, 58) = 4.17$ ,  $p = .002$ , multivariate  $\eta^2 = .301$ ) and class classification (Wilk's  $\Lambda = .709$ ,  $F(6, 58) = 3.98$ ,  $p = .058$ , multivariate  $\eta^2 = .291$ ) were statistically significant. Tables 4-6 show the statistically significant divergences ( $p < .05$ ) between the Independent Variables. Follow-up ANOVAs (see Table 7) indicate that the effects of gender and class were statistically significant for *Remembering More Effectively* ( $p < .05$ ) and *Learning With Others* ( $p < .05$ ).

To determine learning style preferences while controlling for gender, an Independent Samples T-Test was conducted. Assumptions were checked and met.<sup>5</sup> Table 8 shows that males were significantly ( $p < .05$ ) different from females in *How I Use My Physical Senses (Visual)* and in *How I Handle Possibilities (Concrete Sequential)*. An analysis of the data indicate that the female's preference for learning visually ( $M=3.51$ ) is greater than males ( $M=3.28$ ). The difference in means is .23 and the effect size  $d$  is approximately .58, which is considered a medium to large-sized effect (Morgan, Leech, Gloeckner & Barrett, 2007, p. 146). These findings collectively suggest that when conducting styles and strategies research with students in a MFLP, gender is a relevant variable worthy of study.



Table 3  
*Chi-Square Analysis of Prevalence of Taking MFLP Among Males and Females*

<u>Gender</u>					
Variable	n	Males	Females	$\chi^2$	$p$
Spanish				.718	.397
MFLP	26	10	16		
Non-MFLP	42	12	30		
Totals	68	22	46		

Table 4  
*Means and Standard Deviations for Perceived Foreign Language Strategy Use as a Function of Gender and Class (MFLP or non-MFLP) Classification*

		Remembering More Effectively		Using Your Mental Processes		
Group	n	M	SD	M	SD	
Male						
MFLP	9	2.84	.355	3.076	.383	
Non-MFLP	14	2.73	.521	3.063	.656	
Female						
MFLP	13	3.68	.550	3.47	.546	
Non-MFLP	31	2.88	.422	3.00	.567	

Table 5  
*Means and Standard Deviations for Perceived Foreign Language Strategy Use as a Function of Gender and Class (MFLP or non-MFLP) Classification*

		Compensating for Missing knowledge		Organizing & Evaluating Your Learning		
Group	n	M	SD	M	SD	
Male						
MFLP	9	3.61	.502	3.22	.553	
Non-MFLP	14	3.64	.518	3.07	.764	
Female						
MFLP	13	3.43	.554	3.82	.688	
Non-MFLP	31	3.61	.585	2.97	.722	

Table 6

*Means and Standard Deviation for Perceived Foreign Language Strategy Use as a Function of Gender and Class (MFLP or non-MFLP) Classification*

Group	n	Managing Your Emotion		Learning With Others	
		M	SD	M	SD
Male					
MFLP	9	3.03	.377	3.23	.632
Non-MFLP	14	2.57	.684	2.95	.681
Female					
MFLP	13	3.34	.720	3.78	.724
Non-MFLP	31	2.88	.713	3.00	.794

Table 7

*Effects of Gender and Class (MFLP & Non-MFLP) on Foreign Language Strategy Use*

Source	Dependent Variables	df	F	p
Gender	Remembering more effectively	1	15.99	.001
	Using your mental processes	1	.96	.331
	Compensating for missing knowledge	1	.439	.510
	Organizing and evaluating your knowledge	1	1.72	.194
	Managing your emotion	1	1.51	.223
	Learning with others	1	2.23	.140
	Class	Remembering more effectively	1	13.13
Using your mental processes		1	2.88	.094
Compensating for missing knowledge		1	.460	.500
Organizing and evaluating your knowledge		1	3.36	.012
Managing your emotion		1	10.77	.002
Learning with others		1	7.01	.010
Gender x Class	Remembering more effectively	1	7.60	.008
	Using your mental processes	1	2.61	.111
	Compensating for missing knowledge	1	.277	.600
	Organizing and evaluating your knowledge	1	3.32	.073
	Learning with others	1	1.51	.023

Table 8

*Comparisons of Male and Female Learning Style Preferences. (n = 20 males and 42 females)*

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Physical Senses: Visual			-2.08	60	.042
Males	3.28	.374			
Females	3.51	.410			

### Suggestions for Future Research

This study was an exploration in the foreign language learning strategies and preferred learning styles of *at-risk* students (MFLP students) studying Spanish at a post-secondary institution. The findings are suggestive and justify further study. Specifically, future research will want to control for gender when investigating the preferred foreign language learning styles and perceived strategy use of MFLP students, for this data set suggests that there are statistically significant differences based on gender. The finding that the MFLP group has a statistically significant preference for visual learning has implications for teaching and future research as well. Researchers and teachers may want to investigate the degree to which SSBI can be used to 1) help students stretch their styles, and 2) to explicitly teach students strategies that are more in line with their preferred learning styles (Cohen & Weaver, 2006). The findings from a pilot study conducted in concert with this study suggest that the MFLP students, despite clearly being visual learners, are not using strategies commensurate with their learning styles (see Appendix A for a representative sample of a MFLP student self-created study guide). The findings also suggest that the act of taking the LSS is a consciousness raising activity that can inform how a student studies (see Appendix B for a representative example of a student's self-created study guide after having taken the LSS). Most importantly, future studies will want to include, in addition to the questionnaire data, observational data elicited through Stimulated Recalls, Think-Aloud Tasks and/or Immediate-Recall Tasks (Mackey & Gass, 2005, pp. 75-85). As previously mentioned, there are inherent concerns (i.e., reliability and validity) with questionnaire data. Researchers can attenuate these concerns by analyzing students' use of strategies while performing specific tasks.

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## Notes

1. The authors did not state whether or not this finding was statistically significant.
2. The authors did not state whether or not this finding was statistically significant.
3. An initial analysis of the descriptive statistics showed five variables to be kurtotic: *Using your mental processes* (1.535), *How I deal with ambiguity and deadlines* (-1.86), *How I further process information* (1.390), *How I commit material to memory* (1.75), and *How I deal with response time* (1.125). According to Indiana University Department of Statistics, the aforementioned variables are acceptable and are not a concern (Personal communication, May 7<sup>th</sup>, 2010).
4. The Box Test was not statistically significant ( $p = .231$ ), therefore the assumption of homogeneity of covariances was not violated; the Leven's Test was also not statistically significant ( $p=.703, p=.702, p=.773, p=.697, p=.246, p=.683$ ), thus ensuring that the assumption of homogeneity of variance was not violated.
5. The dependent variables are normally distributed and the Leven's tests for equality of variance were not statistically significant ( $p.>.05$ ).

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## The Author

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## Appendix A

### Student 1's Pre-LSS Self-Created Study Guide

Clothes, Colors, Direct Objects

yellow - amarillo  
orange - anaranjado  
blue - azul  
white - blanco  
gray - gris  
brown - café  
purple - morado  
black - negro  
Red - rojo  
Pink - rosado  
Green - verde

S	P
Me	Nos
te	los/las

---

coat - abrigo  
jeans - los bluejeans  
blouse - la blusa  
purse - la bolsa  
socks - los calcetines  
shirt - la camisa  
t-shirt - la camiseta  
belt - el cinturón  
tie - la corbata  
skirt - la falda  
sunglasses - las gafas (de sol)  
gloves - los guantes  
shorts - los pantalones cortos  
sweater - el sueter  
suit - el traje  
dress - el vestido

**Appendix B**  
*Student 1's Post-LSS Self-Created Study Guide*

S	P
me	nos
+e	+s
Lo/La	Los/Las

**Direct Object** = main thing being talked about

**Example:**

- John is going to write a letter
- John va a escribir una carta

**Pronoun** - John la va a escribir

---

S	P
me	nos
+e	+s
Lo	Los

**Indirect Objects** = 2nd object

**Example**

- John is buying a gift for his wife
- John está comprando un regalo a su esposa

**Pronoun** - John le está comprando un regalo

---

**Progressive Tense**

**to be (+) verb + ing**

estar = to be	
estoy   estamos	ar = ando
estas   están	er/ir = iendo
esta   están	oir = yendo

**Examples**

hablar → habl + ando → hablando

comer → + iendo = comiendo

vivir → + iendo = viviendo

**Ex:**

I am talking  
 ↳ estoy hablando

~~Leer~~ → + yendo = leyendo



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## **The Use of SKYPE in the World Language Classroom and Its Effects On Participation and Collaboration**

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**Abby Eakin**  
*Knox County Schools*

*During a quasi-experimental study, a French 3 class used SKYPE, a web-based video communication tool, to communicate with native French speakers. After 3 weeks of communication with the host family, the subjects were asked to complete a short survey that elicited their levels of student involvement, participation, and collaboration. Students responded positively, expressing feelings of more involvement and interest in the SKYPE lessons compared with non-SKYPE lessons.*

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### **Introduction**

Introducing world language students to the idea of a global society and culture can be a challenge, given the constraints of a traditional classroom. Technological advancements have allowed educators the opportunity to bring the international world to the student body. Generally, introductory level language learners have little exposure to cultures outside of their own. By introducing authentic language experiences and providing instant feedback from a native speaker, through web-based conferencing, the benefits are two-fold.

First, using web-based video conferencing, students have the opportunity to hone in on specific grammar, writing, or pronunciation problems that only a native speaker would be able to hear or understand. Secondly, students have the opportunity to make connections with people throughout the world and learn about cultures outside of their own communities. Language teachers are given the daunting task of teaching not just a language, but also everything surrounding that language. Computer-enhanced conferencing, however, helps teachers and students come face-to-face with new people, genuine language experiences, and new cultures.

This paper, focusing on the authentic use of the target language using SKYPE in the world language classroom, will be organized into the following sections: Introduction; Purpose of the Study; Significance of the Study; Limitations of the Study; Review of the Literature; Methodology; Data Analysis; Results; Discussion; Recommendations for Further Study; References; Bibliography; and Appendix.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to determine how SKYPE, a computer-enhanced video conferencing medium, affected students' participation and overall collaboration with other students and teachers in the World Language classroom. This study was accomplished by conducting a review of relevant literature and by analyzing data collected by an instrument created by the researcher.

## **Significance of the Study**

New technology has offered teachers and students a multitude of opportunities for improving instruction in the classroom; however, the majority of the available published works are primarily focused on research of the technology – the hardware and software, not the actual use of this relatively new technology in the classroom. This study was conducted in order to offer teachers and students a first-hand experience on the implementation of this technology in the World Language classroom.

## **Limitations**

This study was limited by a number of variables. The literature reviewed was restricted to that available on the two electronic databases, Full Text and ERIC, at The University of Tennessee and published in the years 2004 through 2010. The population involved in this study was limited in number and diversity. In addition, the subjects were asked a limited number of close-ended survey questions on one quantitative instrument. Therefore, as a result of these limitations, the results of this study cannot be generalized to a larger population.

## **Review of Literature**

The following review of the literature is based on articles found via electronic databases primarily from peer-reviewed journals that date from 2004 to present and is organized into four sections: Web-Based Conferencing; Teacher Strategies; Cultivating a Safe Environment, and a Summary.

### **Web-Based Conferencing**

Web-based video-chat tools are not all created equally. In a study conducted by Eroztuga and Saddler (2009), research results ranked six of the leading video chat tools: MSN Messenger, SKYPE, Yahoo, ICQ, CUworld, and Paltalk (Eröz-Tuğa & Saddler, 2009). Ranking in the respective order listed above, these tools were evaluated by world language teachers using a questionnaire asking about ease of use, reliability, and sound and audio quality (Eröz-Tuğa & Saddler, 2009). Furthermore, in order to benefit from these tools, one has to know what equipment will work best for the classroom. If one is able to see the other class but unable to hear, then the point is moot. Students and teachers need a reliable source in order to have an affective authentic experience.

Gomez's (2010) research provides a foundation for making a case for SKYPE, one of the newest web-based tools that many find easy to use as well as effective. Students and teachers have the opportunity to talk in large and small groups as well as chat using text, thus, creating an opportunity for written, oral, and aural comprehension. Meeting a class for the first time can be done in a large discussion format with guided questions and progress to smaller group discussions with only themes as guidelines for conversation. However, logistically, arranging students into small groups with multiple web cameras calls for a high-tech school computer lab. This sort of arrangement may not be entirely possible; nonetheless, given two international classrooms with one web camera each, one will definitely find that the possibilities and applications are endless.

Therefore, maintaining manageability is also key in the success of integrating technology into the world language classroom. Eaton's (2010) research states, "Because Skype originally began as a voice-over-Internet (VOIP) service, as a cost-effective alternative to traditional phone calls, its application as a personal communication tool makes it more attractive to those who struggle to incorporate technology into their classrooms" (p. 11). This study implies that teachers need to locate a certain comfort level with the technology they choose to use. Frustration with the functionality of a web-based tool has the potential to damage the pacing of a lesson and student's interest levels. Planning for the unforeseen is where the tool can be used for pre and post collaborative efforts on the parts of the teachers.

## Teacher Strategies

Given this new technology, teachers must adjust their methods in order to best meet the needs of the students; however, no two teachers are alike. In posing the same question to several educators, one would likely hear many different responses. That is exactly why collaborating can be a challenge for teachers. Add in the complications of technology, and one may find him or herself in a 21st century world language classroom. One must find common ground, build, and compromise in order to reach the best decision for the students. Musanti and Pense (2010) suggest that, "Collaborative practices have been defined as central to professional development because they further opportunities for teachers to establish networks of relationships through which they may reflectively share their practice, revisit beliefs on teaching and learning, and co-construct knowledge" (p. 74). When creating a community of educators, one must be aware of the many different teaching styles and personalities that appear within the new population. No one is able to create a cohesive unit of educators without some preparation.

First, one must outline and define what it means to be a teacher community. Levine (2010) reports, "Most conceptions of teacher community do have a common core, i.e., the notion that ongoing collaboration among educators produces teacher learning, and this ultimately improves teaching and learning for K-12 students" (p. 110). Therefore, as Levine suggests, teachers must model the behavior they wish to see in their students. A functioning and ongoing collaboration among team-teachers yields the same response from students. This is important because if students can model a team arrangement, the flow of the lesson, general instruction, and classroom management become not only much easier, but everyone involved inherently learns to function as one unit.

In general, one finds that a good educator constantly changes his or her repertoire of information to stay current and relevant. This is especially true in an ever-growing technological and global society. There is an opportunity to improve upon a curriculum and the students' overall experience. With a web-based collaborative seminar, teachers have the ability to present authentic artifacts and interactions for their students. According to Wang, Chen, and Levy (2010), an effective *e-model* should include practice, reflection, and collaboration as its key features" (p. 777). Wang built on these three ideas with a theory from Korthagen (2001) and Loughran (2006) who state, "A pedagogy of teacher education should go beyond the mere transmission of knowledge and focus on identity formation and personal growth" (as cited in Wang, 2010, p. 777). According to the research, in a world language classroom, these qualities are more than ideal, as cultivating these traits promotes awareness beyond language learning

and helps to more thoroughly define the ever-desired critical thinking skills. Nonetheless, the collaborating teachers must be able to outwardly demonstrate effective collaboration before ever setting foot, or face, rather, in the cyber classroom.

Conversely, the reflection on the success of the lesson can be just as important as the planning and preconference. As stated in Carolan and Wang (2012), “Peer observation used technologies such as, video recording a class, email, and SKYPE. Teachers reflected on their own and each others' practice, methodology, students, and institutions” (abstract). Practice without reflection can yield more bad habits instead of improved learning experiences, thus, the implementation of Skype, or other video-conferencing tools, can be just as instrumental for teachers to acquire knowledge and better their practices as the tool is for students.

### **Student Collaboration**

Initial online meetings will certainly yield little more than introductory information; however, provided enough time throughout the academic year or semester, students have the opportunity to create meaningful artifacts through what Gomez's (2010) research refers to as computer-supported team-based learning, or CS-TBL. The researcher highlights, “The instructor creates structured discussion threads to facilitate the team building process” (p. 380). Therefore, the students become responsible for the real formation of the learning, and the teacher is merely a their guide to provide the framework by which the learning should be accomplished. Once students take ownership of their international language exchanges, they add meaning and personalization to an already authentic experience, thus yielding a more concrete understanding of the material.

Conversely, Pozzi (2010) explores varying levels of structure in the realm of Computer Supported Collaborative Learning, or CSCL. She finds, “This [Jigsaw Method] indicates that highly structured activities should be taken into account in those contexts where one wants to develop students' ability to work in groups and reflect with others” (p. 73). A goal of the upper-level world language learner is to be able to carry out higher order conversations in the target language. These types of exercises, where specific goals are presented for each interaction, allow for the students to more concretely reach and track their own comprehension by communicating using new vocabulary and more difficult grammar constructions.

### **Cultivating a Safe Environment**

Safety is a high priority when considering students in a cyber-world, and as with some online experiences, there are drawbacks. In a recent study of a virtual tool, Second Life, students would have the opportunity to make *avatars*, or digital three-dimensional cartoon characters of themselves in order to carry on chats with international students (Andreas, Tsiatsos, Terzidou, & Pomportis, et al., 2010). Pointing out that students would be able to infer non-verbal clues with the help of these avatars seems harmless and advantageous to some; however, a teacher could never be absolutely positive who is controlling the other avatar (Andreas et al., 2010). A simple breach of a password would allow personal or sensitive information to be made public. Therefore, this type of interaction would have to be in a highly-controlled environment, which may present a challenge when considering the capabilities and training of those

teachers executing the technological control. Thus, teachers need to be aware that when considering online tools for a language exchange, the use of SKYPE, or another video-chat tool, ensures the integrity of the account holder and those he or she is contacting. Nonetheless, safety cannot be considered a mere technological trait. One needs to consider safety on all levels of the cyber-domain.

Outside of the World Wide Web, the literature reports that teachers must also concern themselves with the comfort level of the students within this new medium of learning. This technology-enhanced language exchange is not just meeting new people. Students are about to be exposed to new ideas, cultures, and references they may have never heard of before. “Learning how to read the big picture of a course and seeing what’s shared and valued within the community helps them adjust better” (Bentley, Tinney, & Chia, 2005, p. 61). Instead of highlighting the differences, which may be many, it is suggested to focus attention first on the similarities. These similarities can be slight (i.e., age and common interests). Yet, once the comfort level of the students reaches an equilibrium, the students will have a comfortable base on which to discuss deeper topics. Therefore, Bentley et al. (2005) suggest that safety should be respected as both physical and emotional. Additionally, the online environment and the classroom are places of non-judgmental discussions and not merely a place to reflect on differences and similarities in culture, language, and life.

Furthermore, Bell (2010) states that these safe environments foster higher-order thinking as well as the ability to cultivate practical knowledge. She adds, “PBL [Project Based Learning] promotes social learning as children practice and become proficient with the twenty-first-century skills of communication, negotiation, and collaboration” (p. 40). Everyday, students want to know how exactly they are affected by any given assignment. The teamwork required for conducting cyber sessions has outwardly visible benefits for today’s fast-paced technological world. Regardless of a student’s ultimate interest or career goal, these are qualities that students must possess in order to be successful in any field, much less in a world language (Bell, 2010).

## **Summary**

By using web-based communication tools, world language teachers can provide authentic experiences fostering collaboration and enhanced participation. Teachers collaborate and “co-construct knowledge” (Musanti & Pense, 2010, p. 74), thus, modeling for students cooperative learning and collaboration. This is important because the activity relies on the assumption that students will work together. Gomez (2010) refers to this type of arrangement as team-based learning. In the long run, this type of learning produces students who are able to translate that skill set into other subject areas or even careers (Bell, 2010). Offering students this type of opportunity exposes them to culture, grammar, and cooperative learning. All of these areas are crucial for students in today’s society. Considering the ideas of online collaboration, strategies, student participation, and a safe environment, the literature reports that teachers can find success in using these new technological advancements (Musanti & Pense, 2010). If one is prepared to adjust to the new methods and ideas, the research suggests that utilizing these tools can be an overall enhancement to the world language classroom.

## **Methodology**

This section will describe the subjects who participated in the study, the procedures implemented, and the instruments used to collect the data for analysis and discussion.

### **Subjects**

The population who was surveyed in this study were sophomore, junior, and senior high school students comprised of 21 females and 5 males in a French 1 class. The study was conducted at a large suburban high school in Knoxville, Tennessee.

### **Methods and Procedures**

Introducing the study, the teacher informed students about the research and explained that their participation was voluntary and that their responses and opinions would in no way impact their grades. The teacher issued a permission letter for parents to sign stating that they acknowledged the study and were willing to allow their minor student to participate. The letter also explained that the study was a crucial component of the coursework required at The University of Tennessee for the researcher to earn a master's degree in Teacher Education. After explaining the study in detail, the teacher also told the students how their anonymity would be protected throughout the study. Students were given the permission letters on a Wednesday and required to return the permission letter by Friday of that same week. Students who failed to return the letter by Friday were given the weekend to obtain the required signature. However, if the students were not able to return the letter by Monday morning, the teacher made phone calls to the parents in order to obtain permission. After the weekend, only one student did not return the letter. The parents of this student could not be contacted, and therefore, that one student could not be allowed to participate in the study. Consequently, only 28 of the 29 possible students were able to participate in the research.

After collecting the permission letters the teacher began her study. Three SKYPE sessions were conducted with the high school French 3 class on one side and an exchange student living in France with her French family on the other side. Each session was approximately 30 minutes in duration and consisted of questions constructed and corrected by the students in the French 3 class, with the researcher's guidance. The teacher allowed one class period for students to write a minimum of 12 sentences asking about life and culture in France (see Appendix A). At the end of class, students were required to turn in their sentences so the teacher could approve and highlight any areas that needed grammar or construction attention.

Students were allowed to divide themselves into teams per the Jigsaw method and were asked to identify a recorder, an interviewer, a group leader, and an artist. More than one student was allowed to occupy each role; however, students were limited to no more than two people per role. When the SKYPE sessions took place in the classroom, delegates from each group approached the computer to ask their questions. As the individual teams asked questions, the recorders from every group wrote down the responses. In the end, the answers to the questions were used to make a mock Facebook page about the exchange student and her host family

All team members worked together to construct the page, but the team member who was elected artist was responsible for the structure and design of the page. Finally the leader of the group was responsible for collecting all of the drafts of the questions and the final questions and answers from the interview to turn in with the completed Facebook page.

Each SKYPE session lasted approximately 20 to 30 minutes every Thursday for 3 weeks. After the sessions had ended, students used 15 minutes of the next class meeting to answer the survey. Surveys were handed out then recollected. As they were collected they were arranged by male then female and then assigned numbers to ensure anonymity.

## **Instrument**

One questionnaire, entitled In-Class SKYPE Survey (see Appendix A), was administered to collect data from the subjects. The questionnaire consisted of 5 demographic questions, 5 close-ended questions, and 3 open-ended questions. The demographic questions asked for students' gender, age, class, approximate grade in French, and approximate overall GPA. Four of the 5 close-ended questions were answered on a 1-4 interval scale which ranged from (1) *strongly disagree*, to (4) *strongly agree*. The questions asked for the students' opinions on the overall use of Skype in the classroom and how the use of the web-based video communication tool impacted their participation in the class.

The 3 open-ended questions asked which countries the students had visited, how their opinions on France and francophone culture had changed following SKYPE activities, and lastly, how the students would potentially change the SKYPE sessions to make them more enjoyable or more educational. The directions explained that students were to answer each question to the best of their ability. The results of this survey will be discussed later in this paper.

## **Data Analysis**

This portion of the research paper will detail the procedures utilized by this researcher in analyzing the data collected over the 4-week research period. Since the principal investigator was primarily interested in obtaining a frequency response for each of the close-ended items on the instrument, a mode was electronically calculated for each individual item after the data were entered on an Excel spreadsheet.

As stated earlier in the paper, this researcher administered one instrument entitled the In-Class SKYPE Survey, on which the subjects responded to 5 close-ended questions on a 4-point interval scale, with values of 1 to 4. After the subjects completed the 5 close-ended questions, they then responded to 3 open-ended questions. The close-ended items were analyzed and a percentage of total responses was calculated for each of the 4 possible responses. The 3 open-ended questions yielded various responses that were qualitatively analyzed by the researcher in an effort to identify commonalities for each response. A hand-written grid of the individual responses was produced identifying common themes among the answers. The results of the analysis of data will be reported in the following section of the research paper.



## Results

The results of the analysis of data collected from the In-Class SKYPE Survey (Appendix B) instrument will be reported in this section of the research paper in narrative, graphic, and tabular format when appropriate.

Due to the larger population of females, 21, to males, 5, the results are reported for the 11<sup>th</sup> grade class and are not controlled by gender.

Of the 28 possible participants for this study, 26 took part in completing the instrument. The first of the demographic questions established the gender of the subjects. The number of male subjects, 5, versus the number of female subjects, 21 approximately reports the ratio of males to females in the class. The remainder of the demographic data, including age, class, approximate grade in the class, and approximate overall GPA, are presented in Table 1.

Table 1  
*Demographics of Subjects*

Age # of Subjects	$\frac{16}{13}$	$\frac{17}{11}$	$\frac{18}{2}$		
Class # of Subjects	$\frac{10^{\text{th}} \text{ Grade}}{3}$	$\frac{11^{\text{th}} \text{ Grade}}{21}$	$\frac{12^{\text{th}} \text{ Grade}}{2}$		
Est. Grade in Class # of Subjects	$\frac{\text{Below C}}{2}$	$\frac{\text{C}}{2}$	$\frac{\text{B}}{12}$	$\frac{\text{A}}{10}$	
Estimated Overall GPA # of Subjects	$\frac{\text{Did not respond}}{2}$	$\frac{\text{Below C}}{1}$	$\frac{\text{C}}{1}$	$\frac{\text{B}}{7}$	$\frac{\text{A}}{15}$

As the data in Table 1 indicate, there were three age groups, which ranged from 16 to 18-year-olds. Students included in the study came from 10<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grades. Also, students were divided into groups based on estimated class grade and estimated overall GPA. The GPA and grades were classified using the following categories: below C, C, B, A, and did not respond.

The largest category that could be analyzed for data was the junior class (11<sup>th</sup> grade). Some of the findings in this portion of the class were how the students felt that their experience in French class was improved by speaking to the Moët<sup>1</sup> family, Question 9, and how the students reported feeling more involved, Question 11. Question 9 read, “My experience in French class was improved by speaking to the Moët family.” Fifty-two percent (11) of the 11<sup>th</sup> graders agreed that their experience was improved, and similarly, another 10% (2) of students strongly agreed that their experience was improved. The results of Question 9 by 11<sup>th</sup> graders are presented in Figure 1.

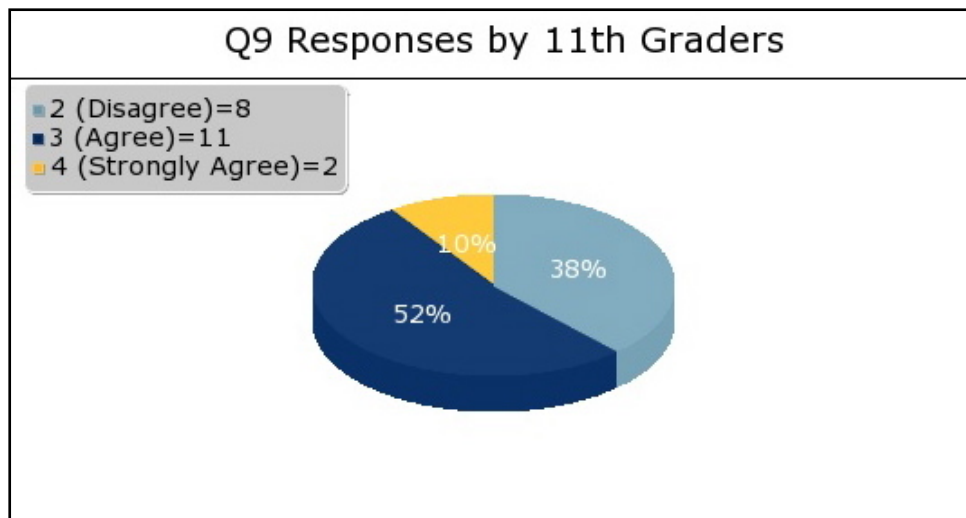


Figure 1. Question 9 by 11<sup>th</sup> graders.

In addition to having felt that their experience was improved, students largely felt more involved. According to the 11<sup>th</sup> graders on Question 11, 62% (13) felt that they were more involved on days the class met with the French family over SKYPE. In contrast, only 1 student strongly disagreed about feeling more involved. The results of Question 11 by 11<sup>th</sup> graders are reported in Figure 2.

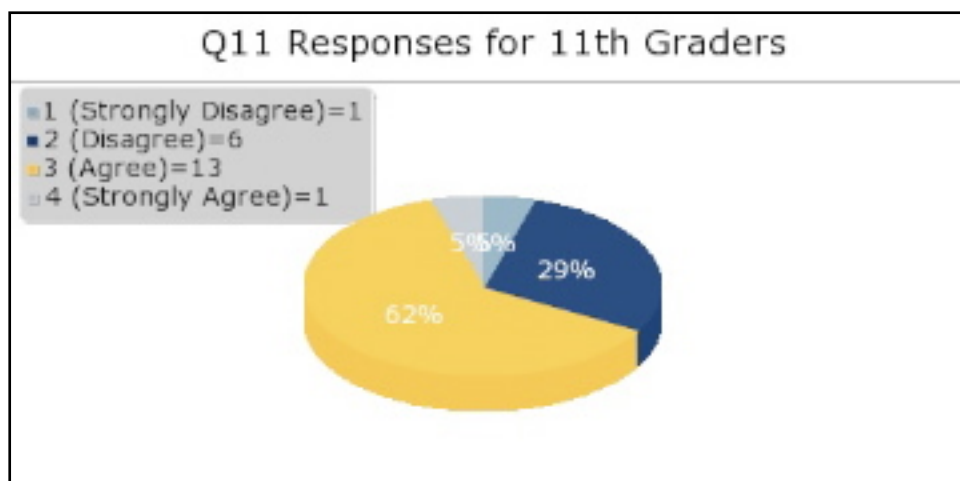


Figure 2. Question 11 by 11<sup>th</sup> graders.

Following the close-ended questions, the survey continued with 3 open-ended questions. The first question was, “How did your opinions about France and francophone culture change after speaking to the Moët family?” The three most common types of responses were that their opinions did not change, they were better able to compare and contrast the United States to France, and that they were more interested in how their school and work schedules were arranged. Only one student highlighted the difference in the number of languages that French students learn as compared with American students, and one other student citing that

French people seemed to be nicer than he or she expected.

The second open-ended question asked, “How could the SKYPE sessions be made more enjoyable?” Overwhelmingly, of the students who responded, 6 cited that the sound quality or technology would be the first thing they would improve. Following this response, students wanted more activities with SKYPE. One student in particular thought a fun activity would be to show the students around the town, and then show the French family around Knoxville. Others also included that this opportunity could be treated as more of a language exchange, equally splitting the time between English and French.

Lastly, the students were just asked to make additional comments concerning the SKYPE sessions. While the majority of the students did not respond to the questions, 10 students responded with comments like, “It was fun.” Other students responded that the activity was “enjoyable” and “enriching.” Overall, the students seemed to have a positive response to the activity as a whole.

### **Discussion**

In conclusion, the literature reviewed for this study, though cursory, seems to confirm the experiences of the subjects in the present study. A well-constructed group arrangement will provide for students to learn from each other and be more apt to learn from the contributing cyber party (Wang, Chen, & Levy, 2010). In general, the students were able to work together and successfully produce authentic questions for the Moët family using the textbook and current vocabulary. Because of general excitement about seeing a fellow student, albeit in France, the class took the time to make sure that their questions were accurate and grammatically understandable. Interestingly, having a solid anchor for the questions, the Facebook page and the actual discussion with the Moët family, made the students more actively participate in the assignment. Because of the real world nature of the activity, students had previous experiences to contribute to the process and the overall goal of the project.

Students responded positively to being able to see, hear, and interact with a real franco-phone family. A concern, however, was that students would not be as involved in the writing process and the overall discussion because the technology was not always functioning at full capacity. Even at times when the technology would not operate as predicted; however, the students were involved and interested in the lesson. In fact, according to the survey, 62% (13) of students felt more involved on days that they met with the Moët family via SKYPE, thus, corroborating the published literature on the efficacy of this new technology in the classroom.

### **Implications**

If one were to consider the benefits, then the end result is worth the obstacles and challenges that face a teacher who is organizing a web-based language exchange. One has the possibility to educate not only the students, but also other teachers in advancing methods, new research, and cooperative team-based learning. All of these aspects directly benefit students by being the model foundation of how students should interact not only in a classroom, but also in the global arena.

What teacher could not benefit from modeling a team-based experience? Not only are the teachers collaborating to create authentic experiences for the students, but the students are also given the opportunity to work in a mini-global society with other students their own age. These experiences are not only valuable to the classroom; they can easily translate into a professional setting. If high school students expect to have viable careers in the future, they need to have as many authentic international group interactions as possible starting in high school, if not before, and web-based conferencing such as SKYPE can be a vehicle for providing this base.

Teachers need to remember that SKYPE can be best utilized in small groups. Having domestic students work one-on-one or even in pairs with students in the second language classroom on the other side of the webcam, would provide them the opportunity to hone in on specific language skills, targeting equal opportunities for speaking and listening, and providing an opportunity for a more thorough language exchange amongst students in both classroom groups. If the instructor is able to monitor the amount of time spent communicating in each language, then students will be able to have a free exchange of ideas. An value-added bonus would be if the teachers in each SKYPE classroom are able to practice and model the collaborative process and provide the thread for discussion, as well as establishing a structure for the exchange.

Lastly, world language teachers need to remember that they have the opportunity to fundamentally enhance their best practices by using the same tool to reflect on lessons and mimic the same cooperative group that is practiced by their students. The overall benefits suggest that there is not only room for students to feel more involved in the classroom, but teachers as well can actively participate in the improvement and advancement of their teaching in a global arena.

### **Recommendations**

The largest part of the cyber-classroom process is the initial set-up. From finding the right online video chat tool, to arranging times, and navigating time zones, there are many obstacles that stand between a teacher and a successful cyber language exchange. In replicating this research, one should maintain the tenants of teamwork and respect. In the present study, some students misunderstood that each group was required to gather information from all of the groups. By working in groups from the beginning of the semester, however, the teacher could establish the expectation for appropriate student behavior during group work and the subsequent language exchange. If there is time to do the preparation work and explain the end goal of the process to the student participants, then the activity should go smoothly.

Finally, given the short duration of the SKYPE activities investigated in the present study and the small, non-gender-diverse composition of the subjects, the results cannot be fully generalizable to other populations. Future researchers should therefore be encouraged to conduct a more in-depth review of the literature, use a greater variety of data-collection instruments, including a pre-test and a post-test, and implement the study over a longer period of time than what occurred in the study presented in this article.

## Note

1. In order to protect the identify of the actual French family who participated in the present study, the pseudonym Moët was used in this article.

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## The Author

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**Appendix A**  
*In-Class SKYPE Survey*

**In-Class SKYPE Survey**  
**Moët Family**



Your participation in this survey is completely anonymous and voluntary. This survey will not impact your grade in this course. Circle one answer for each item. Please be honest. Thank you for your cooperation.

*For the following questions please **circle one** for each of the bolded areas.*

1. **Circle one:** M F
2. **Age:** 14 15 16 17 18
3. **Grade Level:** 9 10 11 12
4. **Grade Average:** A B C D F
5. **Expected Grade In this class:** A B C D F
6. **Have you been out of the country:** Yes No
7. **These are the countries I have visited:**
8. **I enjoyed speaking with the Moët Family.**  

1	2	3	4
(strongly disagree)	(disagree)	(agree)	(strongly agree)
9. **My experience in French class was improved by speaking to the Moët family.**  

1	2	3	4
(strongly disagree)	(disagree)	(agree)	(strongly agree)
10. **I would like to do something similar to our SKYPE sessions in the future.**  

1	2	3	4
(strongly disagree)	(disagree)	(agree)	(strongly agree)
11. **I felt more involved in French class on days we SKYPED the Moët family.**  

1	2	3	4
(strongly disagree)	(disagree)	(agree)	(strongly agree)
12. **How did your opinions about France and francophone culture change after speaking to the Moët family?**
13. **How could the SKYPE sessions be made more enjoyable?**
14. **Additional comments concerning the SKYPE sessions?**



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## Factors Leading to An Effective Oral Presentation in EFL Classrooms

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*One of the tasks which is of great importance for students, especially in advanced-level language classes, is the oral presentation. This paper was an attempt to identify what Iranian EFL language teachers and their students perceive as being important components of giving an oral presentation. It also investigated the similarities or differences between these two groups' perspectives. In order to conduct this study, 205 EFL teachers and their students were selected, using a random cluster sampling procedure, and given a questionnaire to complete. The analysis of the data revealed that the subjects believed that body language, manner of presentation, the speaker's style of presentation, feedback, voice quality, transfer of the message, use of other resources when presenting, and details of the presentation are the most important aspects of giving successful oral presentations.*

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### Introduction

The need for oral assessment in language classrooms and its efficient implementation has been greatly emphasized in the literature (Lim, 2007; Miller & Ng, 1994; Mika, 2006; Unearee, 2006; ). Therefore, in line with the concept of a student-centered approach to instruction and education, students can assume an active role in learning by participating in peer-assessment activities. In addition to the evaluations completed by teachers, learners can express their own views on the performance of their peers. In situations in which communication is valued (i.e., oral presentations), feedback received from peers is extremely important because it can improve the interaction between the learners and, thus, enrich the learning opportunities offered, resulting in achievement of a higher level of learning through interaction with other students and teachers (Earl, 1986). Therefore, peer assessment can be considered to be a highly valuable activity for students to develop a sense of both autonomy and self-efficacy.

People use language to not only communicate but also to get something done. For instance, they may intend to carry out some important functions in the classroom such as establishing a good rapport with one another, or expressing themselves by different ways, in giving a lecture, conducting small conversations, or even giving oral presentations.

Making a good oral presentation is an art that involves attentiveness to the needs of one's audience, careful planning, and attention to delivery. Clearly, the most obvious manifestation of learning a world or second language (L2) is the ability of learners to speak the language accurately and proficiently in different contexts and also to be able to communicate their ideas clearly to other individuals who speak the same language. Therefore, in many situations, knowing a language is equated with speaking that language impeccably. In addition, especially at advanced levels, one must be able to give clear oral presentations; this is one of the most fundamental prerequisites for many language courses or subject fields that are presented in the L2. Consequently, many recent studies in the L2 teaching and learning arena have focused on the

oral performance of students in world or second language classrooms (Flewelling & Snider, 2005; Volle, 2005; Yu, 2003), and the factors affecting oral presentations (Consolo, 2006; Dryden, Hyder, & Jethwa, 2003; Oliver, 2002).

In many learning situations, the criteria used for evaluation are determined by teachers and not by students. However, since the students are not fully aware of these pre-existing criteria, they cannot properly evaluate performance of their peers, which in turn may lead to low reliability of valid peer-assessment (Otoshi & Heffernan, 2008). Therefore, it seems necessary to investigate students' opinions on different aspects of oral presentations and to establish the criteria needed for peer-assessment from the students' points of view. By doing so, students may feel more responsible for their own learning and consequently become more autonomous learners. Determining the assessment criteria from the learners' viewpoint can also increase the reliability of peer-assessment activities incorporated into second language classrooms.

For successful communication to occur and successful oral presentations to take place, language users need to know some oral presentation skills specific to the context of communication and the participants. Oral presentations are one way to enhance public communication skills in front of an audience. The nature of the oral presentation is accurately delivering valuable information in the best way possible, in a manner that is understandable to the target audience.

What is an oral presentation? It can normally be identified by three main elements: (1) it is almost always prepared in outline form and spoken from aids or notes; (2) it normally involves visual aids or graphics; and, (3) it is usually given to a participating audience, asking questions and engaging them in dialog in most classrooms. Oral presentations are a common requirement in many courses. They may be short or long, include slides or other visual aids, and be delivered individually or in a small group (Jing, 2009). Since the aim of oral presentations is to usually convey information to an audience, they can provide a real life context for communication in the second or world language and increase learners' interaction in the classroom.

### **Background of the Study**

The ability to speak a world or L2 proficiently and as perfectly as possible and to clearly understand it in different contexts is perhaps the most important goal for many language learners. Another goal, especially in the advanced level classrooms, the ability to give an effective oral presentation is one of the basic requirements in language classrooms. Many factors might influence the quality of a student's oral presentation, including oral proficiency, interaction with the audience (Dryden et al., 2003), performance conditions (Elder, Iwashita, & McNamara, 2002), self-perceived competence and a desire to communicate (Xu, 2006), and, individual differences in working memory capacity (Payne & Ross, 2005). Some studies (such as Tseng, n.d.) have suggested that Oral Presentation Instruction (OPI) can improve students' overall quality of oral (proficiency) performance. But there are still many factors which remain to be investigated. For instance, the findings of some studies (Miller & Ng, 1994; Langan et al., 2008) suggest that a student's level of language proficiency could influence his/her own assessment of others' oral proficiency skills. On the other hand, various and, sometimes, inconsistent criteria have been used for evaluating the oral proficiency of the learner or the presenter. Oliver

(2002) employed three categories of constructs for assessing oral proficiency (i.e., accuracy and fluency, classroom language, and nonverbal communication). In addition, Volle (2005) examined students' pronunciation as another indicator of oral proficiency. One issue bearing significant importance is which indices of oral presentations are preferred by both teachers and learners to be more critical when giving an oral presentation. In other words, what are teachers' and students' criteria for successful EFL oral presentations? In addition, it is needed to determine possible similarities and differences that exist between teachers' and learners' expectations in EFL oral presentations to gain an insight into factors affecting EFL oral presentations, based on the teachers' and learners' expectations.

Oral presentation is a practical device that if implemented carefully, can provide many opportunities for language learners. Godev (2007), enumerating various benefits of oral presentations, believes that the oral presentation can give learners an awareness of new rhetorical devices that are specific to the rhetorical situation. It also provides the students with the opportunity to experience a creative process that is very similar to the writing process. In particular, Godev (2007) suggests that the oral presentation with an appropriate topic provides an enriched ground for students to use their oral skills and at the same time incorporate morpho-syntactic and discourse structures that are needed for intermediate and advanced proficiency levels. Furthermore, in considering the increasing demands for a move from teacher-centered activities toward student-centered instruction (Lee & VanPatten, 1995; Nunan, 1993; Thomson, 1992; Wenden, 2002;), it seems that oral presentation is extremely suitable for applying this principle; students have some freedom to choose a topic of their own interest, and they play the primary role during the oral performance while the teacher's role becomes secondary during the presentation.

However, to be more effective, oral presentations should follow an appropriate procedure. Godev (2007) suggests the procedure for delivering successful oral presentations should consist of: "(1) defining the topic, (2) providing information sources, (3) assisting the audience, (4) keeping track of the preparation process, (5) organizing the talk, (6) delivering the talk, and (7) obtaining the desired grade" (p. 2). Along this line, the topic of presentation must be consistent with and covered in the syllabus. Teachers also should make accessible sources of information to the students in order to minimize research time. Furthermore, students must be instructed on how to interact with the audience. Also, in order to monitor the process of preparation for oral presentations, students may be required to keep track of the preparation process in the form of various portfolios or self reports. In addition to the way students organize their talks and the way they deliver them to the audience, a grading criterion is needed to show the clarity, quality, organization of the ideas in oral presentations (Godev, 2007).

In addition, students may have different purposes for taking oral presentation classes. For instance, a case study by Miles (n.d.) suggests that students may regard presentation classes as a chance to improve their English proficiency rather than simply learn how to give presentations. Therefore, teachers need to be more aware of the possible reasons for students taking oral presentation classes and to choose more appropriate textbooks to address these reasons.

In spite of traditional assessments which are always managed by teachers, it is now believed that learners must be given the opportunity to engage in making decisions about their own language course management, placement assessment, and peer and self-evaluation. Duke

and Sanchez, (1994) found that learners display extremely positive attitudes toward peer-evaluation activities and that such activities can positively impact intrinsic motivation and confidence in the language learner. Accordingly, learners actually enjoy evaluating each others' work, and have much to gain from performing this activity. However, great care must be taken by learners when considering just how to evaluate their peers (Erwin & Knight, 1995). Nakamura (2002) also arrived at the same conclusion and reports that peer-evaluation motivates students to improve their presentations. Furthermore, as Une-aree (2006) argued, it is necessary to take a careful look at language assessment and to take into account students' performance (performance-based assessment). Genesee and Upsher (1996) add that language proficiency must be evaluated in a way that resembles like real-life situations and tasks for which language learning is taking place, in order for performance-based assessment to be implemented efficiently. Research also shows that the application of formative assessment compared with traditional modes of assessment, can change learners' autonomous learning beliefs and strategies. In an experimental study Bing-rong (2008), used tests and students' portfolios to show the differences between traditional modes of assessment and formative assessment. The study found that learners' goal-setting beliefs, evaluation beliefs, independent-action strategies and evaluation strategies had been changed through formative assessment. In addition, there was a significant difference between the experimental class and the control class.

From an instructor's point of view, assessment of oral presentations may question issues of reliability and validity. It isn't always clearly known how the employed assessment criteria may deal with the skill and knowledge under question (Dryden et al, 2003) and whether the assessments have established inter- and intra-rater reliability. Clearly, learners may have different views toward oral assessment. Based on a study of students' descriptions, Joughin (2003) identified six aspects of oral assessment, including students' intention in preparing for assessment, their conceptions of the subject matter, their experience of interaction, their feelings, their sense of audience, and the comparisons they made between written and oral assessment formats. It is believed that each aspect can be experienced in different ways. For example, students may regard assessment as a one-way medium or may find it highly interactive. Additionally, students' understanding of oral assessment can be described based on their personal experience with each aspect of oral assessment. Furthermore, Joughin (2003) also found that students' perception of particular aspects of oral assessment may be different from teachers' understandings of these same aspects.

### **Research Questions**

Taking into consideration the above-cited points, the present study attempted to answer the following research questions:

1. What factors do EFL teachers feel contribute to effective oral presentations?
2. What factors do EFL students feel contribute to effective oral presentations?
3. What are the similarities and differences between ESL teachers' and learners' viewpoints concerning the factors that contribute to the efficacy of oral presentations?
4. What factors influence the assessment of oral presentations, based on EFL teachers' and learners' viewpoints?

The findings of the study can provide useful guidelines for EFL students to make them more cognizant of the importance of oral presentation skills in English. The study can also present a plan for EFL teachers on how to meet students' expectations in their oral presentations and how to adopt a teacher- and learner-based approach in improving oral skills in language classrooms. This study will reveal how Iranian EFL students and teachers assess oral presentations given in language classrooms and, therefore, it will identify possible similarities and differences that exist between teachers' and students' evaluations of oral presentations. Consequently, it will help both EFL teachers and students to approach the possible differences between their respective expectations for EFL oral presentations and also identify potential similarities in making students' oral presentations more effective. Furthermore, since the study will ultimately identify a list of criteria needed for evaluation of oral presentations, and factors for affecting successful oral presentations, its findings can be employed for improving the quality of presentations delivered by the both Iranian EFL teachers and students.

## **Methodology**

### **Participants**

The participants of this study fell into two groups. The first group of participants consisted of 38 professors who were teaching M.A. courses to EFL students (the first group of participants) at the aforementioned universities; 22 of them were teaching EFL graduate courses at Shiraz University and the remaining 16 were from Shahrekord University. However, unlike the EFL students in the present study, the gender and the age of EFL teachers were not used as control variables in this research endeavor. The second group consisted of 167 M.A. students of TEFL, linguistics, English translation, and English literature at Shahrekord and Shiraz universities who ranged in age from 23 to 31. There were 75 males and 92 females who were selected by random cluster sampling in order to increase a sample representative of the grand population of Iranian EFL students. It should be noted here that the rationale for selecting students studying at the graduate level is that the majority of the courses offered in graduate program in Iran require students to give oral presentations in the classrooms. This is not the case for those studying EFL courses at the undergraduate level.

### **Instruments**

In order to gather the required data, a 30-item survey (see Appendix A) was developed by the researchers, based on the studies conducted in the field of oral presentations (Bing-rong, 2008; Consolo, 2006; Dryden et al., 2003; Otoshi & Heffernan, 2008). At the end of the instrument, space was provided for the subjects to express additional comments regarding oral presentations given in the classroom. Informal conversations also took place with university professors, M.A. students of English language and literature, and EFL specialists who had taught oral presentation skills in both EFL and ESL contexts. The questionnaire covered different evaluation criteria of oral presentations and included: eye-contact, voice, English proficiency, originality of the content, clarity, PowerPoint, body language, and time management. Each item in the survey was answerable using a 5-point interval scale. (For positive statements, 1= *strongly disagree* to 5= *strongly agree*; for negative statements the coding was reversed). In addition, the reliability of the instrument was checked by Cronbach alpha which turned out to be 0.84. In

order to categorize its items, after running a factor analysis, the 30 items were grouped into the following 8 factors: body language, manner of presentation, the speakers' style of presentation, the presenter's feedback, voice quality, transfer of the message, using other resources when presenting, and details of presentation.

### Data Analysis

Data collected from the subjects were subsequently analyzed using a Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 16) to run frequency analysis and a Chi-square test to answer the study research questions. Specifically, in order to answer the first and the second research questions guiding the present study, three frequency analyses were run to determine the frequency of the factors that EFL teachers and students considered to be of significance in EFL oral presentations and to identify similarities and differences in the teachers' and the students' expectations for successful oral presentations. Additionally, three Chi-square tests were run to identify the similarities and differences in the teachers' and the students' data and in the criteria used by the teachers to evaluate oral presentations delivered by the students.

## Results and Discussion

### Results and Discussion

The results of the data analyzed for the present study will be presented and discussed in this section of the article. Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics for the first group of participants (EFL teachers) on the 8 extracted above-cited factors. The mean values presented in the table are out of 5. In other words, the maximum value assigned to each item by was 5, while the minimum value for each factor was 1. Therefore, the possible range for a factor is  $1 \leq F \leq 5$ . As it is seen in Table 1, factors 5 and 8 possess the highest mean numbers (3.57 and 3.89 respectively). In contrast, factors number 7 and 3 have the smallest mean numbers (1.65 and 1.81 respectively).

#### EFL Teachers.

		F 1	F 2	F 3	F 4	F 5	F 6	F 7	F 8
N	Valid	38	38	38	38	38	38	38	38
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean		2.46	2.23	1.81	2.78	3.57	2.23	1.65	3.89

On the basis of the data reported in Table 1, it can be concluded that according to the instructors' views, the rank order of importance for these 8 factors are:

1. Details of the presentation
2. Voice quality
3. Body language
4. Manner of presentation
5. Presenter's feedback
6. Transfer of the message
7. Using other resources when presenting
8. Speaker's style of presentation

However, a more careful look at the Table 1 indicates that the mean difference between the two factors at the extremes (i.e., factors 8 and 7) is  $(3.89-1.65=) 2.24$ , which does not apparently show a notable difference. This is confirmed by the results of the Chi-square test (see Table 2) for the instructors ( $X^2 = 9.31$ ,  $df = 7$ ,  $p = 0.21$ ), which indicates that the importance of the above mentioned factors for the teachers were not significantly different than those of their students.

Table 2 <i>Chi-Square Test for the Teachers</i>			
Chi-Square	$X^2$	df	P
	9.31 <sup>a</sup>	7	.21

Figure 1 vividly reports the way language teachers evaluated the different dimensions of the oral presentation. In this figure, the horizontal axis represents the 8 factors of oral presentations assessed by the instructors, while the vertical axis shows the scores assigned to each factor by the teachers.

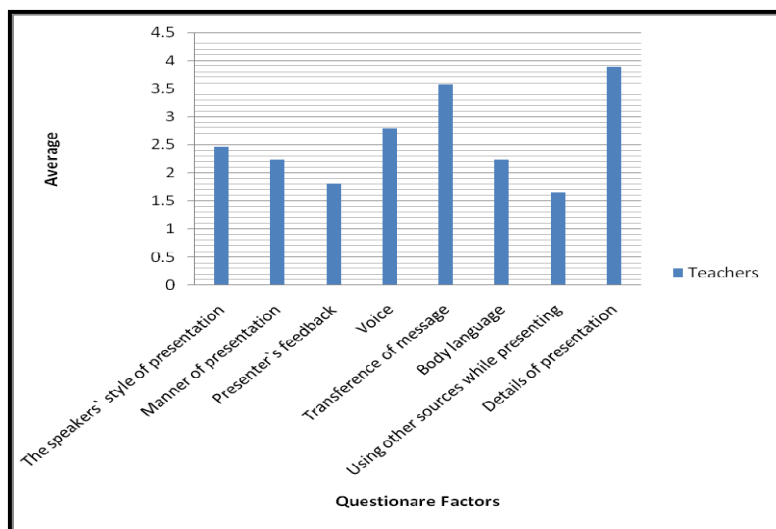


Figure 1. Teachers' assessment of oral presentation factors.

## EFL Students.

Table 3 represents the descriptive statistics for the EFL students (language learners).

		F 1	F 2	F 3	F 4	F 5	F 6	F 7	F 8
N	Valid	179	179	179	179	179	179	179	179
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean		2.30	2.19	1.72	2.64	2.95	2.38	1.72	3.28

As can be seen in Table 3, the highest mean values are for factor 8 and factor 5. The mean value for factor 8 (*details of presentation*) is 3.28 and for factor 5 (*voice quality*) is 2.95. On the other hand, the lowest mean values belong to factors 7 and 3. The former is related to *using other resources when presenting*, while the latter is associated with *the speakers' style of presentation*. The related value for both these two factors is approximately equal to 1.72. Similar to the teacher group, as Table 4 reports, there is no significant difference between the ratings made for different factors by the students ( $X^2 = 9.333$ ,  $df = 7$ ,  $p = 0.230$ ). Figure 2 graphically presents this same information.

Chi-Square	$X^2$	df	P
	9.33 <sup>a</sup>	7	.23

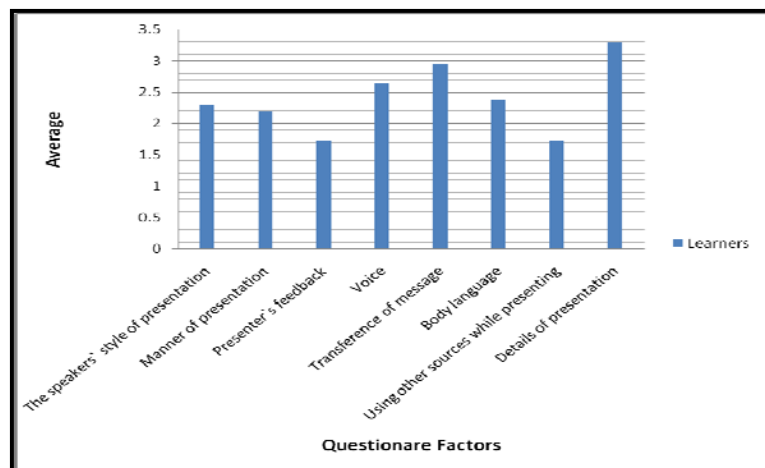


Figure 2. Students' assessment of oral presentation factors.



Essentially, it can be said that both the EFL instructors and the EFL learners had very similar views concerning the elements of an effective oral presentation in language classrooms. How the instructors and the learners evaluated each of the 8 factors, however, is another issue. A comparison of the mean scores of the instructors and the learners (see Table 5) reports these data.

Table 5 <i>Comparisons of Teachers' and Students' Assessments</i>									
Participants	F 1	F 2	F 3	F 4	F 5	F 6	F 7	F 8	Me an
Teachers	2.4	2.2	1.8	2.7	3.5	2.2	1.6	3.8	2.5
	6	3	1	8	7	3	5	9	8
Learners	2.3	2.1	1.7	2.6	2.9	2.3	1.7	3.2	2.4
	0	9	2	4	5	8	2	8	0

As reported in Table 5, the mean score given by the teachers to the first factor (*body language*) is slightly higher than the score assigned by the learners. The mean value for teachers' score is 2.46, while that of the students is 2.30, indicating that the instructors believed that body language is more important in oral presentations than the learners did.

The same pattern has been repeated for the second, third, fourth, fifth, and eighth factors. The mean scores given by the instructors to *the manner of presentation, the speakers' style of presentation, the presenter's feedback, voice quality, and details of presentation* are 2.23, 1.81, 2.78, 3.57, and 3.89, respectively. In contrast, the mean scores assigned to the above factors by the learners are 2.19, 1.72, 2.64, 2.95, and 3.28, respectively, which are slightly lower than the scores given by the instructors. Figure 3 reflects the comparison of the teachers' and the learners' perspectives on the dimensions of oral presentations.

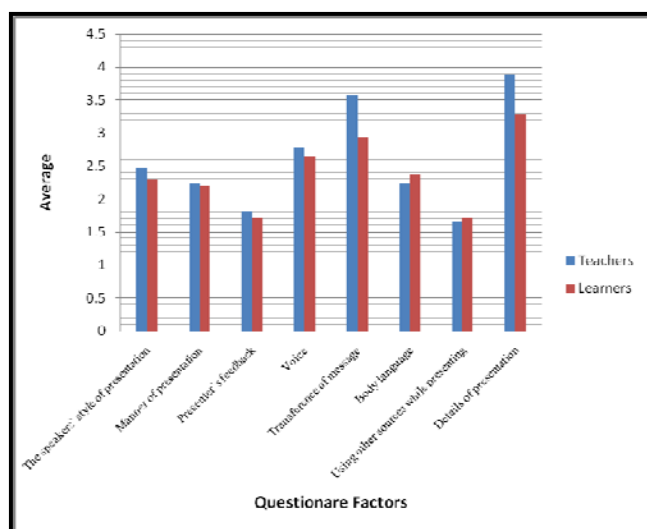


Figure 3. Comparison and the Teachers' and Learners' Perspectives.

There are only two factors that do not follow the aforementioned pattern. The mean scores given to factors 6 and 7, namely *transfer of the message* and *using other resources when presenting*, by the learners, are higher than those assigned by the teachers. The mean scores given to these two factors by the learners are 2.38 and 1.72, and the scores assigned by the teachers are 2.23 and 1.65, respectively, which are a little lower than the mean scores given by the students. On a whole, except for the two previously-mentioned factors, the scores given by the instructors to the remaining six factors are a bit higher than the scores given by the learners. This can be clearly seen by the total mean scores given by the two groups of participants to these eight factors. The total mean score for the teachers is 2.58 (the last column in Table 4.4); that of the learners is 2.40.

What these findings show is that the instructors assessed the contribution of each factor in oral presentations higher than did the learners. But it is not clear from these results whether the differences between the teachers' and the learners' are significant or not. Table 6 shows the results of the Chi-square test for the mean scores given by the two groups of participants. As it is reported in the table, the differences in the assessments made by the instructors and the students were not significant ( $P = .24 > .05$ ). Therefore, both groups of participants (i.e., teachers and students) have similarly evaluated the effects of different factors in oral presentations.

Table 6 Chi-Square Test for Participants' Scores			
Chi-Square	X <sup>2</sup>	df	P
	9.30 <sup>a</sup>	7	0.24

### Conclusion and Discussion

In this study, oral presentations in language classrooms were investigated from teachers' and learners' view points. In summary, the findings of the present study show that both teachers and learners had very similar attitudes concerning the salient factors in successful oral presentations. Both groups believed details of *presentation* and *voice quality* were the most crucial constituents of oral presentations. They also regarded *using other resources when presenting* and *the speakers' style of presentation* as the less effective factors when giving oral presentations in EFL classrooms. However, teachers' assessments of different dimensions of oral presentations were slightly higher than the learners' assessments, although the differences between the teachers' and the learners' assessments were not significant. As a result, it can be concluded that both groups of participants in the study showed very similar preferences toward oral presentations in language classrooms.

Concerning the general aspects of oral presentations, the researchers found that both teachers and learners had exactly similar views concerning the general aspects of oral presentations. In other words, in the instructors' and learners' viewpoints, *details of the presentation* and *voice quality* were regarded as being more important than other aspects, while the *use of other resources* when presenting (i.e., the employment of multimedia and other technologies, as suggested by Blake et al., 2008; Flewelling & Snider, 2005; Yu, 2003) and the *speaker's style of presentation* were not regarded as being very important aspects when giving oral presenta-

tions. Other dimensions, such as *body language, manner of presentation, the presenter's feedback, and the transfer of the message* occupy a middle position between these two extremes from the participants' points of view. Since there were no significant differences in assessments concerning the dimensions of oral presentations, the instructors and the learners expressed very similar views, though the teachers' ratings were slightly higher than those of the students. This is partly in line with Fujita (2001) who examined peer and instructor assessments of speeches and found that the correlations between instructor and peer ratings were high.

### **Results of the Study Answering the Research Questions**

This last section of the article will present how the results of the present study addressed the research questions which guided this empirical research.

#### **RQ1: What factors do EFL teachers feel contribute to effective oral presentations?**

Generally, EFL teachers regarded body language, manner of presentation, the speakers' style of presentation, the presenter's feedback, voice quality, transfer of the message, using other resources when presenting, and details of presentation as the being the most important aspects of effective oral presentations.

#### **RQ2: What factors do EFL students feel contribute to effective oral presentations?**

Learners expressed the exact same viewpoints concerning effective oral presentations as did the teachers. They believed that body language, manner of presentation, the speakers' style of presentation, the presenter's feedback, voice quality, transfer of the message, using other resources when presenting, and details of presentation are important while giving presentations. On the other hand, the use of other resources when presenting and the speaker's style of presentation were not regarded by either teachers or learners as being essential in oral presentations.

#### **RQ3: What are the similarities and differences between EFL teachers' and learners' viewpoints concerning the factors that contribute to the efficacy of oral presentations?**

Learners and teachers alike assessed general aspects of successful oral presentations in a similar manner. Their evaluations of specific elements of oral presentations, however, were slightly different.

#### **RQ4: What factors influence the assessment of oral presentations, based on EFL teachers' and learners' viewpoints?**

Assessments of oral presentations made by EFL teachers and learners in this study indicated topic and organization of the presentation, audience's feedback, eye-contact, the size of letters in the power point, voice quality, the use of body language, the rate of speech, the speaker's confidence, and pronunciation were viewed by both teachers and learners as being important components of oral presentations. The findings of the study also indicated that general aspects of oral presentations consist of body language, manner of presentation, the speakers' style of presentation, the presenter's feedback, voice quality, transfer of the message, using

other resources when presenting, and details of presentation. In addition, teachers and learners expressed similar ideas on general aspects of oral presentations. They believed that details of the presentation and voice quality were more important than other aspects. On the other hand, the use of other resources when presenting and the speaker's style of presentation were not regarded as being important when giving presentation. Insofar as there were no significant differences in assessments made by both groups concerning the dimensions of oral presentations, the instructors and the learners showed similar preferences.

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**Appendix A**  
*Questionnaire*

<b>Questionnaire</b>	
Student of..... English	Age.....
Average of last semester.....	Sex.....
<hr/>	
1. Presentation topics should be interesting to the audience.	
<i>*1) Strongly agree 2) agree 3) undecided 4) disagree 5) Strongly disagree</i>	
2. Smiling is not good while giving a presentation.	
3. A presentation should be given in an organized way.	
4. Glancing at a transcript is not good while giving a presentation.	
5. Using signal words such as “First” and “Second” are important when giving a presentation.	
6. Using PowerPoint is not necessary when giving a presentation.	
7. Speakers should avoid using difficult terms when giving a presentation.	
8. Speakers should just speak about whatever they want even if the audience does not understand it.	
9. Good presentations include detailed examples and reasons.	
10. I don’t mind if I find grammatical errors in a PowerPoint presentation.	
11. Speakers should pay attention to the audience’s response while they speak.	
12. A PowerPoint presentation does not have to include statistical data when speakers mention numerical information.	
13. Speakers should argue their own ideas or possible solutions in their talk.	
14. A good PowerPoint presentation includes pictures and photographs.	
15. Speakers don’t have to speak fluent English.	
16. Oral presentations should be given in informal language (as opposed to a formal, written style of language).	
17. Speakers should stick to the objectives of the presentation without confusing the audience.	
18. Speakers don’t have to finish the presentation within an allotted time.	
19. Speakers don’t have to act cheerfully when speaking.	
20. Speakers should make eye-contact with the audience.	
21. Speakers don’t have to outline the presentation objectives to the audience.	
22. The size of the letters in a PowerPoint presentation should be easy to read.	
23. A presentation should be given in a clear voice.	
24. The speaker should use some body language while speaking.	
25. A presentation should be given in a very loud voice.	
26. Speakers should pay attention to the speed of the speech.	
27. Speakers should speak with confidence.	
28. I don’t mind grammatical mistakes in a presentation as long as the message is clearly delivered to the audience.	
29. A presentation should be delivered with correct pronunciation.	
30. Speakers don’t have to speak loudly.	
 <i>*all items on this instrument are answerable on the same 1-5 interval scale as shown in Item 1.</i>	

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## Variable Word Stress in the Edo English Variety of Nigerian English

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*Existing studies on Nigerian English prosody have claimed that stress, one of the English suprasegmentals, is a major challenge to Nigerian users of English. There are few studies on Nigerian English disyllabic and polysyllabic word stress patterns but little attention has been paid to Standard English variable word stress. This study, therefore, investigated the extent to which Educated Edo English Speakers (EEES) assign stress appropriately in English variable words as in Standard British English (SBE). The Prince and Liberman's Metrical Theory, which establishes SBE stress patterns as reflecting an underlying structure, where stronger and weaker constituents juxtapose in a word group, was adopted as the theoretical framework for the study. Two hundred Edo speakers, undergraduates of the University of Benin, were the subjects in this study and the Speech Filling System Software, version 1.41 was employed for acoustic analysis. The overall performance of Educated Edo English subjects in the assignment of stress to appropriate syllables of English variable words was 13.2%, while inappropriate use amounted to 86.8%. The results of this study imply that EEES do not observe the Lexical Category Prominence Rule and the Nuclear Stress Rule (that account for compounds and noun phrase stressing respectively in Standard British English). This has a serious implication for intelligibility and comprehension, especially when there is a need to communicate with non-Nigerians.*

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### Introduction

In a linguistically-heterogeneous nation such as Nigeria, the official number of languages spoken remains elusive as various official linguistic figures have been posited by linguists. Bamgbose (1971) and Jibril (1982) estimate these languages at about 400 and 200 respectively. Crozier and Blench (1993, p. 4) suggested about 436 languages, Adegbija (1998) proposed 400, while Akinjobi (2004) put forward 470 living language, based on Grime's (1996) Ethnologue estimate. English as used in Nigeria has been viewed by many linguists as being peculiar (Adegbija, 2004; Akindele & Adegbite, 2005; Akinjobi & Oladipupo, 2010; Bamgbose 1995). Adegbija claims that English has a new flavour<sup>1</sup> in Nigeria where it has been nativized, acculturated, and indigenized.

Scholars like Brosnahan (1958), Banjo (1979), Afolayan (1982), Bamgbose (1982), Bokambia (1983) and Jowitt (1991), who have researched the varieties of Nigerian English, have identified sub-varieties following different criteria. Some have differentiated these sub-varieties of Nigerian English according to the educational level attained by users (Banjo, 1971). Jibril (1982) and Jowitt (1991) have also stratified Nigerian English along regional boundaries, such as Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo, Edo and Efik.

Spoken English has been viewed by many linguists as a major challenge to second language users (Atoye, 2005) while the suprasegmentals<sup>2</sup> have been expressed as constituting a



major hurdle that many Nigerians find difficult to cross (Banjo, 1971). Existing studies on Nigerian English prosody<sup>3</sup> have claimed that stress, one of the English suprasegmentals, is a major challenge to Nigerian users of English (Akindele, 2008, 2011; Akinjobi, 2004; Atoye, 1991, 2005).

In the opinion of Hyman (1975), the term *stress* is said to have received the most developed treatment of the suprasegmentals of prominence. According to him, this is due to the fact that most European languages are stress languages. He explains that in a stress language, prominence is cumulative and hierarchical, and that *stress* languages like English differ from *tone* languages. Relatedly, Cruttenden (1986) views stress in relation to prominence in a general, rather than specific way, irrespective of how such prominence is achieved.

Many linguists have proposed a range of 3 to 4 phonetic correlates of stress and the primacy of pitch. These are pitch modulation, duration, intensity, segmental quality, including especially vowel quality (Crutenden, 1986; Egbokhare, 2003; Fromkin & Rodman, 1978; Ladefoged, 2003; Roach, 1991).

### **Focus of the Present Study**

The focus of this research was to empirically investigate the variable word stress pattern of Educated Edo English Speakers. Edo English is a sub-variety of Nigerian English. The Edo-speaking people are found in the centre of a large language group in Edo state. To the north are the Igbirra, Esako and Igala people while to the edge of the costal swamp forest in the south are their neighbours who speak Ijo & Itsekiri. Their other boundaries are with the Yorubas to the west and the Igbo to the East (Amayo, 1976). Investigations into the nature of the historical relationship between the various Nigerian languages have established the fact that Edo is a core member of a larger group of genetically-related languages and dialect clusters, usually referred to as the Edoid Group of languages, which in turn, belongs with other Nigerian languages such as Yoruba, Nupe, Idoma, Igbo, and Izon, and the Kwa branch of the Niger-Congo family (Greenberg, 1966; Westermann, 1952). In addition, Edo English as used in this research reflects the way Edo (Bini) people speak English. Though, Edo and English to a certain extent share considerable similarities in syntactic structures; that is, both are SVO languages. In terms of the suprasegmentals, Ladefoged (2003) classifies Edo (Bini) language as a *register tone* language, which means it can be described in terms of points within a pitch range. English on the other hand has been confirmed a stress-timed language (Cruttenden, 1986; Roach, 1991).

### **A Brief Look at English Phonetics**

In order to describe the scope and depth of the present research study, an phonetic overview of English will be presented in this section of the paper.

### **Compound Word and Noun Phrase Stressing**

English compounds are made up of two or more independent words, and the three types of compound words found in English are true compounds (i.e., two words combined without any space separating them such as sunshine, bookcase, chairman, and handshake), hyphenated compounds (i.e., two words separated by a hyphen such as drawing-pin, tape-recorder, good-looking, well-behaved), and phrasal compounds (i.e., two words separated by a space which are

compounds only in a loose sense such as motor cycle, gas cooker, free enterprise).

### **Stress rules for English compounds.**

1. In most compounds, whatever the type, the primary stress is usually assigned to the syllable of the FIRST of the two components. Examples: SUNshine, BOOKcase, HEADache, CHAIRman, HANDshake, BREAKdown, DRAWing-pin, SITting-room, TAPE-recorder, MOTor cycle, GAS cooker.
2. Some compounds have the primary stress on the syllable of the SECOND word. They include adjectival compounds such as self-EMPLOYED, good-LOOKing, farFETCHED, well-beHAVED, full GROWN and first-CLASS, numbers such as twenty-ONE, forty-FIVE, food/menu items such as roast CHICKEn, baked BEANS and points of the compass: north-WEST, south-EAST. (Cruttenden, 1986; Gimson, 1989; Jowitt, 2006)

### **Stress and Attributive Nouns/Adjectives.**

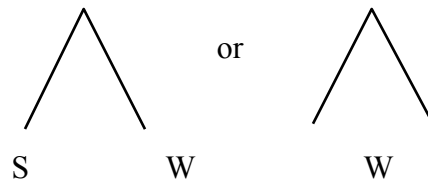
According to Gimson (1975, p. 41), words that are carrying primary accents may exhibit a weakening of the primary accent when used attributively. This implies that when they occur in isolation, the stress is assigned to a particular syllable. However, when they are used attributively with another noun, stress then has to be re-assigned to another syllable in the word (e.g., *thirteen* but *thir'teen* pounds. Here, the primary stress on the *-teen* of thirteen in isolation has to get reduced to having a secondary stress in the word group thirteen pounds.

The English variable word stress rules are complex and may be problematic for a vast majority of second language speakers of English because these rules are numerous and have many exceptions. The implication of this complex rule system is that second language speakers of English, such as Edo English Speakers, even if exposed to the rules, would have to learn them along with the exceptions, which is indeed a challenge for them to handle.

### **Metrical Theory and Stress Rules.**

Metrical Phonology, an offshoot of Generative Phonology, was initiated by Liberman and Prince (1977) as an alternative approach to stress description. It was a reaction to the dissatisfaction with generative stress description as found in Chomsky's (1968) *Sound pattern of English* (SPE) which considers stress as a feature such that sounds could be described as [+stress] or [-stress] using the binary approach. As a reinterpretation of the basic descriptive data contained in SPE, metrical theory is a family of sub-theories of generative phonology intended to insightfully characterize the properties of stress and stress rules.

The innovative feature of this theory is that the prominence of a unit is defined relative to other units in the same phrase (Cruttenden, 1986) and the starting point of metrical theory is an assumption about the nature of stress and its representation, which is that stress patterns reflect an underlying structure in which stronger and weaker constituents are juxtaposed. To say that a certain syllable is stressed is to make a judgment about its strength relative to adjacent syllables. That is:



Where S and W simply indicate stronger and weaker constituents (Clark & Yallop 1995, p. 410). Metrical grid, one of the features of metrical phonology, is employed in this study to show the heights of word group prominence because it has been proven to have advantage over metrical tree. Metrical grid represents stress as hierarchical rather than a relational property (Kager, 1995, p. 328). The height of grid marks represent levels of prominence while distance between grids stand for rhythmic structure. For instance, metrical tree shows the relative prominence of nodes only, it fails to account for rhythmic alternation between strong and weak syllables as well as stress clash in a situation where adjacent syllables are stressed (Kager, 1995, p. 369).

### **Rationale for the Study and Research Questions**

Existing studies on Nigerian English prosody have claimed that stress, one of the English suprasegmentals, is a major challenge to Nigerian users of English. There are few studies on Nigerian English disyllabic and polysyllabic word stress patterns but little attention has been paid to Standard English variable word stress. This study, therefore, investigated the extent to which Educated Edo English Speakers (EEES) assign stress appropriately in English variable words as obtains in Standard British English (SBE), and was guided by the following research questions:

1. Do Educated Edo English Speakers assign stress appropriately to compounds as used in the SBE form?
2. Do Educated Edo English Speakers assign stress appropriately to noun phrases as used in the SBE form?
3. Do Educated Edo English Speakers re-assign stress appropriately to English attributive nouns and adjectives in phrases as used in SBE form?
4. To what extent does the performance of EEES in the assignment of stress to English compounds, noun phrases and attributive nouns and adjectives in phrases conform to SBE usage?

### **Methodology and Procedures**

#### **Subjects**

Two hundred Edo speakers who are undergraduates of the University of Benin constituted the subjects while some first language users' recorded voices served as the native baseline data.

#### **Procedures**

The Prince and Liberman's Metrical Theory, which establishes SBE stress patterns as reflecting an underlying structure, where stronger and weaker constituents juxtapose in a word

group, was adopted as the theoretical framework for the study. Each one of the 200 subjects was asked to read some validated test items (shown to scholars who are established authorities in the field of English phonology, who confirmed that the instrument was good enough for the research after necessary correction had been made into a digital voice recorder). Their recorded voices were later played back and the content transcribed by the researchers. The variable items were entered on index cards from which incidences of occurrence were tallied by stokes and later converted to simple percentages. The Speech Filling System Software, version 1.41, was employed for acoustic analysis. Specifically, the collected data were then perceptually and statistically analyzed. In order to determine the extent to which Educated Edo-English variable word stress patterns conform to Standard form, the number of correctly stressed items was calculated as a percentage of the total frequency of the occurrence of stress in the test passage. This is statistically represented as follows:

<u>No of Appropriately Assigned Variable Word Stress</u>	X	<u>100</u>
Total number of Appropriate Variable Word Stress		1

### Data Analysis and Discussion of the Findings

The analysis and findings from the research are presented as follows, beginning with the subjects' performance in the assignment of stress to English compound nouns.

From the analysis reported in Table 1, it is evident that the subjects performed below average in assigning stress appropriately to the correct syllables in English compound words with 793 correct instances of occurrence 39.7% out of 2,000 expected instances of appropriate stress assignment to the first element of the compound noun.

Table 1 <i>Stress Assignment to English Compound Words</i>				
S/N	Compounds	Potential Score	Actual Score	%
1	∪Grand ∩father	200	91	45.5
2	'Black ∩board	200	95	47.5
3	∪Head ∩lamp	200	104	52
4	'Black ∩bird	200	91	45.5
5	∪Sea ∩shore	200	90	45
6	∪Watch∩dog	200	90	45
7	'Cross ∩word	200	97	48.5
8	'Light ∩ship	200	96	48
9	'High ∩light	200	20	10
10	'Check∩mate	200	19	9.5
	TOTAL	2000	793	39.7

As reported in Table 2, the subjects' could not assign stress appropriately to noun phrases as the result of the statistical analysis clearly showed 0% performance.

Table 2 Stress Assignment to Noun Phrases				
S/N	Noun phrases	Potential Score	Actual Score	%
1	a ∩grand∪father	200	0	0
2	a ∩black∪board	200	0	0
3	a∩head∪lamp	200	0	0
4	a∩black∪bird	200	0	0
5	a∩sea∪shore	200	0	0
6	a∩watch∪dog	200	0	0
7	a∩cross∪word	200	0	0
8	a∩light∪ship	200	0	0
9	a∩high∪light	200	0	0
10	a∩check∪mate	200	0	0
	TOTAL	2000	0	0

Table 3 reveals that EEES could assign stress appropriately on the correct syllables of nouns/adjectives when uttered in isolation, as the subjects' performance was rated at 93.4%. However, EEES could not re-assign stress appropriately to English nouns/adjectives when they play attributive roles in phrases, as none of the subjects got any of the items tested correctly (0%). According to Table 4, as and as graphically shown in Figure 1, the subjects assigned stress appropriately to English compound words in 793 correct instances, constituting 37.9% of the total expected output of 2,000 items. None of the subjects could assign stress appropriately to English phrases, nor to attributive nouns and adjectives since their performance was rated 0% for each. The overall performance of the subjects in all the items tested was rated 13.2%.

### Metrical Analysis of Selected Variable Word Stress Patterns of Educated Edo English Speakers

In the compound noun below, prominence is on the only syllable of the English first element as revealed in the native baseline production while that of EEES manifests equal prominence on all the syllables of the compound.

Native Baseline

3  
1            2  
GRAND father

Subject 1

3            4  
1            2  
GRAND FATHER

Table 3 <i>Stress Re-assignment to Attributive Nouns/Adjectives</i>								
S/N	Nouns/Adjectives	Potential Score	Actual Score	% Score	Attributive Nouns/Adjectives	Potential Score	Actual Score	% Score
1	ˈThirˌteen	200	200	100	ʊθɪrˌteen 'naira	200	0	0
2	ˈAfterˌnoon	200	200	100	ʊˌɑːftərˌnoʊn 'meal	200	0	0
3	'Breakfast	200	68	34	ʊbrɛkˌfɑːst ʊtray	200	0	0
4	'Morning	200	200	100	ˌmɔːnɪŋ 'show	200	0	0
5	'Dog	200	200	100	ˌɪsɪə 'dɒg	200	0	0
6	'Wind	200	200	100	ˌwɪl 'wɪnd	200	0	0
7	'Large	200	200	100	ˌlɑːdʒ 'krɔːd	200	0	0
8	'White	200	200	100	ˌwɪt 'ræbɪt	200	0	0
9	'School	200	200	100	ˌskʊl 'bʌs	200	0	0
10	'Big	200	200	100	ˌbɪg 'sɪtɪ	200	0	0
	Total	2000	1868	93.4		0	0	0

Table 4 <i>EEES Overall Performance</i>				
Variable Items		Potential Score	Actual Score	% Score
Attributive Nouns/Adjectives	10	2000	0	0
Compounds	10	2000	793	39.7
Noun phrases	10	2000	0	0
Overall Total	30	6000	793	13.2

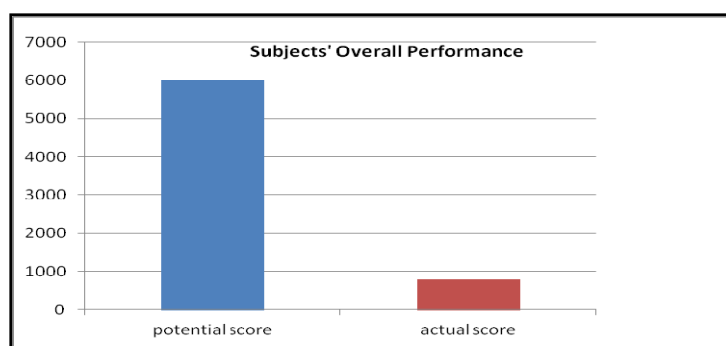


Figure 1. *EEES overall performance.*

The native baseline production's grid for  $\cap$  *break* U *fast*  $\cap$  *tray* (shown below) demonstrates that the last monosyllabic word bears the highest prominence as revealed through the grid numbering while the EEES, Subject II grid shows equal prominence of all syllables.

Native Baseline	Subject II																					
<table style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">6</td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">4</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">5</td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">1</td><td style="text-align: center;">2</td><td style="text-align: center;">3</td><td></td><td></td></tr> </table>			6			4		5			1	2	3			<table style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">4</td><td style="text-align: center;">5</td><td style="text-align: center;">6</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">1</td><td style="text-align: center;">2</td><td style="text-align: center;">3</td></tr> </table>	4	5	6	1	2	3
		6																				
4		5																				
1	2	3																				
4	5	6																				
1	2	3																				
BREAKfast TRAY	BREAKFAST TRAY																					

The grid for the native baseline production (see below) indicates that *board*, the last syllable of the noun phrase a  $\cap$  *black* U *board*, is more prominent than other syllables in the phrase. For EEES: Subject 3, the grid illustrates that all the syllables of the noun phrase were given equal prominence.

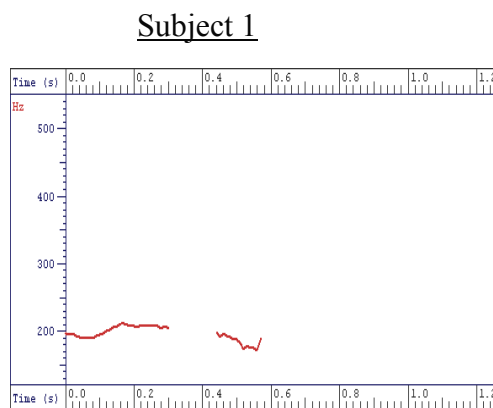
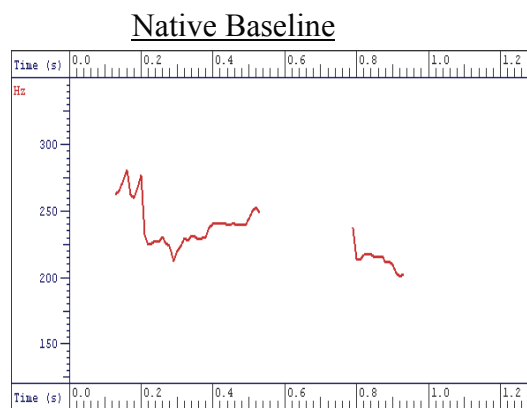
Native Baseline	Subject 3										
<table style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">3</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">1</td><td style="text-align: center;">2</td><td></td></tr> </table>		3		1	2		<table style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">3</td><td style="text-align: center;">4</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">1</td><td style="text-align: center;">2</td></tr> </table>	3	4	1	2
	3										
1	2										
3	4										
1	2										
black BOARD	BLACK BOARD										

In further illustration, in the grid for U *thir*  $\cap$  *teen* U *naira*, the first syllable of the last word U *naira* occupies the highest point of the grid for the native baseline production. This demonstrates that the syllable of the last word is the most prominent and the non-clearly stressed syllable. For EEES Subject 4, the grid shows that all the syllables were given equal prominence.

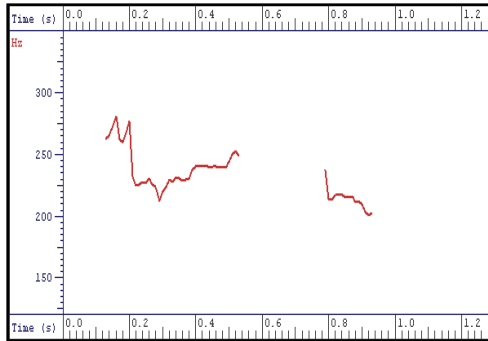
### Pitch Contours of Selected EEES Subjects

With English variable words such as compounds, noun phrases and attributive adjectives, where a variation of stress is expected to differentiate isolated usage from phrasal in Standard British English, most EEES pitch contours show *flatness* when compared with Standard use (i.e., native baseline production). Illustrations of this phenomenon are shown for three of the subjects who participated in the present study.

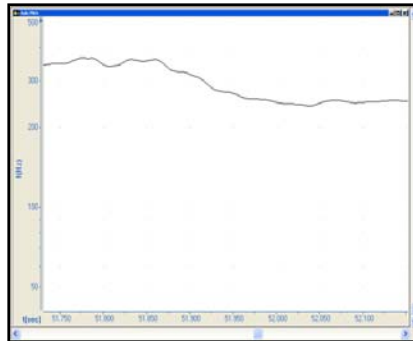
#### GRAND father



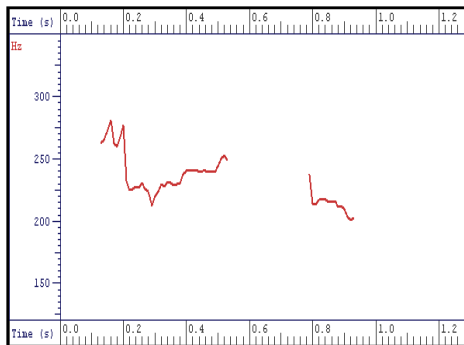
Native Baseline



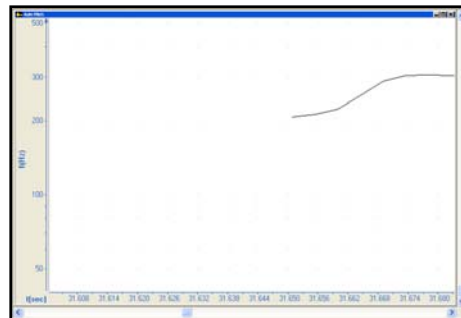
Subject 2



Native Baseline



Subject 3

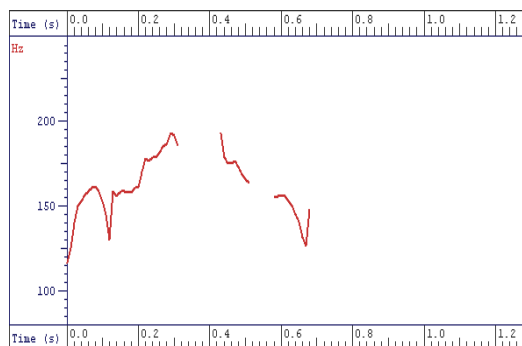


From the contours above, one can observe that the pitch contour of the native baseline data shows pitch contrast. Specifically, the highest point on the contour is the first element *grand* while the second element is on a lower Hz, whereas those of the EEES are *flat*.

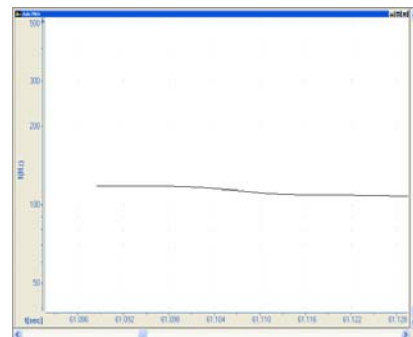
The pitch contours of the native baseline production for the phrase *a grand FATHER* reveals the *fa* of *father* (i.e., the second element of the phrase) as the peak of the phrase while those of the EEES subjects are *flat*. This is illustrated below for subjects 1-3.

a grand FATHER

Native Baseline

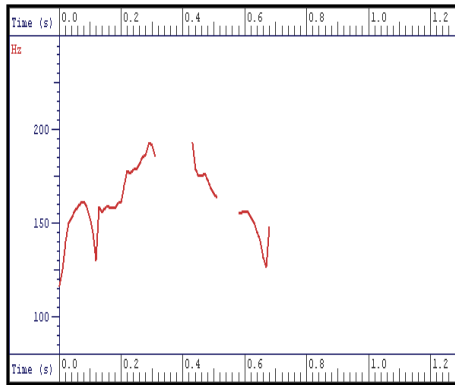


Subject 1

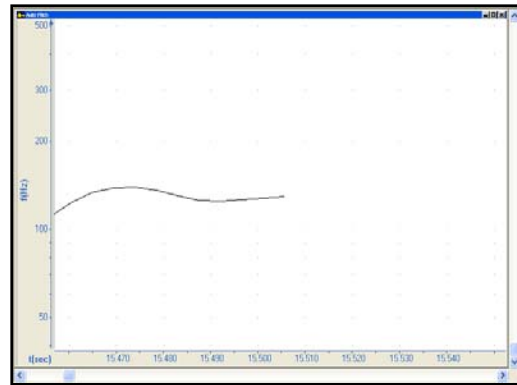




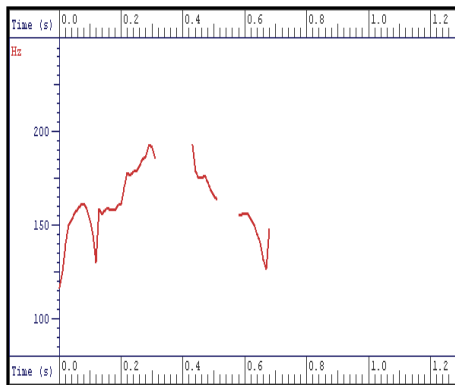
Native Baseline



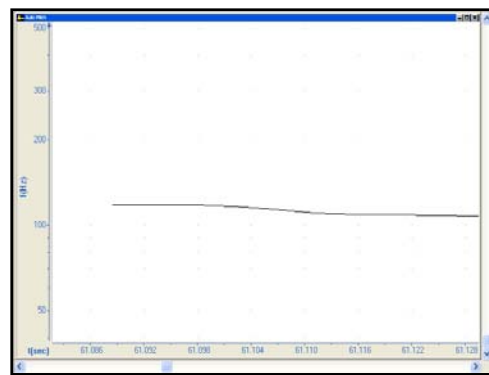
Subject 2



Native Baseline

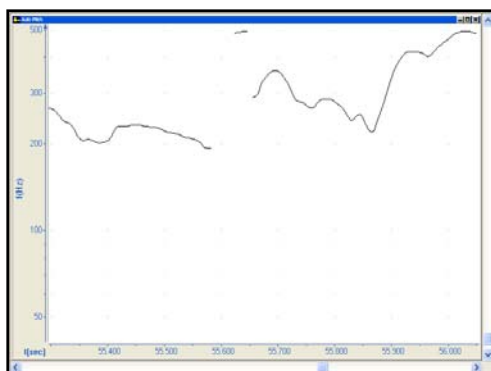


Subject 3

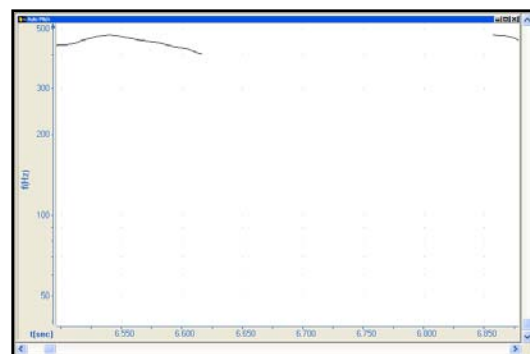


From the pitch contours which follow, one notes that the pitch contours of the native baseline data show contour variation whereas the EEES pitch contours were static on a particular Hz. Graphic examples of this phenomenon for *thirTEEN* (adjective/ noun) and *THIRteen NAIRA* (attributive adjective/noun) have the following patterns for subjects 1-3.

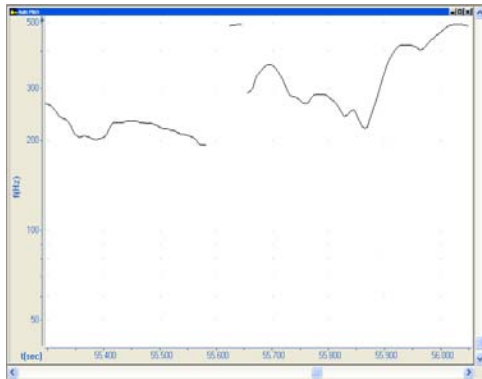
Native Baseline



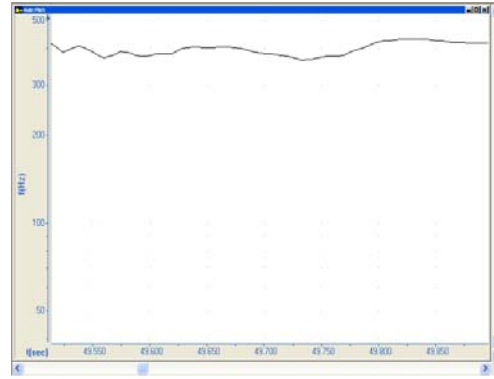
Subject 1



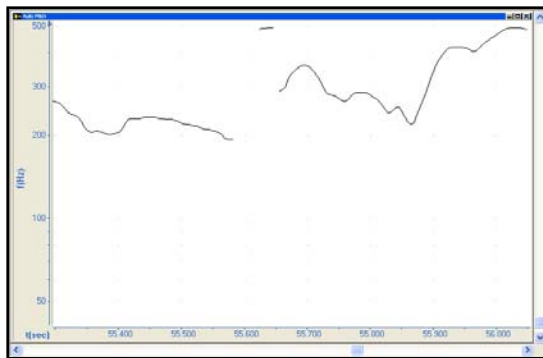
Native Baseline



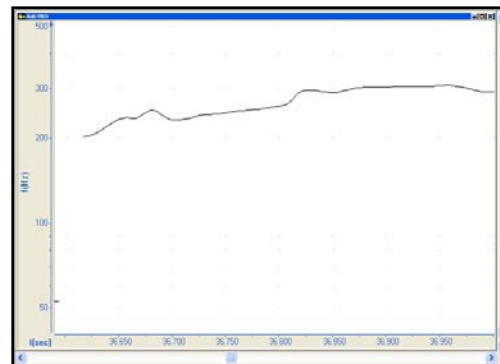
Subject 2



Native Baseline



Subject 3



### **Findings and Conclusion**

This study was conducted to find out whether or not Educated Edo English variable word stress patterns conform to Standard English usage.

For compound words, Educated Edo English speakers assigned stress appropriately in 793 out of 2,000 expected instances. This confirms that EEES do not observe the Lexical Category Prominence Rule since the analysis revealed a low performance (39.7%) of correct oral utterances. For noun phrases and English attributive nouns/adjectives, there was 0% correct oral performance respectively, which implies that none of the EEES subjects could assign stress appropriately to the second elements of English noun phrases and consequently downgraded the primary stress on attributive nouns and adjectives when they occurred within phrases. This as well implies that none of the subjects could observe the Nuclear Stress Rule which accounts for Standard English phrase stressing.

Therefore, the researchers feel that the subjects' inability to assign stress appropriately on the English variable items could be as a result of what Cruttenden (1986) and Roach (1991) refer to as the complexity of stress of assignment in Standard English, which results in the downgrad-

ing or lowering of some constituents within larger constituents. Considering the fact that most Nigerian languages (especially Edo) are not stress languages. The results of this study have serious implications for intelligibility and comprehension, especially when there is a need for EES to communicate in Standard English with non-Nigerians.

### Notes

1. The authors speak Standard British English and will therefore use British rather than English spelling in this paper.
2. Suprasegmentals is a phonetic term referring to stress, tone, or word juncture that accompanies or is added over consonants and vowels
2. Prosody refers to the use of pitch, loudness, tempo, and rhythm in speech.

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