



University of Tabriz
Faculty of Persian Literature and Foreign Languages
Department of English Language

**Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of Persian Literature
and Foreign Languages in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
PhD
In
English Language Teaching**

**THE EVALUATION OF LANGUAGE RELATED
ENGAGEMENT AND TASK RELATED ENGAGEMENT
WITH
THE PURPOSE OF INVESTIGATING THE EFFECT OF
METATALK AND TASK TYPOLOGY**

Supervisor: Ali Akbar Ansarin (PhD)

Advisors: Farahman Farrokhi (PhD)

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Researcher: Zohre Mohamadi Zenouzagh

July 2013

In the Name of God



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**We hereby recommend that the dissertation by Zohre
Mohamadi
Entitled**

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related engagement with the purpose of investigating the
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**be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of
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Dedicated to My Family

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Abstract

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Keywords: Language engagement, task types, task engagement, meta-talk. Syntactic devices, intonational devices, and discourse markers	
<p style="text-align: center;">Abstract</p> <p>While task-based instruction is considered as the most effective way to learn a language in the related literature, it is oversimplified on various grounds. Different variables may affect how students are engaged with not only the language but also with the task itself. The present study was conducted to investigate language and task related engagement on the basis of the task typology and metatalk. To this end, 80 homogeneous participants in terms of the language proficiency were assigned to four groups. The groups were different in terms of opportunities they are provided with by being engaged in different types of the tasks namely jigsaw, dictogloss, text reconstruction and translation as operationally defined on the basis of Ellis' definition of a task (2003). Participants' language related engagement was measured by evaluating syntactic</p>	

devices, intonational, and discursive devices used in language related episodes in their performances. The first research question was about evaluating the potentiality of four task types in directing students' attention to syntactic devices. Correspondingly, one way ANOVA was utilized to test the first research hypothesis. The second research question was answered using one way ANOVA to evaluate the potentiality of the targeted tasks in engaging students with intonational devices as a way to solve their communication problem. The third research question was answered using the same statistical technique to explore the potentiality of these four tasks in directing students' attention to discursive markers. The fourth research question was answered by the microgenetic approach introduced by Platt and Brook (2002) and Storch (2008). The findings show tasks are different in terms of their potentiality in engaging students with language at syntactic intonation and discursive levels whereas in terms of task engagement students went through the same patterns from pre-engagement to elaborate engagement across four task types. The findings imply a theoretical implication. Level of task-ness is analyzed mostly on the basis of the essentialness, naturalness and utility of the linguistic elements that each task creates a medium for the occurrence of those elements. What is missing from this model is the level of task engagement. Each task's potentiality in engaging students with itself can create a medium for acquisition rich processes. The findings of the present study have important implications for language teaching, language testing and materials development. Pedagogical implication suggests that the mere incorporation of tasks in the curriculum will not satisfy the principles of task- based and sociocultural approaches towards language teaching because the medium in which the interaction takes place will affect the quality of talk and in turns the quality of learning. The findings also provide insight to the concept of authenticity in materials development and testing as the findings support authenticity as a process rather than a product.

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List of Abbreviations

ANOVA.....	Analysis of Variances
CLT.....	Communicative Language Teaching
CA	Communicative Analysis
CALL.....	Computer Assisted Language learning
EFL.....	English as a Foreign Language
ESL.....	English as a Second Language
FL.....	Foreign Language
FFI.....	Form Focused Instruction
FSI.....	Foreign Service Institute
IP.....	Input Processing
IL.....	Interlanguage
L2	Second Language
L1.....	First Language
LREs	Language Related Episodes
PPP.....	Practice, Present, Produce
SL.....	Second Language
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
SCT.....	Socio-Cultural Theory
SRL.....	Self -Regulated Learning
SLL.....	Second Language Learning
TL.....	Target Language
TBLA.....	Task-Based Language Assessment
ZPD.....	Zone of Proximal Development

Chapter One

Introduction

Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Background to the Study

By reviewing the literature, one would see that research on classroom discourse analysis has seen a trend of change. According to Tsui (2007, cited in Simpson, 2011), classroom discourse analysis has been evaluated within the realm of three approaches.

The input-output driven approach in which the teacher input, feedback and the kind of interactional modification occurring within the course of an interaction were seen as the driving force for learning to occur.

In the holistic approach, language has a semiotic role which brings all relevant factors into account including society, scaffolding, collaboration provided in the task performance, the meta -talk as well as intersubjectivity created as students with different motives and social backgrounds oriented towards the tasks to make the joint ownership of task.

The critical approach involves situating the classroom in a larger context of society and evaluating how classroom processes are shaped by not only by the pedagogical concerns but also by broader social, economic, political

and cultural forces social inequality, including political, cultural, class, ethnic, racial and gender inequality (Van Dijk, 1993).

I explored how quality and quantity of negotiation of meaning in different task typology affect the potentiality of different task types in creating a medium for negotiation of meaning from input –output approach in her MA Thesis.

Therefore, this would be a golden opportunity in the present piece of research to take a step ahead and explore the issue from sociocultural perspective and work on the metatalk and intersubjectivity each task requires to be performed appropriately by the participants. That is, how participants orient themselves towards English as a Foreign Language (EFL) tasks and what the end results would be by evaluating the syntactic, intonational and discursive devices they use to examine activity theory in this research context.

To this end, the researcher analyzed the EFL task performances quantitatively to measure the syntactic, intonational and discursive tools used in each task performance and for the qualitative analysis, the researcher used the principles of conversational analysis proposed by Platt and Brook (2002) and Storch (1998, 2008) to evaluate how participants were involved in task engagement to see whether the opportunity for the metatalk in each typology of tasks makes any difference in task performance.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Although task based instruction is seen as one of the recent and powerful driving forces for learning, it has been over simplified over various grounds. Learner production is affected by many factors such as learners' goals and motives.

Considering the sociolinguistics approaches and activity theory, by having the opportunity to create the joint ownership of task, the same learning task may be operationalized as a different learning task by different learners or by the same learner in different contexts (Ellis, 2003).

In this study, four task types (text construction, dictogloss, translation, and jigsaw) were performed by four groups of participants. Participants' performances were analyzed to explore which kind of task provided more opportunities for metatalk as it is believed that metatalk has a facilitative role in learning since it primes acquisition processes by creating opportunities for noticing (Ellis, 2003; Ferrer, 2008). The syntactic, intonational and discursive devices used in each group were evaluated quantitatively by measuring Language Related Episodes (LREs) in each group.

Quantitative analysis did not seem to tell the whole story about learner production since it masks the more fruitful aspects of learner production which is how learners were engaged in performing the task and managed their conversation to accomplish tasks. For this reason, conversational