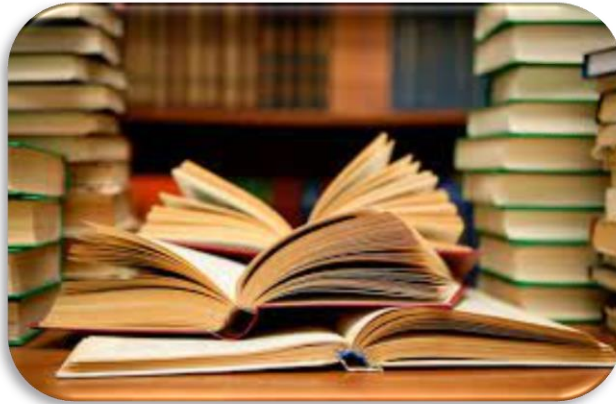**Research Paper**

Pedagogical Implementation of Stylistic Imitation in Grammar-based Writing Instruction in EFL Classes

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ABSTRACT

Writing has a unique position in language teaching since its acquisition involves the practice and knowledge of the other three language skills. One of the best ways to attract students to writing is to let them write at the beginning of the learning process as freely as possible and evoke in them the feeling of creativity. Creative writing obviously can play a crucial role in the development of writing skills. This study is an inquiry into the role grammar-based stylistic imitation plays in learning how to write in English classes. To this end, the researcher, taking advantage of qualitative and action research to collect and analyze the data, attempted to teach paragraph writing to EFL in-service teachers using the grammar-based stylistic imitation. Fourteen non-native English teachers from the Gooyesh language institute in Shahrood were asked to do a close and free imitation. The researcher made use of semi-structured interviews to explain if and when they would use it in their own classes. The results showed grammar-based stylistic imitation could be of tremendous help to novice learners in their classes in that it can alleviate the burden they feel trying to master writing. However, a few teachers argued against it stating concerns about voices getting lost and styles getting killed. The results from the present inquiry can raise awareness of the way imitation, grammar-based stylistic imitation to be more specific, can find its way back into the classroom, which can help curriculum designers, stakeholders, policymakers, and administrators.

Keywords: Imitation. Stylistic Imitation. Grammar- based Stylistic Imitation. Social Learning Theory. Modeling

کاربرد آموزشی تقلید سبکی در آموزش گرامر محور مهارت نوشتاری در کلاسهای زبان انگلیسی

نوشتن در آموزش زبان جایگاه منحصر به فردی دارد زیرا کسب آن مستلزم تمرین و دانش سه مهارت زبان دیگر است. یکی از بهترین راهها برای جذب دانش‌آموزان به نوشتن این است که به آنها اجازه دهیم در ابتدای فرآیند یادگیری تا حد امکان آزادانه بنویسند و احساس خلاقیت را در آنها برانگیزند. بدیهی است که نوشتن خلاق می تواند نقش مهمی در توسعه مهارت های نوشتاری داشته باشد. این مطالعه تحقیقی در مورد نقش تقلید سبک مبتنی بر دستور زبان در یادگیری نحوه نوشتن در کلاس های انگلیسی است. بدین منظور محقق با بهره گیری از روش کیفی و اقدام پژوهی برای جمع آوری و تجزیه و تحلیل داده ها، اقدام به آموزش پاراگراف نویسی به معلمان ضمن خدمت زبان انگلیسی با استفاده از تقلید سبک گرامر محور کرد. از 14 مدرس زبان انگلیسی غیر بومی از موسسه زبان گویش شاهرود درخواست شد تا تقلید سبکی انجام دهند. محقق از مصاحبه‌های نیمه ساختاریافته برای توضیح اینکه آیا و چه زمانی از آن در کلاس‌های خود استفاده می‌کنند، استفاده کرد. نتایج نشان داد که تقلید سبک مبتنی بر دستور زبان می‌تواند به زبان‌آموزان مبتدی در کلاس‌هایشان کمک شایانی کند، زیرا می‌تواند باری را که آنها در تلاش برای تسلط بر نوشتن احساس می‌کنند کاهش دهد. با این حال، تعدادی از معلمان با ابراز نگرانی در مورد گم شدن و از بین رفتن سبک های فردی ، مخالف آن استدلال کردند. نتایج حاصل از تحقیق حاضر می‌تواند آگاهی را در مورد نحوه تقلید سبکی مبتنی بر دستور زبان به طور خاصتر، می‌تواند راه درس خود را به کلاس درس بازگرداند، که می‌تواند به طراحان برنامه درسی تصمیم گیرندگان، سیاستگذاران و مدیران کمک کند

واژگان کلیدی: تقلید، تقلید سبکی، تقلید سبکی گرامر محور، نظریه یادگیری اجتماعی، مدل سازی

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays no one can ignore the great degree of importance the written language has as social and pedagogical function having a high social prestige. It has its specific norm, which is a structure of its kind (Urbanova & Oakland, 2002: 31). Walsh (2010) believes that writing is significant because it is used extensively in higher education and in the workplace. Knowing how to express themselves in writing, it enables students to communicate well with professors, employers, peers, or just about anyone else. Much of professional communication is done in writing including proposals, memos, reports, applications, preliminary interviews, e-mails, and more are part of the daily life of a college student or successful graduate.

Learning by observation in human beings, an ever-present method since the dawn of history, justifies employing imitation in learning which means it has always benefitted beginners by facilitating their way into the intended craft. Salisu and Ransom (2014) hold that young human beings have the capability to imitate events that are beyond their immediate sensory field making their way towards total mastery in small steps. Also, Brown (2014) explains how infants master language learning via solely responding to phonological code, known as surface structure imitation, and internalizing the semantic code, the fact that those sounds bear meaning, a process called structure imitation.

Furthermore, Liang (2019) contends that the act of becoming situated in an established discourse with its own specific guidelines justifies the use of imitation over invention and discovery. He believes that being welcomed in a field of knowledge requires a certain extent of mastery of the jargon and the discourse which would take too long if it were not for imitation. And this is not accomplished via self-discovery and invention. In fact, that phrase is only arrived at when they first master the basics of the craft; i.e. the styles commonly used by the members of the community. Among the four language skills aimed at in language teaching programs, writing has always been unique in its own way. Graham (2019) argued that in order to succeed at school and work students must know how to write. Despite its usefulness, writing, it seems, has not received due attention compared to its other counterparts. Reviewing 28 studies designed to evaluate how writing is taught in contemporary classrooms, Graham (2019) found out that, shocking as it may be, writing and teaching writing in those classes are inadequate. Also, in the same line, Rietdijk et al. (2018) discovered that the time dedicated to writing in elementary schools in the Netherlands is at most one lesson per week. Finally, Liang (2019) stated that a lack of knowledge of American writing patterns is the primary reason responsible for the matter at hand. Geist (2005), Stodola(2013), Reeves(2019) in other countries and Ghorbanpoor(2007), Rezaeinejad (2020) and Akbari Rad(2021) in Iran have done some research on imitating style or stylistic imitation. But all of these studies are about teaching writing or writing style to learners and not about teachers' ideas about applying stylistic imitation in classes.

To the best of the researcher's knowledge, there are few studies regarding the use of grammar-based stylistic imitation in teaching writing in general and the perceptions of EFL in-service teachers in particular in Iran. There is a lot of hope regarding what comes out of the present inquiry. To begin with, it can finally provide English teachers with an excellent technic to overcome a long-lasting problem. Besides, learners will greatly benefit from this new technic to address some of their major concerns regarding how to master writing; e.g. those seeking an international certificate like IELTS or TOEFL. Also, this way, English teachers can bring literature to the class, making English learning far more

exciting, productive and unforgettable. Reading excerpts from Nathaniel Hawthorne, Thomas Hardy, Jane Austin, Virginia Wolfe, and Kate Chopin will truly depict how wonderfully prolific English Syntax can be. Even more, this can inspire some of them to take this passion to the next level; that is to start writing their own pieces. Last but not least, providing evidence on the use of stylistic imitation to teach writing can benefit every other school around the country. Employing this technic in writing classes in elementary as well as junior high schools can produce more competent writers as well as provide the chance to use our rich heritage of Persian works of literature in class. Given the great number of well-written stories and novels in Persian, writing classes will be a source of inspiration and great joy. This study is taken as an invaluable opportunity to argue for the sake of employing grammar-based stylistic imitation as a pedagogical method to be used by learners. To do so, the following research questions were formulated.

RQ1. In what ways does grammar-based stylistic imitation assist Iranian EFL in-service teachers to teach writing?

RQ2. How do Iranian EFL in-service teachers respond to grammar-based stylistic imitation employed to instruct writing?

RQ3. When do Iranian EFL in-service teachers use grammar-based stylistic imitation?

RQ4. How do Iranian EFL in-service teachers use grammar-based stylistic imitation?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Writing has a unique position in language teaching since its acquisition involves the practice and knowledge of the other three language skills, such as listening, reading and speaking. Moreover, it requires mastering other skills, such as metacognitive skills. Learners need to set an objective for their writing, plan it carefully, think over its layout and logical structure, and revise it. In the process of writing, they have to use cognitive skills; they have to analyze their sources and then synthesize them in a compact piece of writing. One of the best ways to attract students to writing is to let them write at the beginning of the learning process as freely as possible and evoke in them the feeling of creativity. Creative writing obviously can play a crucial role in the development of writing skills (cf. Janikova, 2005/6; Zajicova, 2011; or Rico, 1984).

Maley (2009), for example, emphasizes the following benefits of creative writing: it aids language development at all levels: grammar, vocabulary, phonology and discourse; it requires learners to manipulate the language in interesting and demanding ways as they attempt to express uniquely personal meanings; it requires a willingness to play with the language; and it concentrates more on the right side of the brain, with a focus on feelings, physical sensations, intuition and musicality; it also affords scope for learners who in the usual processes of formal instruction are therefore often at a disadvantage.

Hamad, Metwally, and Alfaruque (2019) argue that using YouTube videos and Listening Audio Tracks Imitation (YATI) leads to improvement in EFL learners' speaking skills. They believe that imitating authentic language from real-life videos and audio can help develop fluency and pronunciation. Similarly, Edmiston, Perlman, and Lupyan (2018) contend that spoken words emerge when children

imitate what they hear around them, and over time, the imitated sounds become more stable and word-like.

In the same vein, Lin (2017) proposed some optimizing strategies to introduce sentence imitation in primary schools in China. He seems to believe that language is a meme, meaning it must be imitated to be learned; from input (assimilation) to intake (retention) to output (transmission). Here he roots for close reproduction of the target sentence. He believes watching and following the model can bear optimum outcomes. Also, Zhou and Guo (2016) demonstrated that undergraduate students coming from American and Chinese cultures take advantage of imitations when trying to learn. They found that most undergraduate students believed imitations have positively affected their learning.

Similarly, Joyce and Lundberg (2013) name a student who shared the experiences of copying to learn. Using imitation, he was able to take the lessons he noticed and absorbed from his copying. He also managed to apply it to all sorts of writing, which, in some cases even outperformed some of the successful graduates of ELPP (English Language Preparatory Program). He, they carry on, held a positive attitude towards what he is doing to learn. Also, Brinkman (2010) assigned creative imitations in his undergraduate literature classrooms which, he maintains, has improved students' understanding of and interest in literary genre and form.

Rijlaarsdam & Couzijn (2000) also compared the more conventional learning via doing with learning via observing. They revealed that observational learning proved more productive since the subjects were more willing to transfer their knowledge to reading tasks. Shields (2007) analyzed the style and the stylistic techniques in Dante s Inferno and Chaucer s Canterbury Tales. The students were given a chance to produce a narrative following the same style. He found out that given specific criteria, students find it far more convenient to both initiate the narrative and come up with creative ways to produce their own pieces.

Regarding stylistic imitation, Geist (2004) is of the belief that it is more a matter of gaining insight into possibilities than trying to write the same exact way the model has. This way, he proceeds, imitating the style of some models provides a preliminary step to independent learning rather than strictly sticking to the model, hence, crippling the learner in their attempts to master writing. Likewise, Stodola (2013) holds that stylistic imitation is not only concerned with how to write but enables the learners to develop their own style. He argues that by providing the learner with a model, stylistic imitation illustrates how it is done.

Similarly, Liang (2019) found that due to insufficient knowledge and practice, those learning English as foreign language face difficulties with the rules of writing in English. This, he argues, explains why stylistic imitation can prove productive in developing writing proficiency. Finally, Jones and Freeman (2003) suggest teachers should be repeating some activities that lead to L2 writers finding new voices through close and free stylistic imitation.

Similarly, Mitchell and McGee (2011) argue that looking at a text and analyzing what the writer does is a far more productive way of mastering writing. They believe that giving a chance to go through the model to unearth how the writer has put it together raises awareness of the ways writing in English works. Also, Liang (2019) maintains that stylistic imitation is capable of bringing together grammar and meaning in English writing classes. This could benefit the learners in that they mostly know the content and the structure but not together. Finally, Loux (1987) maintains that exposure to great writers can rise

literature students to the level of a writer; i.e., help them internalize matters of style they may find dull to discuss: diction, sentence structure, parallelism, and repetition. So, there seems to be adequate theoretical ground to support the introduction of stylistic imitation into language classes.

Liang (2019) aimed to investigate the productivity of stylistic imitation to teach writing. He found out that imitating a famous writer can prove quite effective in familiarizing learners with English writing patterns. They saw the model and tried to follow it, and they learned from it. It seems that the model has proved effective in presenting how good writing is done so they can quite effortlessly learn to do it themselves. This is why the participants found this to be a positive, helpful experience that they planned on using to teach writing in their very own classes. There were a number of concerns, but the attitudes were mostly positive.

In the same vein, Tager-Flusberg and Calkins (1990) investigated the imitation of organizational and sentence patterns and revealed that when imitation can, in fact, be liberating. It was concluded that imitation acts as a bridge from acquiring the stylistic features of the model to developing an autonomous style of one's own.

Even a cursory glance at the existing literature on stylistic imitation to teach writing reveals that the number of studies recently conducted is far from sufficient. They, instead, mostly concentrate on using imitation to master oral skills, speaking, pronunciation, accent and the like. Besides, those addressing imitation in writing are outdated, more than three decades back. Furthermore, researchers involved in using imitation to teach writing primarily focused on brining one world renowned writer, Dante, Swift, to the class, analyze the style and have the students produce their own pieces, and eventually hopefully find their own voices. This way they could draw some conclusions regarding the applicability of the new technic to teach writing. Moreover, it seems language teaching, writing in specific, could benefit from abundant works of literature already at our disposal. And stylistic imitation can open doors to more exciting methods of teaching writing. Nevertheless, almost all the research conducted so far has attempted to determine if the technic produces any results without including the teachers' vantage point. As an indispensable part of the learning and teaching process, teachers' opinions on the productivity of the new technic and their views regarding its implementation in class need to be investigated as well. This is the only way we can move forward with this new technic and officially introduce it to more and more classes hoping for better results. To that end, the present inquiry is an attempt to uncover teachers' vantage point arising from their first-hand experience with the technic at hand. In the wake of presenting, analyzing and producing pieces, teachers asked to share outlooks regarding its productivity as well as its applicability. This way, a more solid ground is hoped to be found for stylistic imitation to teach writing in English classes.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) was first started as Social Learning Theory (SLT) in the 1960s by Albert Bandura. SCT revolves around people watching and learning from a model, either interpersonal or media sources. It holds that learning occurs at a faster pace when the beginner has a chance to see things in action and follow in the same footsteps rather than being merely told about them. Likewise, Green and Peil (2010) believe that learning behaviors through observing others replaces the need for

direct instruction. This process involves learning the knowledge through observing those who have mastered the craft so they can flawlessly demonstrate how it is done. SCT holds that imitation bears better results when the learner identifies himself with the master and displays high levels of self-efficacy; i.e., the extent to which an individual believes they can master the craft (Bandura, 2005). Besides, in his writing in 1989, he contends that cognitive and social development would be seriously harmed, if not laborious and slow were knowledge and skills only acquired via direct experience.

METHOD

Design

The design of this study is based on qualitative design and particularly action research. The qualitative investigation is an attempt to explore the use of grammar-based stylistic imitation in class and the participants were in-service teachers who practiced the technique as students. Lin Norton (2019) described action research as looking back at some issues one had to face in the teaching process in the hope of resolving it through the actions they take as a result of delving more deeply into the matter at hand. The present action research was attempting to facilitate using stylistic imitation as a pedagogical technique in the wake of its long absence from English classes. Here, the researcher made an attempt to resolve an issue he had to face while teaching in EFL classes; i.e. how to teach writing is the issue the teacher- researcher is trying to explore the applicability of stylistic imitation to his teaching context. The present inquiry attempts to identify teachers' perception of using imitation to teach writing in class. To that end, the researcher is taking advantage of content analysis to allow for the patterns to freely emerge from the respondents' accounts.

Participants

The present research attempted to facilitate using grammar-based stylistic imitation as a pedagogical technique to teach writing. The researcher has made an attempt to resolve an issue he had to face while teaching in EFL classes and that is how to teach writing issue. The researcher is trying to explore the applicability of stylistic imitation to his teaching context. The researcher used Convenience Sampling to choose English teachers, fourteen to be exact, who took part in a program, introducing grammar-based stylistic imitation, to learn how to instruct language skills as a part of a workshop held at Gooyesh Language Institute (GLI) in Shahrood, Iran. The table 1 below provides more details on the participants.

Table1
Demographic information of the participants

Participants	Age		Degree		Years of Experience	
	-30	+30	BA	MA	-5	+5
Female	5	2	4	3	3	4
Male	2	5	6	1	1	6
Total	7	7	10	4	4	10

Instruments
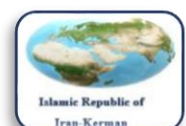
To collect rich data for this study, a model paragraph and a semi-structured interview were used. A general description of these instruments is depicted below:

Merriam and Grenier (2019) argue the chief instrument to gather as well as analyze data in qualitative research is the researcher. First, he provided them with model writing of himself to be freely imitated by the participants. Afterward, he presented the model paragraph and gathered the written pieces for follow-up analysis. Reading and rereading the respondents' accounts carefully, the researcher took advantage of thick description, adding a record of subjective explanations and meanings provided by the people engaged in the behaviors, to make the data collected of greater value to the research. The researcher also made use of the semi-structured interview. To do so, the respondents were also asked to write a paragraph to explain how they felt about the experience. In it, they were requested to explain if and when they would use it in their own classes. This was a paragraph intended to open windows into the respondents' thoughts and feelings toward the newly presented technic. The face and content validity of the semi-structured interview were checked by consulting with three university EFL instructors.

Data Collection Procedure

This was a grammar-based stylistic imitation of a paragraph produced by Chopin (2018) in her work "Awakening". This paragraph was chosen to demonstrate her style of writing. Also, it included the target structure, participial phrases, and participial adjectives. Data collection was done using a model paragraph written by Chopin (2018) and then a semi-structured interview was used to understand the participants' opinion. First was free writing; i.e., the participants were required to produce a piece on the topic chosen by the instructor. Next, the model was presented so they can work on it; they analyzed the model's syntax and were asked to underline the target structure to replace them with words of their own choice; a close imitation of the model. Finally, they were asked to do a free imitation of the paragraph; following the patterns set by the model, they were free to add to the original to make it more about their own real-life experience.

RESULTS

Regarding the benefits, first and foremost is the exposure to authentic English, the one indispensable yet at times ignored component of English learning. This is due to the fact that watching a great writer do the thing one is trying to accomplish can be excessively illuminating. They also find it enjoyable as it can and does, according to them, culminate in finding one's voice if done frequently enough. Finally, they saw this as an opportunity to see how language works to realize its function, enabling human beings to communicate what s on their minds. Interestingly, however, a few find it an obstacle to finding one's voice; believing it demolishes writing, they denounce it altogether. Hence, the results to the present inquiry demonstrate the productivity of stylistic imitation as a technique to teach writing. In regards with the second one, student teachers hold positive attitudes towards using imitation to teach writing, the findings from their comments indicate that they mostly keep a positive attitude towards stylistic imitation to teach writing.

The results of the investigation revealed that eight out of fourteen have gone with close imitation of the original model by Chopin, indicating that using model writings by literary figures in class can, in

fact, produce favorable results. Having an authentic model to refer to if needed looks excessively productive. They now are presented with an invaluable opportunity to see English structure, all that grammar they have been learning and teaching over the years, in real, actual practice. What better way to delineate how real writing is accomplished, than a chance they may not have problems up to now?

Regarding the rest, however, it does seem like an elaborate attempt to diverge from the model; i.e., lexical replacements, though mostly adjectives of the same part of speech, generated a semantically different story. These newly included words are clear signs of the attempt to produce something different, to try and establish themselves in their own writing. Finally, four have made it perfectly clear that they do not abide by the rules set by the author. Put another way, they have bluntly opted for discovering their own voice via articulating their own piece. Not novices, they are already well aware of what they are doing, not literally imitating the model. They view themselves sufficiently proficient to stick to their very own style.

Finally, in regards to the target structure, only four decided to reproduce it in writing of their own, suggesting the possibility that stylistic imitation may not be as prolific to teach structures as one might have hoped. One possible explanation could be the mere lack of salience; with short-term memory failing to attend to the seemingly less significant details, the target structure seems not to have stricken them more than any other surrounding it. One way to address such a matter is to make it stand out in some way. This could also be ascribed to the fact that being English teachers after all, strictly adhering to every single structure used by the author could mean losing face.

1. In what ways does stylistic imitation assist teachers to teach writing*?*

"Seeing how someone may construct a sentence and then mimic the format with your own words."
"We are trying to learn from the best. and who am I to say that is a no-go."
*"It allows me to see how others write to give me new ideas about how I, myself, can write."*
"I can really feel my writing getting better with every word I write in this fashion."
"I truly enjoyed creating a story with the provided foundation"
"I totally changed the tone of the paragraph from a sad and disappointing love affair to a happy, teenage romance."

To begin with, it gives them a framework demonstrating for them how to string English words together so as to communicate what one means. This is what style is about after all. It never forces upon the learners its own content. This is perfectly manifest in the way some of the participants developed their own story via lexical replacements. This points to the fact that they are already showing resistance to blindly following the model presented. As to the rest, the formal variation is an early symptom of trying to establish their own identity in their own writing while, simultaneously following the style the model presents. It seems like it is going to take a while, but they will be there given adequate opportunities. Moreover, regarding those who played by their own rules and tried to stay away from the model, it seems they are more indebted to the model than they are ready to admit. The fact that they are writing, probably unconsciously, within the limits of the author's style, indicates they are not the revolutionary type they imagine themselves to be.
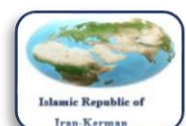
2.How do Iranian EFL in- service teachers respond to grammar-based stylistic imitation employed to instruct writing?

"I think this technique can be so helpful and applicable in my classes as a teacher as well."

"Students will practice stylistic imitation so that they can get a feel of how an academically mature paper sounds and looks like."

"Overall I think that this could be helpful to a younger audience".

"Through imitating the writing of others, they will be able to find their own style and voice."

"This is a great idea and I am definitely going to use it in my own writing classes.

"This way, the learners, fresh as they are with the task, have minimal thinking to do and in its stead, enjoy not having to make tough decisions every single second they do the writing."

"It most certainly helps with uplifting my, and in turn, my student's language."

"To sum up, I will include the technic, but I will definitely make some improvements."

In one word, positively, almost all of them agreed that stylistic imitation to teach writing is useful and they are considering integrating it into their own classes. Firstly, an authentic model demonstrates standard English writing from an actual writer no less, who has, most probably, gone through the same thing trying to master English writing. Secondly, they seem to believe that stylistic imitation can contribute to their finding their voices given ample opportunities to practice. Finally, stylistic imitation, the way any other form of imitation works, can take the pressure off. Having the framework, the learners don't have to concern about every single detail now, setting them free to experience the enjoyable act of writing as a medium to convey what s on their minds.

3. When do Iranian EFL in-service teachers use grammar-based stylistic imitation?

There was no specific reference to any particular case, but it seems they are planning on using it all the time. However, believing the technic to be better suited to them, a few participants have specifically stated to apply it when teaching younger learners. As they are not at the right level of word and structure knowledge, they see it fit to provide more help by presenting a readymade model to follow. It does make it less of a burden.

4. How do Iranian EFL in-service teachers use grammar-based stylistic imitation in their EFL classes?

They will mostly be using it the same way it was used to on them; i.e., bringing pieces from world-renowned authors to the class to entice the learners. They are thinking of having them exposed to the piece indirectly, followed by a detailed analysis of it to give the learners a good chance to see how the professional writers accomplish the mission.

The fact that nearly half of the respondents have opted for close imitation of the original model indicates that using model writings in class can, in fact, produce favorable results. These are the ones who, for different reasons, stuck to the model paragraph in terms of new words, structure, and style. Inversions and present participial phrases are the structures easily noticeable. Besides sophisticated vocabulary suggesting connotations, along with frequent use of gerunds, relative clauses, and double comparatives are also easily noticeable. Regarding the rest, it does not seem like an elaborate attempt to diverge from the model; it means a few lexical replacements, mostly adjectives of the same part of

speech, generated a rather semantically different story. It does not, however, seem like they have managed to escape the powerful grip of the model before their eyes.

All in all, the technic seems to have proved beneficial in 8 cases out of all the 14 participants present in the study. It has mostly helped them develop a style, a way of organizing ideas into acceptable strings of words so it can affect the reader the way the writer has intended.

On the other hand, four have made it perfectly clear that they do not abide by the rules set by the author and have opted for discovering their own voice via articulating their own piece totally disregarding the model. These are the ones defying all presented to them in search of their own voice. A couple of them have proved already proficient while the other ones took advantage of simple unadorned language; i.e., simple, plain sentences, as well as everyday, regular vocabulary with no sign of inversion, reduction, participial phrases, or conjunctions.

Regarding the reasons, imitation appears to produce results when participants have already had some experience with producing written pieces. Otherwise, the model is going to impose itself upon the learners depriving them of any chance to find their own voice, without which it is nearly impossible to become a writer in the first place. All in all, being exposed to a model can lead to favorable results; it can help with the style of writing, with putting together words and structures in effective ways. This seems quite helpful in that the participants, though good at vocabulary and grammar out of context, seem to experience difficulty trying to piece them together so as to generate the effects aimed for.

Only three have employed the target structure, participial adjectives, in their own writing. Regarding the rest, the language they exploited is simple and unadorned. Simple structures, easy words, and easy-to-produce language abound in their writing. The reason could be twofold; they could be nervous and pressured because of the task, or this is how well they are at writing. Either way, this indicates that stylistic imitation may not be the most effective technic to teach structures. This finding could be ascribed to the fact that they seemed too preoccupied with the content to take note of any structure the researcher may have had to present. Being limited in capacity, short-term memory seems to focus on what matters more, content over form. One remedy could be to make the content less attention-consuming so more attention can be given to the form. It is also likely that if the target structure is more salient in some way, it could be noticed more easily.

All in all, the findings seem to indicate that imitation in writing classes does not appear to culminate in mastering structure in that, it seems possible, the learners do not pick it up.

Moreover, almost all the research conducted so far has attempted to determine if the technic produces any results without including the teachers' vantage point. As an indispensable part of the learning and teaching process, teachers' opinions on the productivity of the new technic and their views regarding its implementation in class need to be thoroughly investigated. This is the only way we can move forward with this new technic and officially introduce it to more and more classes worldwide. The current scrutiny has also been an attempt to include teachers' attitudes towards stylistic imitation with the aim of shedding more light on the technic as well as its application in class to promote writing.

DISCUSSION

The present investigation revealed that the novice seems better prepared to be impressed by the model and to give in to her style of writing. On the other hand, more proficient participants appeared more set

in their own ways, hence, less affected by the face of the presented model. They are more confident in their own writing proficiency, therefore closer to discovering their own voice. To them, imitation can hamper their voice and their individuality. Having already tasted the freedom of voice and style, they are not ready or willing to give it up. This is a finding the researcher did not run into in the existing literature on stylistic imitation. So far, the research seems to have been considering the impact of imitation on learners as a whole. This investigation can provide the first step in a line of research to be followed on this specific aspect of imitation in English classes.

Regarding those participants whose performance proved a counterargument against using stylistic imitation to teach writing, it has to be argued that the extent of its productivity is directly linked to the level of writing proficiency; i.e., the ones who are better writers seem to be less affected by the model and the style of the writer. On the other hand, those at the lower levels, overawed as they seem to be, by the style and the writer, appear more subservient to the model, therefore, are affected noticeably more by its style and structure. This is in line with the SCT principle that learning through observation replaces the need for direct instruction (Green & Peil, 2010). Also, this finding corroborates Liang (2019) whose research points to the effectiveness of stylistic imitation in teaching writing. This seems to pinpoint the level of confidence the teacher is expected to bring about in the new writers. The more confident they feel, the more they try to find and establish their own voice, thus less vulnerable to a blind, uncomprehending copying of some paragraph, as was the case at times in the present inquiry.

Furthermore, stylistic imitation does not seem to work with those who make efforts to develop their very own voice. Even if they feel obliged to preserve the content, these are the participants who remain faithful to their own style; i.e., try to employ structures of their own, even if it is less skillful structure. These are the ones who do not abide by the rules set by the author seeing that the top priority is developing a voice. For them, imitating someone else is not conducive to independent writing and they seem to believe that a ready-made model steps on their independence, which they cannot make their peace with. This goes against Eisner and Vicinus (2004), who informs us that even in a literary culture that continues to prize originality, imitation is a viable apprenticeship for a writer. This also goes against Liang (2019) who maintains that close and free stylistic imitation enables second-language writers to find their voice. At least in the case of these few writers, the claim does not seem to stand correct.

In yet another argument, these participants contend that the imitation and the perfect model and the established author trump the novice writers voice, taking away their chance of having to deal with the huge responsibility of endlessly pondering upon the proper choice for the lexicon and the structure so it expresses what is on their minds, which is the true blessing for every emergent author. This is not, they argue, how writers are born. A follower is poles apart from a true writer, they argue. All in all, the results from the present inquiry indicate a close connection between stylistic imitation as a way to learn how to write and the student teachers' current level of proficiency and this finding is in line with Liang (2019) whose research points that stylistic imitation is highly effective in teaching writing.

On the other hand, in regards to those who truly benefited from the initiative, the following are noticeable. To begin with, these are the ones who try to produce a piece much similar to the one presented. Not strong enough to stand on their feet, comparatively inexperienced writers fail to get out from under the heavy influence of an established author. For them, more exposure even works better. This is in line

with Christina Pugh (2008), who argues that imitation is still a perfectly viable tool in teaching learners to write. It was revealed that being exposed to a model shows them how to structure and organize their own ideas, how to put the right lexicon in the right structure to get their meaning across, a job, as my experience informs, that proves daunting to a beginner.

Totally ready to benefit from the technic, there are those who can benefit from a ready-made model, by a well-known author no less, in that it enlightens them to piece the words together the way the giants do. In other words, seeing language in action bestows awareness of how it operates. Similarly, Liang (2019) found that imitating a famous writer can prove quite effective in familiarizing learners with English writing patterns. Seeing that the participants are English teachers, it goes without saying that they have mastered the lexicon and the syntax already. However, when it comes to piecing them together to produce a meaningful account, developing an argument, and articulating an effective paragraph, they have something to be desired. Here is where the model intervenes. Having the learners notice how the famous writer has done it through meticulous analysis, the teachers create an opportunity for them to see how to accomplish the task as a whole. The model shows them how to actually use all that vocabulary and grammar they have been learning over the years to produce meaningful paragraphs and get their message across. This is particularly important when we realize that the skill of writing is rather ignored, compared to oral ones, which have always appeared as exciting ones.

In a few cases seeing English in action, and trying to follow that has culminated in a new style heavily influenced by the model. Likewise, Twomey (2003) revealed that following the models presented can help beginner learners know the standards, recognize the expectations, and more importantly develop a good, as opposed to bad, style of writing. Also, Nguyen & Delvaux (2016) discovered that there is convincing evidence pointing to the fact that imitation is selective and compositional, and may lead to innovation and change. There is, the results revealed, the possibility of developing one's own style combined with the effects of the model. In a few cases, the participants managed to, try to write their own piece and produce a combination. It seems not to be on their mind when they started, but it was definitely there when they ended.   This can be taken as proof of the fact that the model presented can as well work on a subconscious level; i.e., you expose them to good English in action, and they will pick it up at their own pace. This is in line with Loux (1987); when used to follow a given model, imitation is liberating; acts as a bridge from acquiring the stylistic features of the model to developing an autonomous style of one's own.

Dandurand et al. (2004) found that learning by imitation in problem-solving tasks is effective, efficient, and superior to explicit learning because it requires less time and energy on the part of the teacher. So, it seems that sufficient exposure to authentic paragraphs from world-renowned authors provides insights into how to write, thus needs to be employed in English classes more often; it can produce better results and save more time compared to the current state of affairs in English classes. Likewise, Loux (1987) argues that exposure to great writers can transcend literature students to the level of a writer. She believes that writing imitations can engage students with theme and structure in literature; i.e. internalize matters of style that they may find dull to discuss: diction, sentence structure, parallelism and repetition. This way, when asked to write an imitation, their ability to use elements of form and style exceeds the ability to articulate the same form when writing on their own.

Furthermore, it generates insights into how language works. Doing the hard part for beginners, stylistic imitation lessens the burden of having to make big decisions on how to organize one's ideas into perfectly worded sentences, which obviously exceeds their current competence. In the same vein, Lynskey (1957) rebukes how English teachers attempt to teach learners how to write without exposing them first to the great works of art before them, asking them to improve in style without having them observe the niceties of style in practice. Likewise, Gorrell (1981) argues error control, increased fluency, and a sense of structure as well as greater student motivation as the benefits of controlled composition. These are the benefits to which the results of the present investigation point.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The present inquiry attempted to look into the role stylistic imitation plays in promoting writing competence and grammar learning among English teachers in language schools in Iran. Fourteen teachers announced their consent to join the experiment. The participants were given a model of free writing generated by the researcher to produce a free piece. Then, the model paragraph was introduced to the class to be analyzed in detail, in terms of both structure and style. Afterward, the participants were asked to produce a close and a free imitation of the model given. The researcher then began analyzing journals produced in each step to unearth how exposure to the model paragraph affected their style of writing and if it could teach them some grammar, and present participial adjectives, in an indirect fashion. The findings demonstrated that stylistic imitation can facilitate teaching writing, but not structure. In addition, it was revealed to produce better outcomes with less competent learners, novice writers. Put another way, not having formed their own identity yet, the less competent emerged better prepared to follow the original writer s footsteps. With the more proficient writers, however, they were less eager to appropriate some other style as they already have one.

All in all, stylistic imitation appears a promising procedure in need of a serious revaluation by both teachers and syllabus designers. Teachers can take advantage of the passages by established writers in class in that they present the learners with an invaluable opportunity to see how writing is accomplished. Similarly, Schunk (1991) contends that learning through observation outperforms direct instruction. Furthermore, this can lead, for the curriculum designers to reintroduce English literature and literary works in language classes, a promising change since exposure to beautiful passages in English can reinforce motivation among learners. To sum up, teachers can make language learning a far more thrilling experience than it already is.

Both teachers and material developers can benefit from the findings of the present research. The former can bring easy-to-follow samples from world-renowned writers to the class to augment the motivation and productivity of their learners. They can encourage trying to imitate the style employed in the literary excerpt so they can develop their own ways. Regarding the latter, they can find the level-appropriate excerpts and design activities aiming to develop writing from full dependence to total independence on the learners' part.

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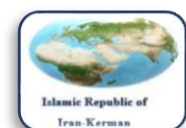
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