

## An Investigation of Constraints and Their Effects in English Language Teaching Practices in English Language Institutes and High Schools in Iran

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### **Abstract**

This study investigated restrictions on teachers in Iranian high schools and English language institutes to see if there was any relationship between restrictions and teaching practices. First, six volunteer teachers (three males and three females) from Iranian high schools and six volunteer teachers (three men and three women) from English language institutes were selected. The next stage was to interview the teachers. The analysis of the results gained through the emerging categories and themes showed that restrictions, the goals of teaching and learning and also how teaching materials, affected their classroom practices. The results of this study were in line with many other studies which confirm that constraints have a substantial influence on their practices.

**Keywords:** restriction, teaching practice, the goals of teaching and learning, teaching materials

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

Before the Islamic revolution in Iran, in 1979, close political, social, economic, and military relationships between Iran and the USA increased western influence in Iran. For this reason, teaching English became a social necessity and private language schools were established in the capital and many large cities. English became an essential requirement in many job vacancies for the younger generation (Khajavi & Abbasian, 2011). After the Islamic revolution, Islamic values were instilled into government infrastructure and as a result Islamic values were implemented into the education system. The main objective was to bring Islamic values into education system as quickly as possible (Farhady et al, 2010 cited in Mahboudi1 & Javdani, 2012). “One of the duties of formal education for foreign language teachers in Iran is to help students develop constructs with which to analyse their particular situation and defend themselves from potentially imperialistic forces” (Mahboudi & Javdani, 2012, p.89). For example, in Iran, the textbooks do not have anything about the culture of English speaking countries. All the names or scenarios that are represented in the textbooks are Iranian.

This paper aims to investigate the constraints on teachers in Iranian high schools and (HSs) and English language institutes (ELIs). This qualitative research study will interview participants to explore how constraints affect their teachings. My interest in researching impact of the restrictions placed on the teachers started when I taught in an ELI in Iran. During my experience of teaching, I faced a lot of restrictions and some of these constraints affected my teaching practices because they meant I was unable to teach according my practices. I decided to do some research on other Iranian teachers to show that constraints can influence the teaching process.

The researcher wanted to find out what restrictions Iranian HS and ELI teachers have to face in their day to day practices. The areas of research interest can be identified by the following question:

- What constraints are there on teaching and how do the constraints affect their teaching?

## **II. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### *A. Education System in Iranian School*

Schools in Iran are comprised of three levels. The first level is the primary school which consists of five years studying. Children start their school when they are six or seven years old. After primary school, it is guidance school, which is a further three years. After finishing guidance school, the students graduate to high school, which involves four years of studying. In total, students have to study for twelve years before they sit a national university entrance exam. English is the main foreign language in Iran and students are taught English from the first year of guidance school. Iranian students must study English for three years in guidance school, three years in secondary school and one year at pre-university level. However, it could be said that the standard of education the students in Iran receive often does not enable them to attain full competence in using the English language or help them to interact with confidence (Dahmardeh, 2010).

In Iranian schools, English is more grammar based and the teachers often tend to place more emphasis on the grammar element rather than reading, comprehension and communicative skills (Musawi, 2001). The standardised national tests force both teachers and students to focus on structural and formal grammatical features of English because this is what is required to perform well in the exams (Ghorbani, 2008). The focus is concentrated mainly on passing the tests and exams (Zohrabi, 2012).

The English language teachers are not usually native speakers (Keihaniyan, 2011). The students often take on a passive role in the learning process (Pishghadam & Navari, 2010). HS graduates often struggle to use the English language they have learnt for the purpose of communication (Tabatabaei & Pourakbari, 2012). All major educational policies concerning the school systems, curriculum standards, course books and examination systems are controlled by the Ministry of Education (Zohrabi, 2012).

### *B. Language Teaching Methodologies in Iran*

English teachers in Iran have used a variety of approaches, methods and techniques over time. Grammar translation method (GTM) is the main technique used in Iran, originating in the 1950's. GTM focuses on grammatical rules, vocabulary, translation of texts and written exercises. The content of the English classes is dependent on the teacher. The students do a wide range of exercises, activities and tasks in their language classes for realising lesson objectives. GTM requires a teacher-centred approach to explain and translate English grammar to Persian and vice-versa with the students listening and attempting to memorise the words and phrases (Iran Dolati & Mikaili, 2011). Teaching and learning English at high school in Iran is not as effective as it could be because the students often lack motivation in learning a new language and fail to fully appreciate the advantages it can bring. There are also too many unqualified teachers and a lack of decent teaching facilities. The methods and styles of teaching are often outdated, as are the resources. There are usually no satellite facilities to watch in English television programmes at the high schools either (Musawi, 2001).

Audio-lingual method (ALM) was used in English language classes in Iran from 1960 onwards (Razmjoo & Riazi, 2006). The ALM prioritises speaking and listening competence over competence in reading and writing. Use of the mother tongue is discouraged in the classroom. Language skills are developed by habit and great importance is placed on pronunciation, with little or no grammatical explanation given (Razmjoo & Riazi, 2006). ALM was not successful in Iranian English classes because of a shortage of qualified teachers, teaching aids and a lack of time invested in it.

### *C. Education System in Iranian English Language Institutes*

Students in the English language institutes (ELIs) have a very active role in the learning process. Task based and audio visual materials are common in ELIs. Students tend to be passive in the learning process. In the institutes, the learners are active because they have the opportunity to interact more with the teachers and can practice using the second language (Pishghadam and Navari, 2010). Those who have studies in ELIs tend to be able to communicate better (Tabatabaei & Pourakbari, 2012).

Each institute has some teaching standard to provide services for the learners. Classes are less crowded and students seem to be more interested there. Jobs in ELIs tend to also be better paid which result in more qualified teachers working there. They use different techniques and supplementary materials that allow students to produce and use the language without focusing on form and neglecting meaning (Alijanian, 2012). ELI teachers are eager to give feedback and praise their students (Alijanian, 2012).

### *D. Beliefs about Methods and Techniques*

Lorduy et al. (1999) studied in-service English teachers' beliefs about culture and language methodology in Monteria. They wanted to find out what the main in-service English teachers'

beliefs were about language teaching. Their study was carried out in five public schools of Monteria. The data were collected by interviews and observations. In this study, the teachers were examined via a personal interview and it was discovered that the majority of them believed that GTM was the most appropriate way to teach English. Even though they tried to implement new activities such as games and role plays, they were using GTM. Therefore, the learning of the second language was being affected due to the fact that teachers were not developing other abilities that were necessary for students to be competent in English (Lorduy et al., 1999). They concluded that most of teachers held beliefs strongly linked with a particular method of teaching, and the actions they performed in the classroom might be affected by their beliefs; therefore, the material, the activities and all the elements that they used in class would be mediated by their beliefs. We can see the beliefs teachers hold influence what they do in their classrooms.

Shinde & Karekatti (2012) investigated the teaching beliefs held by pre-service primary school English teachers about methods and techniques in India. 100 pre-service teachers were the subjects of this study. Questionnaires were used to collect data. Research has indicated these teachers' methods and use of various techniques is affected by their own beliefs about teaching because most of teachers had common beliefs about English teaching methods and techniques employed in the classroom. These methods and techniques were in tune with the teaching principles of CLT. For example, teachers who taught with the CLT approach believed that role plays help students to adjust their use of English to different social contexts. Games were important because they were real communicative events. The focus is on the spoken language and less attention is placed on grammatical rules in terms of their overt presentation.

### *E. Constraints*

Context affects the extent to which beliefs can be put into practice in the classroom and teachers' beliefs can be constrained by the students' needs and the teaching context. The teaching context affects how educators behave and educate their students. There are many factors that determine the context for teaching, such as proficiency level, class size, time available and learning styles. These factors influence both the setting and the students (McDonough & McDonough, 1997). The context in which teachers work, is a determining factor in shaping their beliefs towards teaching. Gender, experience, and work environment are the most important criteria that can affect a teacher's beliefs about teaching (Cabaroglu & Roberts, 2000).

Li (1998) studied a group of South Korean secondary school English teachers who had difficulties in adopting CLT. He employed a pilot study, a written questionnaire, and interviews to gather data. His findings indicated that students have little motivation for communicative competence because the students in secondary schools are much more focused on grammar. The students thought it was very important to learn to use English for communication. But since their goal was to go to university, they preferred to work on English grammar because the National University Entrance Exam was grammar based. Teachers are under pressure to help their students do well on such tests, often allocating a fair

amount of class time to teaching test-taking skills and drilling students on multiple-choice grammar questions. This exam has strongly affected the way English has been taught in South Korea. For this reason, students preferred to learn English language with grammar translation rather than communicative language. Teachers tended to have large groups of students in all classes in South Korea and it was difficult to monitor and manage them in a communicative way.

Li's (1998) work concluded that many teaching methodologies developed in the West are often difficult to introduce into EFL situations due to the differing educational theories and realities in the EFL countries. EFL countries need to develop language teaching methods that take into account the political, economic, social and cultural factors.

Maftoon (2002) studied whether CLT can be adopted in the Iranian educational setting. He considered the barriers to implementing the CLT approach in the Iranian high school context, the context of teaching English in the Iranian educational system, learning strategies of Iranian students and the wash-back effect of the university entrance examination on the learning and teaching of English.

Maftoon (2002) found that class size is a barrier for teaching with a communicative approach. He states that the average English classes in Iranian schools have fifty or more students and it is difficult to use communicative techniques in such large classes, especially when the teacher is under pressure to cover the course material in the class time available. He also found that class time for Iranian school students is limited to between two and four hours of English per week, meaning the time to practice English in classes is almost non-existent and the authenticity of the language is restricted somewhat. Lack of adequate funding and shortage of resources are obstacles for implementing CLT in Iran, along with insufficient teaching equipment.

Maftoon found that the Iranian educational system places emphasis on repetition, memorization and accumulation of knowledge. Repetition and memorization are mainly for the mastery of form rather than the mastery of meaning. This is contrary to CLT principles in which mastery of meaning is more important than mastery of form. English tests almost always measure the grammatical ability of candidates. Due to this wash-back, teacher and language learner interact with the language differently to how they would in an everyday environment. He concluded that for an educational approach to be suitable for both contexts, it should be sensitive to the cultural and pedagogical principles as well as to the needs and strategies of those who receive the training under that approach.

English is taught as a foreign language and is practiced within a context-restricted environment where language learning is shaped by the use of particular textbooks and the teacher's management of classroom work and there is a less than substantial support from social contexts outside of the classroom (Ghorbani, 2008). The ministry of education publishes textbooks and teaching materials for high schools in Iran. Thus, all high schools follow the same curriculum standards (Ghorbani, 2008).

Pei (2008) worked on research about teachers' beliefs about the use of CLT in China. The communicative instructions were investigated through classroom observations. The

teachers all experienced challenges with the limitations of textbooks because they used textbooks to guide their instruction. They also found time constraints and class size were obstacles because there was too much teaching content to cover adequately in each class period and the implementing of tasks was time consuming. Large class sizes made it impossible for the teachers to take care of each of their students individually when they encountered difficulties in performing tasks. The work of Pei (2008) indicated that limitations of textbooks, class size and number of students were the main obstacles for teachers in implementing communicative language teaching in China.

Factors such as parents' principals, the school, society, classroom and school layout, school policies, colleagues, standardised tests and the availability of resources hinder a language teacher's ability to adopt practices which reflect their beliefs. For example, the teacher's awareness of the broader institutional context had an impact on decisions about lesson planning and content (Borg, 2003).

Difficult working conditions affected what language teachers did. Teachers had to cope with heavy workloads of approximately 50 hours a week, which meant that time for preparation for classes was limited. This had an impact on teachers' pedagogical choices. For schools and example, teachers found it difficult to create good quality exercises in such limited time (Crookes & Arakaki, 1999).

### **III. METHODOLOGY**

#### *A. Participants*

Twelve volunteer teachers have been selected from English language institutes and high these twelve teachers were interviewed, just as the study of Ertmer et al. (2012) did. The researcher found out how constraints influenced their methods. Six teachers were chosen from public high schools (HS) and six from private language institutes. All twelve HS and English language Institute (ELI) teachers studied for four years in a university and each had a bachelor's degree in English language. One third of HS teachers (one female and one male) and half of the ELI teachers (two females and one male) studied a master's degree in English language for a further two years. More ELI teachers had a master's degree than HS teachers. More females had a master's degree than males.

#### *B. Instruments*

Semi structured interviews are chosen for this study because it includes personal and open, direct and verbal questions to elicit further detail. Also, the researcher can control the direction of the interview, asking questions where necessary (Whiting, 2008). The order of the questions can be changed depending on the direction of the interview. Additional questions can be asked and the researcher can explain the questions if respondents are unclear (Kajornboon, unknown date).

The interview includes 15 questions in five sections and the aim is to find out the constraints they have in their current professional practice. The five sections are about the

teacher's biography their age, job, and workplace and so on), the methods, approaches and the materials that they use in their teaching and the limitations that restrict the ways they teach. These questions are adapted from Razmjoo & Riazi's work (2006) and the researcher's own questions.

### *C. Procedure*

All the interviews were conducted within the high schools or English language institutes because it was accessible for the participants. At the beginning of the interviews, the researcher explained the purpose of the research and gave them consent and asked them to read it and, if they agree to participate in the interview, sign the declaration. The researcher recorded the interviews and after the data collection, she listened to the recorded interview and transcribed each interview. The transcribed data were then coded and grouped into a number of categories and themes for each teacher.

### *D. Issues Encountered in Data Collection*

Before doing the interview, all the questions were reviewed and answers were prepared for some of the questions to use as examples to help the participants understand the questions. For one of researcher's questions, some of the participants seemed to copy the examples given for clarification. The researcher sees this as a limitation; perhaps it would be better if they were given a check list and they could then select their response from it. Alternatively, use of a group interview format might have helped the participants share their ideas in an environment with other teachers they knew.

When the researcher started to analyse the data, she found that some of the answers were rather vague, which meant they weren't always useful. In these cases follow-up questions were sent to the participants via email, requesting a more detailed explanation of their answers and examples where possible. It took two weeks for all participants to reply to my email. This was another limitation encountered. It might have been better to ask the participants to give more explanation and provide examples during the interview process. This could be attributed to inexperience in conducting semi-structured interviews of the type used in this study.

## **IV. RESULTS**

### **Theme 1: The four skills**

IP10M mentions that all the course books which he uses in institutes include the four skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening. He prefers course books because he does not need to spend a lot of time making handouts and course books are ready to use. Also he demonstrates that his students can improve their four skills when using course books. IP8F said that course books included four skills and enabled her to teach all the skills to her students. She believes if teachers teach more information from other materials, they will help

students to get more opportunities for learning. IP12M says of the institute course book that “it provides order to the way we present materials and also learners can learn about all four skills not just one or two of them”.

IP7F believes that, in learning a language, teachers should pay attention to both structure and meanings of the words and they should teach the use of the words for different social situations. She teaches English with CLT because she wants her students to apply the meanings in different social situations as well as to improve the four skills.

IP12M stated that CLT is a modern method. He believes that if learners can communicate with each other they can improve all four skills and they will be active instead of passive.

There is a relationship between the four skills and restrictions because some restrictions can be obstacles in teaching the four skills. HP3F believes that all four skills should be practiced together simultaneously for learning languages and activities that are used in classes should include the four skills. She likes to use her beliefs in the teaching context but because of some time constraints and lack of listening and speaking skills in course books, she cannot teach the four skills simultaneously. Nevertheless, HP3F prefers to provide and organise more listening and speaking activities such as open discussions and communication skills but the content of books, exams and limited class time do not always allow her to do this.

HP4M explained how restrictions such as lack of speaking and listening skills in HS course books and shortage of resources impede him when working on the four skills. He stated that the ministry of education determines course books for HSs. These include reading, grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary. They do not focus on the four skills. HP4M suggests that materials such as visual aids and computers are useful for improving listening skills but he cannot use any materials except course books because of lack of learning resources in high schools. HP5M and HP6M mentioned about the limitations of HS course books and they claimed that course books are not effective because they improve only reading and writing skills but not listening and speaking skill.

HP1F’s responses imply relationships between the four skills and up-to-date material because the course books are not up-to-date and they do not include authentic materials on the four skills. HP1F mentions that the contents of the course books do not have enough information for learning the English language. The students need to learn from authentic and new materials. She said that high school books incorporate reading and writing skills but learners need to learn the four skills in their English language classes and they include outdated texts. In her opinion, lessons should be taught using other materials such as handouts.

## **Theme 2: Goal of learners and teaching**

The responses of two of HS teachers (one female and one male) imply that there is a relationship between teaching goals and restrictions because the goal of teaching is to finish course books and prepare students for exams. HP6M mentions that he uses GTM and ALM to

help the students to learn grammar and read easily. He has to finish teaching from the course books by the end of term and prepare the students for the final exams. HP2F states that GTM is a suitable method for teaching English language in high schools because the high school exams are grammar based and they help to prepare the students for the exams. HP2F says that she uses grammar books in her classes to help prepare the students for the exams.

From HP4M's responses, it is evident that there are relationships between the goals of teaching, exams, the four skills and restrictions because the main teaching goal at high school is to prepare students for exams and teachers have to work on skills and activities that will be featured in the exams and they have time constraints preventing them from using other materials. HP4M emphasises the importance of preparing students for final exams. The final exams are grammar and reading based. They have to concentrate on reading and grammar to help the students to pass the final exams. He believes that ALM and GTM can help students to learn grammar and reading well. He mentioned that they sometimes did not have enough time to work on other skills.

Five sixths of HS participants (two males and three females) and one third of ELI participants (two males) talked about relationships of teaching goals, exams and restrictions. IP10M and IP11M stated that they often could not use their own materials because they have to concentrate on preparing the students for final exams. HP1F explains about restrictions in the high schools and says that the ministry of education determines course books, time of classes and final exams. They only have to teach the course books and prepare the students for the final exams. The course books do not allow them to use CLT. HP4M said "We have to follow the books and we have to teach grammar by GTM because of the final exam and university entrance exam". He mentioned that there are a large number of students in all the English classes and this makes it difficult to use group works and pair works. Also they have English classes for only three hours a week which is often not enough time to use additional materials. In that time they must also finish all the contents of the course books before the final exams.

HP2F demonstrates that their exams include vocabulary, grammar, language function, pronunciation and reading comprehension and sentence comprehension. These restrictions mean they have to work according to grammar translation method in order to get the best results for their students in exams. HP3F, HP2F, HP6M and HP5M mention that the exam questions and importance of results definitely restrict their teaching capacity. They have to use GTM to prepare students for the final exams and they must finish the course books before the final exams.

Two of HS participants' (two males) responses demonstrate relationships between the goals of teaching, exams and goals of learners because the main goal in high school teaching is to prepare students to pass the exams and the main goal of the students was also to pass the exams. HP5M and HP4M say that GTM and ALM method can help teachers to cope with the needs of the English students and the tasks that the ministry of education asks of teachers. For this idea, they mix GTM and ALM to help prepare the students for the exams and give them the tutoring they need and also to meet the education minister's requests

IP7F states that the main goal of her students is to be able to communicate and converse. She uses CLT to organize integrative skills and activities to teach the four skills and help her students to achieve their goals. She concentrates on communication and language usages and says that a teacher should always teach structures and meanings of words in different situations.

After analysing HP3F's responses, it is evident that the goals of teaching create some restrictions for teaching the four skills. HP3F states that according to the educational minister's plans, all students must enhance their reading and writing skills and learn sentence structures and vocabularies in the schools. This means teachers have to teach with GTM and ALM to improve the students' reading and grammar skills. We can see that the ministry of education asks teachers to improve their students' reading and writing skills. These teaching goals can act as barriers when teaching the four skills.

There is a relationship between teaching goals, exams and restrictions as demonstrated in the responses of five of the six English language institute participants (two females and three males). IP7F, HP8F, IP12M mention that the exam questions place restrictions upon her teaching. They mentioned that there are final and midterm term exams, so they must follow the syllabus and finish half of the book before the midterm exam and the whole of book before the final exams. They must also teach using the materials will be used in the exams. IP12M prefers formative assessment but the institutes ask him to use summative assessments.

IP7F states that the institutes assign the course books, the teacher guides, the specific syllabus, the exam time and the number of students, so a teacher should work in accordance with these plans and organise appropriate methods and activities. It is clear that there is a relationship between the goals of teaching and restrictions because teachers have to teach according to the course books, the teachers' guides and the syllabus itself. The time of exams and the number of students are determined by institutes and this can create barriers for teachers.

IP9F, IP11M and IP8F state that they have to teach with the teachers' guides offered by the institutes and they must follow the rules and the syllabus. Therefore they have to teach based on teachers' guide methods. IP10M and IP11M explain that the number of sessions and the amount of lessons are determined by institute and this can restrict them in their teaching practices. Institutes determine the course books and the teachers' guides that the teachers must follow. Their responses imply that these goals of teaching can hamper them because they have to follow the course books and the teachers' guides.

From IP9F's responses, it is clear there are relationships between the goals of teaching, up-to-date material and four skills. She believes that institute course books are up-to-date and include the culture of the native speakers and four skills. The goal of teaching is that learners get information about the culture of the native speakers.

From the responses of HP2F, the relationships between goal of teaching, the four skills and restrictions are evident. HP2F stated that HS books include new words, reading texts, grammar, comprehensions and pronunciation. However, they are old and they do not have any information about the cultures of the native speakers. Her responses imply that the

high school books are out-of-date and they have a lack of the four skills and also that there is little or no information about the cultures of the native speakers. Teachers are forced to use out-of-date books. HP5M talked about the goals of teaching and restrictions and says that English teachers cannot teach or express what really happens in English speaking countries.

It is clear from all HS and ELI participants' responses that the goal of teaching in HSs are that teachers teach reading and writing skills and prepare the students for final exams and concord exam because the exams are reading and grammar based but ELI teaching goal are that teachers teach the four skills and prepare the students for final exams because exams are four skills based.

### **Theme 3: How up-to-date textbooks are**

It is clear that there are relationships between the goal of teaching, up-to-date materials, restrictions and the four skills because HP6M and HP5M state that the course books which are assigned by the educational minister are not up-to-date. They include only reading and writing skills but they cannot improve learners' four skills. HP5M explained that they have to obey the instructions of the ministry of education. The high school books focus on reading rather than speaking or listening in their teaching. They are not really up-to-date. HP6M explained that course books which he employs in the classes are not up-to-date. They do not contain listening and speaking skills. He has to teach text books which are prepared by educational minister.

HP1F and HP5M talked about restrictions, goals of teaching and out-of-date books. HP1F stated that she looks for new texts from internet and works on them with her students to try to help the students to learn about new information. She mentioned that course books in high schools are out-of-date and she cannot find new information inside them. It is clear that she tries to give new information to the learners because course books are not up-to-date and there is no new information inside them. HP5M mentions that although the course books have been used for a very long time and they are not up-to-date, they still have to use them. He likes to modify the course books used according to his student needs. Their responses imply that they have to teach using HS books but that they are out-of-date.

HP6M talked about course book constraints and explained that they must follow text books which are often boring and out-of-date but because exams are course book based they have no choice but to use them. She says that there are too many students, some times as many as 35 students in her classes and she cannot use group working or pair working. The relationships between the goals of teaching, motivation, up-to-date material, exams, restrictions, group works are clear from his responses. The goals of teaching are mainly to prepare the students for exam. The teachers face restrictions such as book constraints and because of the large number of students and they cannot often use group work.

It is evident that there are relationships between up-to-date material and four skills after analysing IP7F's response because she believe that the course books and methods that are up-to-date can improve learners' four skills ability. IP7F stated that her course book

places emphasis on speaking skills by teaching new words and expressions, listening exercises, grammar and reading comprehension activities and they are colourful and modern.

#### **Theme 4: Restrictions**

##### **Lack of resources**

Some participants talked about lack of resources in the HSs and ELIs. IP7F believes that teaching aids and facilities such as visual aids, video projectors, smart boards and many others can be involved in learners' teaching processes but the institutes do not supply the so she cannot use them. IP12M likes to show movies in his classes but the shortage of visual instruments do not allow him to do so. IP11M and HP6M said they like to use laboratories for teaching but there is not any laboratory in the institute. HP4M says that they do not have any tools to use in their classes. It is clear that HP4M, IP7F, IP12M and IP11M are faced with a lack of resources.

IP8F explains that they have to teach from text books that are assigned by the institutes and there are no tools such as visual aids or projectors in the institutes. It is clear that teaching goals and lack of resources can be barriers for them because they have to teach with the assigned books and there are a lack of facilities in HSs and ELIs.

IP10M claims that institutes determine books and class time. Teachers face a shortage of facilities and time. It is clear that goals of teaching, lack of class time and lack of facilities restricted IP10M.

##### **Lack of Finance**

IP9F explains that they have to teach institute assigned books and adds that institutes have financial problems so they cannot provide equipment such as visual aids and laboratories. Goals of teaching and financial problems restrict her. HP2F and HP5M state that financial problems cause a shortage of facilities in the high schools and they cannot use any resources. They must teach the ministry of education assigned books. Goals of teaching, lack of facility and financial problems are the main obstacles for him.

##### **Number of students**

IP9F cannot use her own materials because of the large number of students in her classroom. IP8F likes to use class activities such as free discussions and showing movies and listening to the news but because of the number of students, time constraints and shortage of facilities, she cannot usually do this. Large numbers of students in the classroom, time constraints and shortage of facilities limit them.

HP1F states that they have to teach course books which have been assigned by the ministry of education and they do not have enough time, or the opportunity to use other materials in their classes and they cannot devote their time to use other materials because of course book constraints, the number of students in class and a lack of time. From her

responses, it is clear that number of students, time constraints, shortage of facilities and goals of teaching act as barriers for her.

### **Time Constraints**

IP8F, IP9F, IP10M, IP11M, HP2F and IP12M explain that they cannot use additional materials because of constraints. HP2F believes that she can help to her learners to get information about the culture of the native speakers and real life situations by using additional materials but she cannot do this because of time constraints. IP12M likes to use extra materials such as books for different skills but time constraints often do not allow him to do so.

HP5M cannot use his own materials because they need more financial support and the school managers reject this. They are also limited in class time so cannot always use their own materials. They do not have sufficient time to employ their own materials. IP10M likes to have free discussions or show movies but because of lack of time and facilities, she cannot. We can see that lack of time and financial problems restrict HP5M and IP10M.

HP3F and IP12M stated that they cannot use other aids such as CDs, Videos and other materials because of time constraints and the specified syllabus that institutes ask of them. HP3F mentioned that books, class time and final exams, plus the school principal's expectations for exam results were barriers for her. It is clear that goals of teaching and lack of time limit them.

HP4M, IP12M, IP7F and HP2F mentions that they only teaches from course books because they must finish them before the end of the semester and they does not have enough time to teach other materials such as text books. They mentioned that HSs do not have materials such as visual aids and laboratories because of financial problems. HP2F suggests that everything that is used in the classes should be approved by the ministry of education. IP12M states that they have to do what their employers ask them and also lack of time and the limited syllabus do not allow them to do what they like to d. It is clear from HP4M's and HP2F's responses that goal of teaching, time constraints, lack of resources and financial problems are barriers for them.

HP3F states that she cannot use other text books or tools because of the shortage of time and importance of the contents and the final exam. HP1F states that HS exams are in written form and exam questions are designed by other teachers. They must prepare students to be successful in entrance exams for university in a limited time. From HP3F's and HP1F's answers, it is evident that there are relationships between goals of teaching, limited class time and exams. They have to teach the course books which are assigned to them by educational minister and prepare students for the exams. Limited class time is barrier for them in using other materials.

### **Additional materials**

Four of the English language institute participants (two females and two males) explain there is only a computer as teaching aids in the institutes and it is suitable equipment for checking learners' listening because of the high quality of the voice. IP9F, IP10M, IP8F and IP11M use computers because they believe that for listening, computers or CD players are the best form of equipment. They are also good for checking students' listening comprehension.

HP1F talks about restrictions and she states that "materials such as visual aids and computers are effective in learners' learning because teachers can show movies or news and students can learn about other cultures and native speakers' pronunciation". She says that she cannot use additional materials because of the financial problems in HSs. She believes that there are restrictions in using additional materials and teaching native speakers' cultures to the learners.

IP7F used her own materials such as extra listening and extra grammar activities because she tries to help students to get information rather than just to use their course book. It is clear that she tries to use additional information to improve learners' four skills and she does not have any constraints in using this. HP6M tries to use additional information because he wants his students to learn listening and speaking skills besides reading and writing skills but first he tries to finish his course books on time and prepare students for their final exams. It is evident that he has restrictions to finish course books on time and then uses additional materials. HP6M's and IP7F's responses imply that there are relationships between additional information, the four skills and teaching goals because some teachers prefer to use additional materials to improve learners' four skills but the teaching goals restrict them in doing this.

HP4M uses his old teacher's methods in his teaching because he likes the teaching method he employed. His teacher teaches them more additional words such as name of fruits, food and so on. They learnt many different words in class. He believes that some students enjoy English classes more when they can learn additional words that they might need in daily conversation and these meant classes were not so boring for them. It is clear that HP4M's learning experiences affected his teaching because he observed his teacher's methods and utilised them in his teaching and he does not have any constraints in doing this. IP11M prefers to find new articles from internet to teach reading but because he must finish the assigned course books, he cannot do this. It is clear that teaching goals limit IP11M and he cannot provide additional information for learners because of this.

### **Levels of ability**

Three female participants from HSs explain that students did not achieve the results they should have according to their talents. HP1F mentions that she uses ALM and GTM in her teaching because she believes that her students are different in their talents. She chooses different methods according to the students' talents. HP2F suggests that there are students with different talents in every class. The books are not graded according to students' levels. For example, the books that they teach from in high school are difficult for some students and

are simple for others. HP3F talks about restrictions in high schools. She says that the students are not classified properly according to their ability, talents, interests or feelings towards English. This means teachers face the problem of a large number of students in their classes who are at different levels. The answers of all three participants imply that there is a relationship between restrictions and standards because students are not classified properly and the contents of books are not suitable for all of them. Teachers often have to contend with a large number of students with different talents. Teachers have to choose different methods according to their students' abilities.

## V. CONCLUSION

This study was developed to identify how restrictions in the context of their teaching impact their ability to teach according to these beliefs. This research provides answers to the research question at the beginning of the project.

As Shinde & Karekatti's (2012) research has indicated, teachers' teaching methods and use of techniques is affected by their own beliefs about teaching. Lorduy et al. (1999) concluded that most of teachers' beliefs are strongly linked with a particular method of teaching because the actions they performed in the classroom might be affected by their beliefs. HS teachers believe that GTM and ALM are the most appropriate methods when teaching English in high schools. They explained that the goal of English teaching in high school is to prepare the students for the final exam and the concord exam. The goal of the learners is purely to pass the exams. The exams are grammar and reading based. The aforementioned methods will help to students to learn grammar and pass the exams. ELI teachers believe that the main goal of the students is to be able to communicate, converse and learn the four skills. The goals of institute teaching are for students to improve their four skills and pass the final exams, which are four skills based. The participants mentioned that CLT is the most suitable method for teaching English language in ELI because the students can learn structures and meanings of words in different situations and with four skills; they will also be able to communicate.

As McDonough & McDonough (1997) mentioned, the teaching context affects how educators behave and educate their students. It is clear that the teaching context affects the attitudes of all HS and ELI teachers. HS teachers teach with GLT and ALM and they follow the course books that are assigned by the ministry of education. They aim to prepare the students for the exams. ELI teachers teach with CLT and follow the course books that the institute assigns to them.

As mentioned in the literature review, Li's (2013) work implied that university entrance exams strongly affect the way English is taught in South Korea. After analysing the responses of the HS participants, it is clear that the university entrance exam affects teaching styles in Iran too. The goal of learners is to go to university. Teachers have to work on English grammar because the National University Entrance Exam is grammar based.

As mentioned in the literature review, factors such as parents' principals, the type of school, society, classroom and school layout, school policies, colleagues, standardised tests

and the availability of resources hinder a language teacher's ability to adopt practices which reflect their beliefs (Borg, 2003). The responses of all the participants collectively implied that factors such as the final exams, university entrance exams, shortage of facilities, lack of resources, time constraints, size of classroom, large numbers of student, school and institute policies and the goals of learners all hindered the participants' ability to adopt practices which reflect their beliefs.

The need for a global language is recognised by the international academic and business communities. Nowadays, the growth in international contacts is increasing. The availability of technology such as computers and mobile products in the twentieth century has provided the circumstances for a global language to grow (Crystal, 2003). Iranian HS students need to learn to communicate because some students would like to study in abroad, and will need to pass IELTS test. They need to learn all four of listening, reading, writing and speaking skills. Some students like to travel worldwide and some want to work in business; all of them need to learn how to communicate competently. HSs should learn from ELI and they improve their teaching goals to help the students to improve all four skills.

HS teachers are restricted by constraints such as out-of-date course books assigned by the ministry of education, time constraints, physical class size, large numbers of students, final exams and shortage of resources. These restrictions do not allow teachers to teach according to their beliefs. ELI teachers have some constraints such as lack of resources and final exams but their restrictions are fewer than in HSs. More ELI teachers can use their beliefs in their teaching than HS teachers.

Evaluating the language teaching methodologies, material used and restrictions in HS and ELI as an EFL context will reveal all the types of approaches and methods and also materials currently in use in such education places, also the restrictions that there are in these education places and they make obstacle for the teachers and the route that teachers have taken in becoming teachers. The results of the study can be used by the EFL institutes and the public schools of Iran and general to improve their activities. The findings suggest that teachers' beliefs about culture can be seen as a continuous process that allows teachers reflect on their beliefs and practices. In the present study teachers were not observed in the classroom. The actual observation of teachers can enhance the results of this study in order to come to further qualitative evidence on how the teachers' belief affected on their teaching.

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