

Duplicity in political texts: Are lie-spotting strategies efficient in L2 contexts?

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Abstract: Deceitful behaviors are mostly verbal, largely culture-bound, and relatively political. Verbal deceitfulness gives us such a survival advantage that some evolutionary biologists believe that the capacity to speak and the ability to lie have been developed hand in hand. This study was an attempt to investigate the relative impacts of using verbal (VSL) and semiotic (SLS) lie-spotting strategies on Persian Speaking EFL learners' interpretation of political discourse. A research sample of male and female EFL learners was selected and assigned into two groups (n1=30, n2=22). Participants were all recognized as intermediate EFL learners after running an English general proficiency test (PET). Later, in two parallel experiments, the participants were exposed to VLS and SLS in 16 classroom sessions before they performed on a post-intervention political discourse comprehension. Both experimental groups showed a lapse in their posttests. Descriptive and inferential statistics supported meaningful impacts of both verbal and semiotic modalities of lie-spotting strategies despite the participants' regressive performance in both experiments on the post-intervention test. The researcher concluded that applying VLS and SLS was a novelty to the subjects in this study who were required to differentiate between their pure comprehension of the political texts and dubious interpretation of the intended message which in turn suggests incorporating more political and journalistic texts and employing lie-spotting strategies in L2 contexts.

Keywords: Lie-Spotting, Political, Semiotic, Strategy, Verbal,

INTRODUCTION

Politicians and political issues seem to play crucial roles in the post-truth era. This masked era grants people the right to disguise without fear of being accused as unscrupulous (Keyes, 2004). Not only politicians but also ordinary people are inevitably obliged to deal with the profound implications of politics in their everyday life. As Kermond cynically claimed (2013), "the world is cluttered with deception in investment services, media, business, literature, academia and politics in particular" (p.1). Likewise, Arendt (1972) believed that, "the mysteries of government and deception, the deliberate falsehood and outright lies as the legitimate means to achieve political ends, have been invading us since the beginning of the recorded history" (p. 16). People will therefore be capable of spotting lies more precisely

if they become empowered with research-based and authenticate detection techniques (Cao, Crews, Lin, Brgoon & Nunamaker, 2003; White, 2017).

Politicians are synchronized with mainstream media to propagate their policies within such mass media as social and community networks. Since the masses receive a great deal of political news and speeches, they raise the key question of whether everyone is able to differentiate truth from falsehood. Prominent figures such as governors or politicians usually do not write their own speeches, but delegating this demanding task to their highly accomplished speechwriters and political advisers to merge state policies with certain issues by means of rhetorical factors to persuade or dissuade audience. Seemingly, verbal and semiotic lie-spotting strategies can provide us with some detection techniques for analyzing political discourse through critical discourse analysis (CDA).

Furnham (2014, p. 20) believed that liars “leak deceit as most people try hard to cover-up their deceit, but it is difficult trying to control their words, voice, face, feet and hands all at the same time. The voice and the face carry important cues”. Consequently, instructing lie detection cues is a significant possible way to enhance people’s skills in detecting signals of lying. To achieve this goal, developing efficient pedagogical curricula is highly required (Cao et al., 2003).

LITERATURE RIVIEW

Beyond words and side issues, the critical social analysis (CSA) looks into various social obligations, concerns, and beliefs. Rather than focusing on merely academic or hypothetical problems, CSA detects widespread social wrongs to figure out the perspectives of those who immensely suffer from injustice and criticize ones in power who have responsibilities and the means to resolve such issues (Van Dijk, 1986). Where the interplay between language and social fields, well-known as critical discourse analysis (CDA), was regarded as a pragmatic feature, Wodak and Meyer (2001) put it forward as:

By the 1990s, the label CDA came to be used more consistently with this particular approach to linguistic analysis. Kress (1990) shows how CDA by that time was emerging as a distinct theory of language, a radically different kind of linguistics. He lists the criteria that characterize the work in the CDA paradigm, illustrating how they distinguish such works from other politically engaged discourse analysis (p. 5).

On the concept of CDA, Gee (1996) broadly defined *discourse* as the socially comprehensive and accepted way of utilizing a language as the means of thinking, feeling, and social behaviors which are used to recognize an individual as a member of a society. For the concept of *analysis* in CDA, Rogers (2011) believed that, to conduct an analysis, researchers usually find a proper research topic, then they choose appropriate analytical methods and techniques in line with their research objectives and questions. In the aspect of application of CDA, Rogers (2011) added that “educational researchers use CDA in many different areas - from studies on higher education, policy making, adult education, and language arts to studies on physical education, math and science, family and community education, art and creativity” (p. 3). Rogers (2011) identified three realms of consistency between educational research and CDA: First, educational activities are deemed to be communicative occurrences. In other words, CDA is applicable to a pedagogical system in terms of analyzing such educational practices as texts, talks, and interactions within a

specific domain and context. Second, CDA is a precise instrument to conceptualize those compatible communicative acts with sociocultural viewpoints in an educational setting. Third, both CDA and educational studies are the paradigms that refer to communication problems through a number of theoretical viewpoints. Further, Rogers (2011, p. 10) proposed that the “two of most influential traditions of CDA in educational research are those of James Gee and Norman Fairclough”.

Gee (2011) identified the traditions of situated meanings, social languages, figured worlds, and Discourses (with a capital D) as devices of queries. They are the social and cultural ideas, rules, and beliefs for comprehending how individuals utilize language to achieve their social objectives. Situated meanings revive the concept of genres and dialogues which address the historical, intertextual and social trappings of semiotic systems. Social languages pertain to various grammatical, semantic and functional dimensions of language as a social practice. Figured worlds emphasize that people from different cultures and societies conceptualize the sense of the world differently through their diverse perspectives, narratives, and symbols. Finally, Discourse models refer to the specific plots, narratives, and explanatory frameworks flowing in a society.

In the same vein, Fairclough (2011) discussed the semiotic resources people usually use to formulate and interpret social practices through various ways of interacting (genre), representing (discourse), and being (style). Genre pertains to the types of contexts that people formulate and call upon. Discourse encompasses a variety of meaning that produces macro-narratives or cultural models. Finally, style refers to popular ways of using language in different genres. The key factor in Fairclough’s framework is the inter-discursive relationship between and within genres, discourses, styles and social domains. The analyst, therefore, should describe, interpret, and explain the relations between textual and social practices within various contexts of regional, national and global scales.

As one of the critical areas in discourse analysis, political discourse analysis (PDA) comprises various social issues and uses a broad range of analytical methods (Wilson, 2007). After World War II, Lasswell and Leites (1965) advanced political discourse approaches on the basis of social communication and mass media research. In the late 1940s, the studies on complex connection between language and politics spread over central European countries, mainly in Germany. The novel *1984* by George Orwell, published in 1949, as a masterpiece of political communication developed the whole field. Naturally, such studies were influenced and inspired by the massive use of propaganda during World War II, and the emergence of the intercontinental Cold War in the 1950s. Meanwhile, introducing political linguistics as an academic field of study was the first step in conducting scientific and systematic studies on political discourse (Wodak, 2012).

Studies on pragmatic approaches to political discourse have dated back to the earliest recorded history. From Cicero to Aristotle (106 BC – 384 BC), the major issue was how to use particular social and political methods in obtaining specific objectives. Although Aristotle believed that social and political aims are superseded in different contexts and series of events, the general principles of politics have remained constant and continual. Studying the modern rhetorical factors is an interdisciplinary research involving communication science, philology, historical construction, social theories, and politics (Wilson, 2017). As Fairclough (2012) elaborated, “PDA is understood as the analysis of political discourse from a critical perspective - a perspective which focuses on the reproduction and contestation of political power through political discourse” (p. 17).

There are two main approaches to PDA, namely Paul Chilton’s approach to PDA and Ruth Wodak’s discourse historical approach (DHA). Chilton (2004) defined the political discourse as a genre, which exploits language in ways that humans tend to be recognized as

political animals. To comprehend a political behavior, we try to separate out those aspects of language such as structures and lexicon that are frequently or typically found in association with what we interpret as particular types of political texts. On the other hand, Wodak (2012) proposed the discourse historical approach (DHA) inspired by CDA to interpret a political event. As he mentioned,

The DHA provides a vehicle for looking at latent power dynamics and the range of potentials in agents, because it integrates and triangulates our knowledge about historical and intertextual sources as well as the background of the social and political fields within which discursive events, such as political speeches are embedded (p. 529).

According to Wodak (2012), DHA recognizes three dimensions which formulate the textual meanings and structures: spoken or written topics, discursive strategies, as well as some linguistic instruments that are used to distinguish between topics and strategies. This method enables the PDA analysts to discuss how discourse, genre and texts alter according to socio-political contexts. Perloff (2014) counted several facets for such political communication: firstly, political communication is a process. For instance, when a president plans to introduce a bill, there is a bureaucratic process to carry out this plan, such as turning an idea into a bill, introducing the bill, and persuading members of the parliament to pass the bill. Secondly, political communication calls centrally on words and symbols. Political figures control the power of linguistic and symbolic features to shape the perspectives and beliefs of their audience. Political symbols encompass such terms as justice, freedom, and equality, and semiotic signs like flags or religious emblems. Thirdly, the leaders, the media, and the citizens are the team players in political communication. Leaders are those political elites as political figures, presidents, advisors, and other high-ranking politicians. Media includes conventional news media, websites, and social networks. Citizens are the touchstone of any political communication. They enormously take part in political activities such as polls or demonstrations.

Manipulation through political discourse in mass media is considered as a multidimensional phenomenon (Kenzhekanova, Zhanabekova & Konyrbekova, 2015). According to Van Dijk (2006), such manipulation should be considered as an illegal influence eventually leading to social inequality. Manipulation as the process of mind control includes the intrusion into the mass cognitive processes of understanding. This persuasive interference shapes mental modals and social ideologies. To tell lies, a politician or liar need to create a false story about an event that does not exist. Therefore, untrue stories might differ from truth in terms of structures and narrative (Newman, Pennebaker, Berry & Richards, 2003). There are some signs with which direct lie-spotters can distinguish a liar: a liar often answers hesitatingly, talks fast, and builds up a vague picture of an event (Vrij, 2001). Meyer (2010) believed that to spot “verbal indicators of lying, deception detectors pay close attention to four characteristics of speech - statement structure, verbal leaks, vocal quality, and attitude” (p. 74). He suggested some lie-spotting tips along with some sorts of statements, the liars usually employ to avoid answering or to distract attention, namely too little/too much statements, bolstering statements, distancing statements, euphemisms, slips of the tongue, non-contracted denials, specific denials, parrot statements, dodgeball statements, guilt-trip statements, and protest statements.

When it comes to language teaching in the past five decades, attempts to improve the ways of teaching and learning L2 based on communicative approaches are abundant. These approaches try to enhance communicative competence of L2 learners. It is a sophisticated

process of integrating the communicative competence with four major language skills, so it needs a comprehensive understanding of all aspects of the process of teaching/learning L2. Uso'-Juan and Martinez-Flor (2006) proposed five components as the building blocks of such communicative framework for language use: discourse, linguistic, pragmatic, intercultural, and strategic competencies. Accordingly, intercultural competence involves both cultural and non-verbal communicative features. Cultural factors are related to "sociocultural knowledge of the target language community, knowledge of dialects and cross-cultural awareness" (p. 17) as well as the non-verbal or semiotic features pertain to body language, use of space, touching or silence. As Sebeok (2001) pointed out,

Semiotics arose from Hippocrates' (460-377 BC) scientific study of the physiological symptoms induced by particular diseases or physical states. The study of signs in non-medical terms became the target of philosophers around the time of Aristotle (384-322 BC) and the Stoic philosophers (p. 16).

The Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913) defined such a semiotic communication as the relationship between a *signifier* (the language which carries or produces meaning) and the *signified* (the meaning itself). His primary insight was that the signifier-signified relationship is arbitrary; the signifier *pink* in English, for example, is not in itself *red* and, further, different languages have different words for the concept of pinkness. Accordingly, semiotics is concerned with how different people perceive a meaning; how their mental representations are, or in a broad sense, how their language generates meaning or how the processes by which they comprehend or attribute meaning are different. Semiotic features, in one sense, can be used to detect the intention of the speaker's message. In other words, by means of semiotic features it is possible to detect many features including the speaker's sincerity or deception.

As Kermond (2013) stated, "in addition to verbal language, body language carries telltale signs of deception" (p. 3). In the same vein, Meyer (2010) proposed ten facial indicators or lie-spotting strategies, such as micro-expressions, squelched expressions, reliable muscle patterns, blink rates, pupil dilation, tears, asymmetrical expressions, timing, duration, and intuition. Emblems, illustrators, and mirroring are three emotional leakages through body language. Moreover, Meyer (2010) introduced some body language clues, including open palms, head nod, steeple, thrusting palm handshake, crossed arms, ankle lock, legs-apart stance, and lint picking.

Notwithstanding, one can assume that teaching and learning those lie-spotting strategies are indispensable for improving L2 learners' communicative competence. To fill the gap, the purpose of this study is to investigate the comparative influence of the knowledge of such verbal and non-verbal (semiotic) lie-spotting strategies on the degree of success of EFL learners in the interpretation of political texts. This study, therefore, focused on the extent CDA beside other social elements can contribute to providing EFL learners with a deeper insight into the impact of detection cues by means of lie-spotting strategies. The current researcher attempted to introduce the verbal and non-verbal (semiotic) lie-spotting techniques as the supplementary material to critically analyze the political discourse in Persian speaking EFL context. In accordance with the objective of the study, the subsequent research questions were raised:

(1) Does verbal lie-spotting strategy have any impact on Persian speaking EFL learners' interpretation of political discourse?

(2) Does semiotic lie-spotting strategy have any impact on Persian speaking EFL learners' interpretation of political discourse?

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Fifty-five Persian speaking EFL learners at Civil Aviation Organization of Iran, of both genders within the age range of 30 to 50 years, were voluntarily recruited before they were assigned into two experimental groups (n1= 30, n2= 22). The participants were selected after an unstructured interview which required their motives for learning English as a foreign language (EFL) and the degree of vocational demands they felt for learning English in their workplace. After administering PET as the English placement test in this study, the participants were assigned into verbal lie-spotting strategy (VLS) (n= 30) and semiotic lie-spotting strategy (SLS) (n= 22) experimental groups.

To ensure the participants' homogeneous level of English proficiency, an adapted version of Preliminary English Test (PET) with 35 reading comprehension questions was administered (Cronbach's $\alpha=.790$). In Experiment 1, a selection of English political texts were practiced for 30 minutes in eight successive classroom sessions. The Microsoft PowerPoint slides and texts were adopted from www.slideplayer.com (slides), and www.fortune.com (written texts). In Experiment 2, the authentic English political speeches and press conferences were selected from www.youtube.com. The researcher's list of verbal and semiotic lie-spotting strategies adopted from Meyer (2010) was practiced with the participants as summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Verbal and Semiotic Lie-Spotting Strategies (adopted from Meyer, 2010)

<i>Verbal Lie-Spotting Strategies</i>	<i>Semiotic Lie-Spotting Strategies</i>
Qualifying statements, Bolstering statements, Repeating question verbatim, Responding non-spontaneously, Having weak and apologetic tone of voice, Giving inappropriate detail, Giving short clipped answers, Providing religious references, Objecting to irrelevant specifics, Being non-cooperative, Having dismissive attitude,	Rubbing the eyes (men), Touching below the eyes (women), Hand wringing, Inward-curved feet, Stiff upper body, Inappropriate stillness, Slumped or self-protective posture, Grooming gestures, Shrugs, Clenched fists, Palms turned up out of sync with dialogue, Moving objects around the table or floor, Excessive sweating, Finger tapping, Short breathing,

As the pre- and post-intervention tasks, the researcher selected a set of authentic political passages from www.babylonbee.com (Readability=7.5 in Flesch reading scale). Twenty multiple-choice reading comprehension items were developed, piloted (Cronbach's $\alpha=.680$) and administered with both groups of participants. Both reading comprehension tasks consisted of three English political texts, each followed by multiple-choice items: political jokes (15 items), famous politicians' quotations (3 items), and political speeches (2 items). To score, the participants received 1 point for every correct answer and zero for incorrect or missing answers. An example of MCI questions in the pre-test was:

- *Don't steal, don't lie and don't cheat. The government hates competition!* What does this statement refer to?

A) The government punishes people who commit such crimes as stealing, lying and cheating.

- B) Politicians perform all such crimes and perhaps worse than all thieves, liars and cheaters.
- C) People are allowed by the government to commit such crimes only if there is a competition.

In Experiment 1, the researcher prepared a number of Microsoft office Power Point slides and broadcast audio tapes to introduce the duplicity in political texts and a series of verbal lie-spotting (VLS) strategies (Meyer, 2010) for around 30 minutes in eight successive sessions. The participants were not exposed to any pictures/videos in order to limit their interpretation of political discourse to only received verbal cues. The participants were required to locate the possible discrepancies between the speakers' words and their intentions in the audiotapes and to use verbal lie-spotting clues for interpreting the insincerity in political texts.

In Experiment 2, the researcher adopted a number of authentic political video tapes and clips from www.fortune.com which were presented along with semiotic lie-spotting (SLS) strategies (Meyer, 2010) to the SLS participants for around 30 minutes in eight sessions. Similar to Experiment 1, the participants were required to use the proper SLS strategies to interpret the political figures' gestures and facial expressions, and to decode the hypocrisy in the speakers' words and actions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this study, the obtained data from pre- and post-tests were later analyzed with SPSS 21. One-sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov test of normality was conducted with the pre- and post-test scores in Experiments 1 and 2. The indices of z for the scores of VLS group in pre- and post-tests were .157 and .272, significant at p-values of .000 and .040 ($\alpha = .05$), respectively, to prove the lack of homogeneity in the obtained scores. However, the z indices for the scores of SLS group in pre- and post-tests were .137 and .214, at p-values .200 and .090 ($\alpha = .05$), respectively to show the homogeneity of the statistical data. The results of Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality tests showed that the scores in VLS group were not homogeneous enough for running parametric statistical tests, contrary to the scores of SLS group.

To investigate the efficiency of verbal lie-spotting strategies (VLS) in improving the subjects' interpretation of political discourse (Research question 1 in this study), the obtained scores of pre- and post-tests in Experiment 1 were undertaken an initial descriptive analysis (Table 2).

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of the Pretest and Posttest of the Verbal Lie-Spotting Strategy Group

		Pretest of the VLS group	Posttest of the VLS group
N	Valid	30	30
	Missing	0	0
Mean		81.90	75.33
Median		82.85	70.00
Std. Deviation		5.47	8.33

Comparing the mean scores, a relative decrease from pre- to post-test (Mean Pre-test = 81.90; Mean Post-test = 75.33) was observed, while the standard deviations dramatically increased (SD Pre-test = 5.47; SD Post-test = 8.33). To further examine the findings, due to the lack of normality of the scores, a non-parametric Wilcoxon Signed Rank test of within-

group difference was conducted. Table 3 demonstrates the results of the test.

Table 3. Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test of Pretest and Posttest Scores in Experiment 1

Total N	30
Wilcoxon SR Test Statistic for VLS group	21.500
Standard Error	17.571
Standardized Test Statistic	-2.191
Asymptotic Sig. (2-sided test)	.028*

* The significance level is .05.

As Table 3 shows, the observed decrease in the post-test scores is statistically meaningful since the level of significance of the Wilcoxon SR test statistic is smaller than the critical p-value ($W = 21.500$; $p = .028$; $\alpha = .05$). Hence, the participants who received verbal lie-spotting strategy seemed to have a pullback in their interpretation of the political texts.

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics of the Pretest and Posttest of the Semiotic Lie-Spotting Strategy Group

		Pretest of the SLS group	Posttest of the SLS group
N	Valid	22	22
	Missing	0	0
Mean		81.71	74.33
Median		82.15	72.07
Std. Deviation		6.25	12.22

Likewise, in Experiment 2, descriptive analysis of the scores obtained after administering the pre- and post-tests showed similar unexpected decrease of mean scores from pre- to post-test, suggesting a regressive pattern of the participants' reading comprehension after receiving the semiotic lie-spotting strategy intervention ($Mean_{Pretest} = 81.71$; $Mean_{Posttest} = 74.33$). The standard deviations however showed a considerable increase in the post-test ($SD_{Pretest} = 6.25$; $SD_{Posttest} = 12.22$) which suggests an increasing within-group difference after receiving SLS clues, similar to Experiment 1. To further examine the reductive pattern of scores in Experiment 2, a parametric paired samples t-test was run.

Table 5. Paired Samples T-Test: Pretest and Posttest Scores of SLS Group

		Paired Differences				t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference					
			Lower	Upper				

Pretest– Posttest of SLS Group	4.38	15.35	3.96	-4.12	12.88	1.10	21	.03
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Accordingly, the low performance of the participants in the post-test was proven to be statistically meaningful ($t_{21} = 1.10$; $p = .03$; $\alpha = .05$) which once again led the researcher to believe that the participants' awareness of the semiotic lie-spotting strategies, had a confusing impact on their interpretation of political discourse in Experiment 2.

Statistical results in this study showed that direct instruction to the VLS deluded the EFL learners in their interpretation of political texts. Moreover, they were responsible for the heterogeneity of their performance on political text comprehension. The researcher inclined to call such discrepancy as an unsystematic confusion between the participants' reading comprehension ability and their interpretation of political discourse, since VLS strategies required them to generate a second contradictory opinion while comprehending the political texts. In other words, lie-spotting strategies could successfully raise their consciousness about the tips and techniques to detect lies in various political contexts and raised their awareness of political dubious messages which eventually contaminated their reading comprehension.

During the VLS intervention sessions in Experiment 1, the EFL learners encountered a totally new and apparently confusing approach to reading between the lines in the assigned political texts. In other words, they received instructions to how to use implicit verbal and cultural features to detect and interpret political texts beside the conventional reading comprehension techniques, such as bottom-up, top-down, skimming, and scanning reading strategies. Likewise, they were instructed how to read a passage cautiously to figure out its dubious message which is mostly disguised in political discourse. VLS strategies directed the participants to detect compelling evidence for a cluster of lying signs within various political contexts, which by themselves caused confusion and low achievement in the post-test.

In line with the findings in this study, Perez-Rosas, Abouelenien, Mihalcea, Xiao, Linton, and Burzo (2015) put forward in a conducted survey on verbal-based lie detection cues which uncovered deceptive contents in various contexts such as forums, social networks, and consumer report websites. Their research findings similarly acknowledged the advantage of learning frequent linguistic representations to interpret the speakers' real intention. On the other hand, Newman, Pennebaker, Berry and Richards (2003, p. 674) believed that "liars can be reliably identified by their own words—not by what they say but by *how* they say it". Paul Ekman (1992) also emphasized how the liars tend to be most careful about their choice of words. To his belief, "messages can be transmitted, far more quickly, by words than by the face, voice, or body" (p. 81). He added:

Liars censor what they say, carefully concealing messages they do not want to deliver, not only because they have learned that everyone pay attention to this source but also because they know that they will be held more accountable for their words than for the sound of their voice, facial expressions, or most body movements. An angry expression or a harsh tone of voice can always be denied. Another reason why words are carefully monitored and so often the chief target for disguise is that it is easy to falsify—to state things that are not true—in words. Exactly what is to be said can be written down and reworded ahead of time. Only a highly trained actor could so precisely plan each facial expression, gesture, and voice inflection. Words are easy to rehearse, again and

again (Ekman, 1992, pp. 81-82).

Back to the current research findings, to verify the assumed effect of semiotic lie-spotting strategies (SLS) on interpretation of political discourse, the statistics suggested a downfall in EFL learners' performance on reading comprehension of political discourse (i.e., post-test) after learning SLS strategies. The findings in this study seemed contradictory to Levine, Feeley, McCornack, Hughes, and Harms (2005) who believed that "those FL students receiving training to interpret the nonverbal behaviors were significantly more accurate than people with no training" (p. 205). Perez-Rosas et al. (2015, p. 20) also concluded that the analysis of "nonverbal behaviors occurring in deceptive and truthful recorded videos brought insight into the gestures that play a role in deception" [to the participants].

In another comparative research on the speakers' facial expressions and their tone of voice in the communication of deception, Zuckerman, Amidon, Bishop, and Pomerantz (1982) found that the tone of voice is a better source of deception than the facial expressions. One's tone is more likely to influence the audience's judgments of deceptive messages, whereas his face is more likely to influence only the judgments of truthful messages (Zuckerman et al., 1982). Their research finding emphasized the superiority of utilizing VLS for critical discourse analysis to semiotic signals. Accordingly, verbal clues would provide the participants with the effective means to interpret political issues on the basis of CDA concepts. Similarly, Woon (2017) accounted for common people capabilities to judge when political figures lie to them, and concluded that "the public is capable of political lie detection. While partisanship typically exerts a powerful force on political attitudes and beliefs, I find that reliance on partisan cues does not diminish the capacity for lie detection" (p.30). To further report on the superiority of using lie-spotting strategies in political discourse analysis, Bucciol and Zarri (2013) analyzed the discourse of two main American political parties of Republicans and Democrats to identify their deceptive language features in their political arena. They put their research findings in a nutshell as follow:

First, we consider various degrees of untruth of representatives' claims and show that while many politicians frequently make partly false claims (i.e. what we term 'grey' lies), fewer of them frequently make completely false claims (that is, 'black' lies). We also find that the amount of lies told to voters critically depends on political affiliation, with Republicans being more likely to depart from the truth than Democrats. Further, we discover that the probability of lying is significantly affected by the politician's state of origin. In this regard, our analysis interestingly reveals that politicians lie less if they come from 'swing' (or battleground) states (pp. 5-6).

In an experimental study, Masip, Garrido and Herrero (2004) proposed three implications for their research findings: Firstly, while in several studies, the successful detection of deceitful language was done with the lay observers as participants, in their study, the participants were trained for applying the non-verbal (semiotic) lie detection strategies, so their judgmental accuracy was highly improved. Secondly, there was a large difference between the accuracy indices in *detecting* truthful language and in *interpreting* deceptive statements which normally have not been taken into account by the majority of L2 researchers. Finally, there seemed a myriad of variables that influenced the participants' accuracy in lie detection, especially when the success was accomplished by using non-verbal signals implied in the speakers' body language.

The current researcher's account for the discrepancy in her findings from those reported

in the literature is perhaps the novelty of the concepts and selected lie-spotting strategies to the Persian speaking EFL learners whose experience in this study was radical and novel. The mismatch between reading comprehension of a political text in L2 and its accurate interpretation was a source of confusion which required more coaching and practice.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Despite the regressive performance of the participants in the post-intervention test, the researcher believes that the instructions to both verbal and semiotic lie-spotting strategies do have significant impacts on the accuracy of EFL learners' comprehension of political discourse. The contradictory findings of this research might attract the attention of L2 researchers, teacher educators and material developers to spice up English reading passages with a variety of authentic political, press or legal genres as well as critical reading strategies. Meanwhile, the learners need to be instructed to pick up a critical approach to the materials, so that they can thoroughly examine the truthfulness and integrity of the passages with their detecting eyes while working with the language as a new means of communication.

The EFL curricula are usually rigid, pragmatic-neutral, and perhaps even unprofitable to the majority of students in FL contexts. Besides, the conservative and culture-neutral nature of EFL materials is a formidable obstacle in the way of teaching and learning English, especially in Asian countries. The research findings in this study insist that language is a multi-dimensional means of communication so that EFL teachers and material developers should be encouraged to introduce such overlooked dimensions as paralinguistic, semiotic features, and subtle linguistic patterns in teaching a variety of linguistic genres. Online resources can update the EFL teachers on recent changes in teaching materials. As Cao et al. (2003) mentioned:

Researchers in deception detection training should focus more on content development of the curriculum, such as the selection and organization of cues, rather than on the delivery method. However, if the curriculum contents have been tested to be effective, it will be necessary and important to study the design of Web-based training tools based on both learning theories and deception detection requirements; because the success of Web-based tools in deception detection training can have enormous impact in practice (p. 606).

New genre-specific contents such as political or legal discourse might encourage EFL teachers to become more autonomous by developing their own teaching materials and designing their own course of instructions. This study promoted a new approach toward teaching political texts in Persian speaking EFL context. As the cross-linguistic line of studies, the contrastive analysis of English and Persian languages in terms of semiotic and paralinguistic features might generate interesting topics for further research. Further studies on the cross-linguistic differences in terms of collocations, choice of words, rhetoric devices, discourse markers and the like between English and Persian political texts are highly recommended as avant-garde research topics to further evolve the EFL pedagogical system.

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