

## **Training Iranian High school Students to Use Test-taking Strategies in a High-Stakes Test<sup>1</sup>**

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### **Abstract**

The results of high-stakes tests such as Iranian National University Entrance Examination, i.e. Konkour may play a significant role in the test takers' future life. Occasionally, despite the test takers' knowledge of the language, some variables may hinder their performance (Rezaei, 2005). Some of these variables are the methods used to measure the language ability, and prior experience with the test, and individual characteristics. Two reasons other than language proficiency that may be accountable for systematic difference in language test performance are the processes and strategies used by test takers in responding to test tasks and the characteristics of the test takers (Bachman, 2000). In Iran, National University Entrance Examination is the only criterion for Iranian students'

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admission into public universities; consequently, it has a crucial role in the test takers' future field of study and their prospective jobs. However, unfortunately many students with high grade point averages are seen to have weak performance in this exam. As Scruggs and Mastropieri (1995) pointed out many students are poorly prepared for test-taking strategies and that the lack of "test-wiseness" is often responsible for test scores which do not accurately reflect students' knowledge. This paper reports on a study which explored the effect of training test-taking strategies on English language performance of Iranian high school students. To do so, 293 students participated in this study. First, participants responded to a demographic questionnaire and Oxford Placement Test (OPT). After reviewing the demographic questionnaires completed by the participants and their performance on the OPT, 33 participants were excluded from the data analysis due to taking part in a similar test-taking training course and/or having extreme scores. Therefore, 260 participants were left for the data analysis who were randomly divided into one experimental and one control group. After taking their pretests, they participated in their workshops during which the experimental group received test-taking strategy package. After the treatment, both groups took their English language posttests. At last, they took their Konkoor. The data were analyzed using Paired samples t-test and Pearson Correlation Coefficient. The findings of this study indicated that the experimental group outperformed the control group. This study suggests that integrating such strategies in the teaching curriculum could be valuable for all students.

**Keywords:** Test-taking Strategies, High-stakes Test, Training, English Test