

ON THE SCREEN OR PRINTED: A CASE OF EFL LEARNERS' ONLINE AND OFFLINE READING THE PRESS

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ABSTRACT

A growing body of investigations on second language teaching and learning is now being devoted to the international use of network information and communication technology known as e-learning. Individualized self-paced e-learning offline and online are two of the common e-learning modalities used by language teachers and learners (Romiszowski (2004). Since one of the aspects of language learning is reading comprehension, this study aimed at finding out whether online or offline reading materials could make a significant difference in the comprehension of English or not. For this purpose, a number of 85 EFL students at Islamic Azad University, Abadeh and Shiraz Branch were selected. After they were proved to be homogeneous through a reading comprehension pre-test, they were divided into two groups; one of them was assigned the already printed materials selected from the online pages of different newspapers for their reading comprehension practice, whereas the second group was given the homepage of the same online-paper pages to surf the net and read online. After a period of three months, the same reading comprehension test used in the pre-test was administered to both groups as the pos-test. The results showed that with the same hypertexts, learners who read online were able to improve their reading comprehension more and outperformed the other group. This implies that since online reading gives the learners a better opportunity to use related links on the page, they are exposed to more reading materials and accordingly can enhance their comprehension better.

Keywords: Online and Offline Hypertexts, Reading Comprehension, Reading Foreign Language Newspapers, Foreign Language Learning.

INTRODUCTION

E-learning is considered to be a kind of learning which is done at a computer, usually connected to a network. A special feature of e-learning which makes it rather different from traditional learning is that it gives the user the opportunity to learn disregarding when and where he is to learn. It comes in many variations ranging from purely online and no face-to-face education to blended learning (i.e., combination of face to face and online learning), and even the use of computer-based materials such as CD-ROMs, video and audio tapes. Homes and Gardner (2006) define e-learning as "online access to learning resources, anywhere and any time". Therefore, they limit the concept to use the information on the net only online. While a more general definition according to Skevoulis and Tavales (2010) can be "an approach to facilitate and enhance learning through the use of devices based on

communication and communications technology". As the definitions suggest, the main focus of e-learning is the accessibility of information through the most commonly-used communications technology which is the computer and the Internet.

E-learning incorporates all educational activities that are carried out by individuals or groups working online or offline. As defined by Naidu (2006), e-learning offline refers to situations in which an individual learner uses learning resources while not connected to the Internet. One example of working offline is using printed pages of hypertexts. E-learning online, on the other hand refers to sitting at the computer and using the materials on the net while it is connected enjoying the facilities as links to learn more about something.

Romiszowski (2004) categorized types of e-learning into four major classes: individualized self-paced offline,

individualized self-paced online, group-based synchronously, and group-based asynchronously. Individualized programs are designed to help the learners work at their own pace, anytime, anywhere. By offline and online learning, he means using the materials while connected to the net or disconnected. As for group-based e-learning synchronously, he refers to situations in which groups of learners collaborate via the Internet. Examples of this can be audio and video conferencing. Group-based e-learning asynchronously is used for situations when exchanges among the participants of a group are done with a delay. Examples of this type can be discussions through mailing lists. According to him, there is argument over the priority on any of these methods over the others. Some prefer to design group-based e-learning programs and some others prefer individualized self-paced ones. There is also a controversy over the superiority of online over offline materials or vice versa.

Following Romiszowski's(2004) classification and Verezub and Wang(2008) who supported the use of hypertexts with hyperlinks for the improvement of language learners' reading comprehension, the purpose of the present study is to find out which method works better: printing the newspaper hypertexts and assigning them to the language learners for the improvement of their reading comprehension or asking the students to read the same newspaper articles while connected to the net. In other words, emphasizing computer-assisted language learning, the main objective of this study is to reveal which one, online or offline hypertexts, will help the Iranian EFL learners enhance their comprehension of English more than the other.

Review of Literature

Computers are now at the service of almost all the world's population specially those involved in education in general and teaching in particular. Warschauer (1995) noted, "technology is developing so rapidly that it can often be difficult or overwhelming to harness somewhat like trying to get a drink of water from a gushing fire hydrant". At every second, there are so many facilities added to help language teachers enjoy their job even more. Teaching and testing programs, references, e-mail exchanges,

online and offline access to different hypertexts, and word processors are among the many uses of computers and the Internet in language teaching these days (Harmer, 2001).

Warschauer and Whittaker (2002) gave some guidelines for net-based teaching to help teachers to implement computers and the net in the second language classrooms. They suggested that the teacher should first consider his/her own goals carefully; little is usually obtained if a teacher just adds random online activities into the classroom. Teachers are also recommended to provide enough encouragement and support in the use of the Internet.

Thorne admitted the use of the Internet in education and stated, "... it is a real opportunity to create learning experiences that can provide the right learning at the right time and in the right place for each and every individual, not just at work, but in schools, universities and even at home. It can be truly universal, crossing global boundaries and bringing groups of learners together through different cultures and time zones" (Thorne 2003: 18).

Using the Internet in language learning widens the students' visions, and it provides regular feedback of their proficiency in the language; it offers a powerful motivation to broaden their knowledge of the related foreign culture, traditions and customs. If, however, students are left alone with their computers, as the Internet is a terrific resource for accessing full-text newspapers, magazines, journals, and reference books, the problem which arises is leaving the students at sixes and sevens about where to begin, which might be overwhelming for inexperienced learners as there is an infinite amount of information available.

In order to find the pedagogical value of e-learning, one needs to glance back at the principles of autonomous learning, on one hand, and collaboration, on the other. According to Kohn (2005), learner-centered approaches support learner's autonomy. By learner-centered he means the learner is required not to be a sole executor of teacher's plans. On the other hand, the learner can make his own learning schedule and choose his own way of learning. Kohn also refers to e-learning as a chance for collaboration. He believes that e-learning opens new

horizons for those who enjoy group work. All in all, Kohn states that e-learning turns one's learning into a life-long one, whether individually or in collaboration of others. Thus, the pedagogical viability of e-learning activities for language learning purposes depends on their contribution to the fulfillment of these principles.

One of the main advantages of e-learning for both collaborative and autonomous self-paced learning is that it greatly enhances getting involved in meaningful activities (Brown, Collins, and Duguid, 1989; Schank & Cleary, 1995; Evensen & Hmelo, 2000). As the situations in which the learners are in, are authentic ones, learners are required to carry out real life tasks. This way, they are encouraged to learn more. Of course this idea is not accepted by all educators. Clark (1994) declared that "media will never influence learning". He mentions that the media are vehicles which only hand in instructions but they do not affect learners' achievement; in the same way that a truck which delivers our food can not change our nutrition. To him, the only thing which matters is instructional method. On the other hand, Schank (1997) said it is accepted that the influence of media and information technology on learning is optimized when it is integrated into educational experience. He added that we need to focus our attention to the design of learning experience than on presentation of subject matter.

As computer-assisted language learning has been highly supported by many scholars in the field, the term e-learning is mostly in association with learning a foreign language. The use of hypertexts has flowingly been involved in educational programs in general and language learning contexts in particular (Chen, Fan, and Maredie, 2006). In fact, interacting with e-learning materials such as hypertexts has been an interesting area of language learning through the net. Hypertext is defined as information systems having organized text-form content within an interrelated network which, when being online, can establish links to maintain the relationship among documents (Salmeron, Canas, Kintsch, and Fajardo, 2005). Links in online hypertexts refer to underlined or bolded words which remind users that there are other places within the Web which relate the already available

materials on the screen to other important information (Bernard, Hull, and Chaparro, 2005; Mazzali-Lurati, 2007).

To be able to use the hypertexts, one needs to be able to make the head and tail out of the materials he is to read. In other words, reading comprehension is the necessary language skill to use the hypertexts on the net. Lutjeharms(1998) defines reading as a "complicated task that figures many kinds of knowledge, abilities and psychological factors which may vary individually". According to him, in reading comprehension, text types and reading goals are two key factors which vary strongly in different individuals.

Research has proved that with the development of modern technology and the use of computers and the Internet in language learning, in e-learning contexts hypertexts can play a vital role. The links used in the online hypertexts provide an opportunity for language learners, in particular, to have access to the related materials and develop their knowledge(Oliver and Herrington, 1995; cited in Verezub and Wang, 2008). In their study aimed at investigating language learners' reading and learning behavior in the e-learning environment,, Verezub and Wang(2008) pointed out that reading the hypertexts leads to a successful understanding since the learners are required to "constantly monitor the reading process". The results of their study also showed that comprehension is enhanced for hypertexts with text, picture and audio links.

Ehrlich, Radde, Polletti, and Freitag(2010) presented an e-learning system for teaching reading comprehension. They concluded that using authentic texts, the language learner is encouraged to apply reading skills and strategies to comprehend a text. They then suggested a technical platform aimed at a better comprehension through e-learning.

Considering computer-assisted language learning as a widely acceptable way of presenting materials in language classrooms and admitting the influential role of the Internet language learning on one hand, and emphasizing the use of hypertexts, either online or offline in reading comprehension on the other, the researcher raises the following question in this study:

Q- Do the EFL learners who practice reading offline

materials outperform in a reading comprehension test compared to those who practice online reading texts?

Based on the research question, the following null hypothesis was posed:

H0- There is no significant difference in the EFL learners' reading comprehension performance whether the read online or offline.

Method

Participants

The participants of the present study were a number of 85 male and female junior Iranian EFL students majoring English translation at Islamic Azad University, Shiraz and Abadeh branches. They were all at the age range of 23 to 27 years old and had all passed their basic reading comprehension (1) and (2) at the university. They had all taken their "reading the press" course; specifically speaking, the study was done in their "reading the Press" class. On the basis of ACTFL Reading Proficiency and rating, all the participants were expected to enjoy a mid-intermediate level of reading proficiency.

Procedure

A number of 45 at Islamic Azad University, Abadeh branch and 40 students at Islamic Azad University, Shiraz branch were chosen from among a number of 160 available junior EFL students as the participants. They were all studying in the third year at the university, and their major was English translation. To see if they were homogeneous as far as their comprehension of English was concerned, a reading comprehension test was developed, and it was, then, piloted for reliability purposes. Additionally, it was reviewed by two language professors for content validity. As the result of the reviewing process, they confirmed that the test enjoyed both content and construct validity. The reliability obtained based on a test-retest method was 0.7. As the reliability of the test was satisfactory, and language experts confirmed that it was valid, it was taken by the participants of the study at the beginning of instruction. In order to find out if the participants were homogeneous or not, an independent t-test was applied to the students' scores in the pre-test. The comparison of participants' scores indicated that the participants were homogeneous, and

there was not a significant difference in their performances. The test was, then, considered as the pre-test and the results were kept for final analyses.

As the question raised in this study was whether online reading could improve reading comprehension or offline one better, a number of pages from online papers were selected from among all available online papers on the net. An attempt was made for the selection of various topics. The topic of excerpts was social, political, health-related etc. It is worth mentioning here that reading for comprehension and making inferences were considered the primary purposes for reading the materials, and raising the learners' awareness toward the main idea in the texts was also another aspect taken into account in the study. While in the first group, the students were given the printed pages of the hypertexts (offline reading) to have a pre-study before the text was worked on in the classroom, in the second group, the students were given the title of the articles and related source of the materials in the net and were assigned to surf the net and do the pre-study online.

Then, as the treatment, for each class session which was one and a half hours every week, since the course was a two-credit one, the students in both groups were required to have a pre-study over the assigned articles in the papers with the difference that in the experimental group the students were asked to use the hyperlinks on the same Web page of the paper while reading it at home, and then in the classroom, the teacher read the articles paragraph by paragraph, asked the students comprehension questions, paraphrased the sentences, discussed about the central idea in each paragraph and finally summarized the whole text. For the researcher to make sure if the participants in the experimental group used the links, the teacher asked them to report what they had found in the related links. The Web sites they could link to were different and the only purpose of using links was to let the participants have more exposure to language. This was done for the whole semester which took about three months.

After the treatment, the same reading test administered at the beginning of instruction was given as the post-test. In fact, all the pre-test, post-test, and treatment were administered and applied in different sessions of their class

time. The pre- and post-test were administered in the very first and last session of the class time in the semester, and the instruction lasted for the whole term. To reject the research null hypothesis, a one-way ANOVA was applied to the students' gain scores, i.e., the difference between their pre- and post-test scores to compare the performance of the participants in both groups in the pre and post tests. The reason why the gain scores were considered was that the researcher needed to know the changes occurring to the performance of the participants in the post-test as the result of the instruction.

Instrumentation

A reading comprehension test was developed to be used for both pre- and post-test. It consisted of six reading passages followed by a set of forty multiple choice items. The items generally were based on reading for comprehension and making inferences. Raising the learners' awareness toward the main idea in the texts was also another aspect taken into account in the test (Appendix 1). The items then were scored objectively - each item having 0.5 point - by the researcher since the test items were all multiple choice questions. After it was proved that the test enjoyed both reliability and validity, it was used for the pre- and post-test.

Materials

A number of pages of online papers from Time on-line, Daily Express, Tehran Times, Iran Daily, The Independent, and Society of Environmental Journalists were selected from all the available online papers in the net (Appendix 2). The choice of the articles was done quite randomly, and the articles enjoyed variety of topics including not only political but also social issues, which were related to the participants' every day life and thus interesting to read. As the researcher was the teacher for the participants' "Reading the Press" course, she selected her teaching materials following not only the course syllabus but also the

research objective. The chosen articles were used during the instruction which was one and a half hour every week for a semester (about three months or so).

Results and Discussion

The results of the independent t-test to check the homogeneity of participants are represented in tables below:

According to Table 1, whereas the average score (mean) of the first group, i.e. those who read the newspaper excerpts offline was 13.6, the average score for the second group's performance was 13.8.

According to Table 2, while the value of *t* is .3, the significance level is .5, which implies that there is not significant difference between the performances of the participants in both groups. This reveals that the participants in both groups were homogeneous.

As the research hypothesis was there is no difference in the performance of the participants whether they read the newspaper excerpts online or offline, a one-way ANOVA was used to compare the two groups' performance in the reading comprehension pre- and post-test. It is worth mentioning here that the range of students' scores in the pre-test for the experimental group was 12, that of the control group was 11, and the range of participants' scores was 9 for the experimental group and 10 for the control group. The results of the one-way ANOVA to compare the participants' gain scores (the difference between pre and post test scores) is as follows:

Based on what can be observed in Table 3, the value of *F* (*F* = 16.473) is much greater than the significance level. This means that there is a significant difference in the

Groups	N	mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error of Mean
Offline group	40	13.6500	2.33754	.36960
Online group	45	13.8000	2.18049	.32505

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for participants' performance in the pre-test

	Leven's test for equality of variance		t-test for equality of means					95% confidence interval of difference	
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig(2-tailed)	Mean difference	Std. error difference	lower	upper
Equal value assumed	.347	.557	-.306	83	.760	-.15000	.49017	-1.12492	.82492
Equal values not assumed			-.305	80.157	.761	-.15000	.49220	-1.12948	.82948

Table 2. t-test to compare the participants' performance in the pre-test

	Sum of square	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Between groups	375.333	3	125.111	16.473	0.00
Within groups	1260.719	166	7.595		
Total	1636.053	169			

Table 3. one-way ANOVA to compare the participants' pre- and post test

participants' performance in both pre- and post-test. Therefore, the null hypothesis raised in this study stating that there is no significant difference in the participants' performance in the online and offline groups is rejected here. To find the area of difference and see which group outperformed the other, a sheffe test was applied.

According to Table 4, comparing the pre-test mean scores (offline group mean = 13.65 and online group mean = 13.8) with the post test mean scores (offline group mean = 15.07 and online group = 18.08) for both groups, it can be concluded that both groups had improvements in their newspaper reading comprehension. Comparing both group participants' performance (offline group =15.07 and online group = 17.08), however, indicates that the second group who used paper materials online were able to outperform the other one who read offline newspaper excerpts.

Pedagogical Implication

Following Verezub and Wang(2008) who stated that using hypertexts with text and picture hyperlinks is advantageous in enhancing reading comprehension of language learners, the results of this study support the idea that if our language learners are exposed to reading excerpts from the screen online, they will enhance their comprehension much better than reading the same content offline, in printed form. In fact, the practical aspect of this study was to develop an e-learning program for Iranian EFL learners to strengthen their reading comprehension through the use of hypertexts. This has not only pedagogical benefits for the learners, but it is useful for the teachers as well. Language teachers can surf the net and try to find useful websites and

Groups	N.	Subset for alpha=0.05
Offline pre-test	40	13.6500
Online pre-test	45	13.8000
Offline post-test	40	15.0750
Online post-test	45	17.0889

Table 4. Sheffe test to compare the participants' performance in both groups in the pre- and post-test

use them as sources of tasks to be done by the learners for their out of class activities. It can enhance the teacher's scope of knowledge, too. As Harmer(2001) puts it, internet can be a course alternative, so language learners will definitely learn more if they can make a bridge between what they learn in the classroom, and what is available to them out of the class. Computers are now everywhere at everybody's disposal, and the world has turned into a village through the World Wide Web, so why not make use of these tools and let them be at the service of our language learners! They can be sources of knowledge, motivation, enthusiasm, and interest, which can drive the learners right to the path language teachers have so long endeavored to drag them to.

Conclusion

This study aimed at finding out if there is any considerable difference in the improvement of reading comprehension for those who read the paper online hypertexts, and those who have access to the same newspaper articles offline. Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that even though both offline and online reading can lead to the learners' enhancement of the comprehension of newspaper articles, reading online will help the learners outperform in their comprehension much more than those who use the same materials offline. This study demonstrated the advantage of incorporating hyperlinks to provide an opportunity for the language learner to read the related materials on a new node. As Wei, Evans, Eliot, Barrick, Maust, & Spyridakis (2005) put it, browsing and navigation through hyperlinks attracts their attention to more reading. It, therefore supports the fact that online hypertexts help language learners to improve their reading comprehension much better than offline hypertexts.

Appendix 1: Reading Comprehension Test

Attention:

1. This exam booklet contains 40 reading comprehension questions. You have 55 minutes to answer the questions.
2. There are six reading passages. First read each passage carefully and then answer the questions following it. Choose the best answer and mark the letter that stand for it on your answer sheet.

3. Each correct answer receives one point; no negative point is deduced for incorrect answers.
4. Do not write on this booklet, please.

Reading 1:

Statistics would like to place a giant mirror in space above the earth. It might be six miles wide. It would be used to catch the rays of the sun. It would be direct the sun's ray s upon the earth as you might do with a magnifying glass.

Why do they want to do this? The sun's rays could be helpful in many ways. They could light up cities at night. The warm rays could stop frosts that might come at night and hurt fruit crops. The rays could melt dangerous iceberg in the ocean. Perhaps they could change cloud movements and bring rain where it is needed.

1. Scientists would like a giant mirror placed ...
 - a. on the sun
 - b. above the earth
 - c. in the ocean
 - d. on the earth
2. The mirror would be used to ...
 - a. catch the sun rays
 - b. see the star rays
 - c. catch the star rays
 - d. help to catch far away stars
3. The warm rays of the sun might be used to melt ...
 - a. oceans
 - b. frosts
 - c. icebergs
 - d. clouds
4. The rays might help fruit crops by ...
 - a. giving them more light at night
 - b. making them bigger
 - c. stopping frosts that come at night
 - d. magnifying them
5. The giant mirror is ...
 - a. just an idea
 - b. in the sky now
 - c. already made
 - d. never broken

Reading 2:

Insects have many methods of living through a cold winter. One unusual method is that one used by honey bees. When cold weather comes, the bees form a cluster within the hive. Those in the middle of this mass start dancing. Dancing makes the bees warm. Their heat raises the temperature within the whole cluster. The bees on the outside serve as a shell to hold in the heat. The temperature in the center may be seventy, five degrees higher than in the air outside the cluster.

Throughout the winter, the bees keep changing places

within the cluster so that each takes a turn at the center and on the outside. In this way, all the bees stay warm for months.

6. In the cold weather, honey bees form a cluster ...
 - a. in the air
 - b. inside the shell
 - c. in their hives
 - d. in front of a hive
7. The bees in the middle of the cluster ...
 - a. lower the temperature of the cluster
 - b. try to get out of the middle
 - c. stay in the idle all the time
 - d. raise the temperature of the cluster
8. At times the bees on the outside of the cluster will ...
 - a. allow some cold air to get into the middle
 - b. change places within those in center
 - c. fly away to another hive
 - d. kill those in the center
9. Heat stays within the cluster because the bees on the outside ...
 - a. keep changing places
 - b. raise the temperature
 - c. serve as a shell
 - d. stay warm for months
10. The cluster helps the bees to keep the temperature in the center ...
 - a. higher than temperature outside the cluster
 - b. lower than temperature outside the cluster
 - c. lower than seventy-five degrees
 - d. seventy-five degrees above zero

Reading 3:

Algae are fine plants that grow in water or certain moist places, shady spots are best for their growth. Algae can exist alone as one cell – called plants or they can join together to form large masses. The green scum that grows on woodland pond is a type of algae. So are the green mossy coats that carpet the forest floor, ceiling to damp rocks and flower – spots, or grow on the north side of tree – trunks. Woodsmen often look for the algae for tree trunks to point out the northerly direction.

Algae are important to water life. Most algae five off oxygen, which helps freshen the surrounding water. Some of them furnish food especially iodine. In some countries, some algae that grow as seaweed are used as food.

Others make good fertilizers.

11. What is the main idea of the third paragraph?

- a. Algae are good fertilizers.
- b. Algae are important because of their rich nutrients.
- c. Algae are important to water life.
- d. Algae are good source of food when fish is scarce.

12. What's the topic of the second paragraph?

- a. the size of the algae b. the importance of algae
- c. the use of algae d. the kinds of algae

13. The word "they" (paragraph 2, line 1) refers to ...

- a. algae b. plants c. masses d. spots

14. The word "others" in paragraph 3 line 1 refers to ...

- a. other people b. other kinds of algae
- c. some countries d. some algae

15. It is stated that woodsmen can use algae grown on trees ...

- a. for food b. to find the direction
- c. as fertilizers d. to freshen the water

16. Algae are used as a source of food for its ...

- a. oxygen b. iodine c. shady spots
- d. mossy coats

17. Algae grow best in places ...

- a. which are moist and shady
- b. which are sunny and shady
- c. which are sunny and rocky
- d. which are rocky and shady

Reading 4:

Some people remember their dreams; others don't. But all human beings, even many animals dream. Scientists have recently made machines that measure how we sleep and we dream. In one experiment, two groups of people used the machines. Those in one group were wakened when they were not dreaming. Their daily behavior remained normal. The second group were awakened when they were starting a dream. After four dreamless nights, these people were disturbed and couldn't concentrate. When they were allowed unbroken sleep, the machines showed they dreamed more each night, until they had made up for

their dreamless period.

Young people spend one-quarter of their sleep dreaming; older people have less dreaming time But every sleeper, young or old, needs some dream – time for his health.

18. In the scientists' experiment, two groups of people were ...

- a. made to go to sleep for different lengths of time
- b. made to go to sleep at different hours
- c. wakened at different times
- d. left dreaming all the night

19. The result of dreamless night proved to be ...

- a. normal behavior b. disturbed behavior
- c. improved health d. undisturbed concentration

20. When allowed undisturbed sleep, the second group ...

- a. dreamed less each night
- b. dreamed more each night
- c. dreamed only occasionally
- d. stopped dreaming temporarily

21. The main idea of paragraph 3 is ...

- a. young people dream more than old people
- b. old people dream more than young people
- c. people may dream if they are healthy
- d. people need to dream to be healthy

22. In paragraph 2, "these people" refers to people in the ...

- a. first group b. second group
- c. experimenters d. two groups

23. A good topic for this passage is ...

- a. machines that measure dreams
- b. human beings and animals
- c. human beings daily behavior
- d. dreams and man's daily behavior

24. People whose sleep and dreams are left undisturbed ...

- a. can remember their dreams best
- b. never remember their dreams
- c. show normal behavior during the day

d. are usually weak and unhealthy

Reading 5:

If you ask three people to look out the same window at a busy street corner and tell you what they see, chances are you will receive three different answers. Each person sees the same scene, but each perceives something different about it.

Perceiving goes on in our minds. Of the three people who look out the window, one may say that he sees a policeman talking to a motorist; another may say that he sees a rush-hour traffic jam at the intersection, and the third may tell you that he sees a woman trying to cross the street with her four children, for perception is the mind's interpretation of what the senses – in this case our eyes – tells us.

Many psychologists today are working to try to determine just how a person experiences or perceives the world around him. Using a scientific approach, these psychologists set up experiments in which they can control all of the factors. By measuring and charting the results of many experiments, they are trying to find out what makes different people perceive totally different things about the same scene.

25. The word perception refers to the ...

- a. ability to differentiate things differently
- b. process by which man understands his surroundings
- c. method by which psychologists measure eyesight
- d. scientific approach for solving rush-hour traffic

26. People perceive different things about the same scene because they ...

- a. do not look at the same scene
- b. do not want to see the same things
- c. interpret the things they see differently
- d. are asked to look at different things

27. Psychologists study perception by ...

- a. determining interests of different people
- b. using factor-controlled experiments
- c. disregarding people's visual ability
- d. interpreting the factors causing traffic jams

28. According to this passage, in a scientific approach, ...

- a. psychologists make an attempt to study perception
- b. factors affecting a process do not need to be controlled
- c. measures and charts determine the results of the experiment
- d. people's differences in perception are usually encouraged

29. According to this passage, ...

- a. psychologists are able to explain how the mind works
- b. man is not able to solve traffic problems at intersections
- c. we do not know yet how man reacts to his environment
- d. the study of perception does not involve psychological factors

30. What is the main idea of paragraph 1?

- a. people are interested in watching the same things
- b. people do not like to talk about things they perceive
- c. people do not like to see the same things repeatedly
- d. people see the same scenes but perceive them differently

31. We can conclude from this passage that ...

- a. perceiving things is different from seeing them
- b. people seeing similar objects should perceive similarly
- c. different policemen operate the same intersection differently
- d. man may not notice women with children crossing streets

32. A good topic for this passage is ...

- a. the differences among people
- b. psychologists and experiments
- c. psychologists' perception
- d. perception and man's seeing

Reading 6:

In western countries most of the people who appear most often and most gloriously in the history books are great conquerors and generals and soldiers, whereas the people who really helped civilization forward are often never mentioned at all. We do not know who first set a broken leg, or launched a seaworthy boat, or calculated the length of

a year, or manured a field; but we know all about the killers and destroyers. People think a great deal of them, so much so that on all the highest pillars in the great cities of the world you will find the figure of a conqueror or a general or a soldier. And most people believe that the greatest countries are those that have beaten in the battle the greatest number of other countries and ruled over them as conquerors. It is just possible they are, but they are not the most civilized. Even being good at getting other people to fight for you and telling them how to do it most efficiently – is not being civilized. People fight to settle quarrels. Fighting means killing, and civilized people ought to be able to find some way of setting their disputes other than by seeing which side can kill off the greatest number of the other side, and then saying that that side which has killed most has won. For that is what going to war means; it means saying that might is right.

33. Which of the following is a characteristic of a civilized country?

- a. Its people fight in order to settle quarrels
- b. Its people think being strong makes them savages
- c. Its people believe their strength brings them right
- d. Its people respect those helping civilization improve

34. It is implied that . . .

- a. Hitler is not as famous as Einstein
- b. civilized people think being strong makes them savages
- c. quarrels should be settled by wars
- d. man has no true understanding of civilization

35. Who is now honored most according to this passage?

- a. conquerors, generals, and soldiers
- b. killers, destroyers, and animals
- c. people who believe might is not right
- d. men who helped civilization forward

36. The word "maure" in this passage means . . .

- a. cultivate b. plant trees in a land
- c. calculate d. put fertilizer in land

37. The word "figure" in this passage means . . .

- a. number b. statue c. body d. picture

38. If you yourself do not fight but involve others in fighting,

you're still . . .

- a. savage b. civilized c. right d. strong

39. If a country rules over another country . . .

- a. the former may be efficient but not strong
- b. the latter may be weak but not civilized
- c. the former may be civilized but not great
- d. the latter may be right but not mighty

40. Animals are different from human beings because they . . .

- a. can not fight to solve problems
- b. can not solve their disagreements
- c. can distinguish right from wrong
- d. can win over other animals

Appendix 2. Online Paper Articles

(1) "China Racing Ahead of U.S. in the Drive to Go Solar"

"WUXI, China -- President Obama wants to make the United States 'the world's leading exporter of renewable energy,' but in his seven months in office, it is China that has stepped on the gas in an effort to become the dominant player in



green energy -- especially in solar power, and even in the United States.

Chinese companies have already played a leading role in pushing down the price of solar panels by almost half over the last year. Shi Zhengrong, the chief executive and founder of China's biggest solar panel manufacturer, Suntech Power Holdings, said in an interview here that Suntech, to build market share, is selling solar panels on the American market for less than the cost of the materials, assembly and shipping.

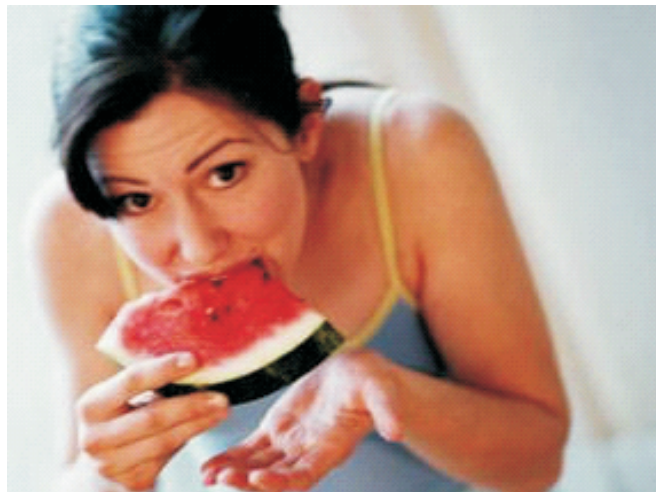
Backed by lavish government support, the Chinese are preparing to build plants to assemble their products in the United States to bypass protectionist legislation. As Japanese automakers did decades ago, Chinese solar companies are encouraging their United States executives to join industry trade groups to tamp down anti-Chinese sentiment before it takes root."

(2) Why Watermelons Pack More Power Than You Thought

Watermelons that are rejected from the shelves can help fuel us up

By Leah Simpson for Express.co.uk

WATERMELONS might be able to offer a source of renewable power, according to new reports. Juice from the fruits that are too bad to sell are actually capable of fermenting into ethanol biofuel. The summery produce is able to make energy at the rate of 220 litres per hectare, or 2.5 acres, say researchers. The popular summery snack may also help provide the two health supplements. Apparently those that are rejected from store shelves can



be used for their "nutri-chemicals" lycopene and L-citrulline. Lycopene behaves like a powerful antioxidant while L-citrulline helps to improve blood flow. Dr Wayne Fish, from the US Department of Agriculture, said: "About 20% of each annual watermelon crop is left in the field because of surface blemishes or because they are misshapen.

"We've shown that the juice of these melons is a source of readily fermentable sugars, representing a heretofore untapped feedstock for ethanol biofuel production."

(3) TV'S Kerry Is Arrested For Assault'

Kerry Katona is driven away from Wilmslow Police Station in Cheshire

TROUBLED television star Kerry Katona was arrested last night on suspicion of assaulting her accountant. The 28-year-old mother-of-four is alleged to have punched David McHugh in the face and thrown a mug of tea at him in a bust-up at his office. She was arrested at her £1.3million home at about 5pm. Katona was last night being questioned on suspicion of an assault, criminal damage and public order offence. The row is said to have blown up when Katona asked for a copy of her old accounts and was apparently told they were not available, sources said. The alleged clash came just 48 hours after she was cautioned by police for possessing cocaine following video footage emerging of her snorting the Class-A drug at her home in Wilmslow, Cheshire. The shocking images cost the star – who went bankrupt last year – her £250,000-a-year contract as the face of supermarket Iceland. Mr McHugh, 51 – who has had a long-standing business relationship with the former Atomic Kitten – had been fighting for compensation from the firm on her behalf. He had written to Iceland bosses demanding they pay Katona £40,000 for a series of TV ads she filmed last month but will now never be screened. The alleged attack happened about 4pm yesterday at Mr McHugh's office on a business park in Warrington, Cheshire. Shortly after 5pm three officers turned up in two Vauxhall Astra police cars at Katona's home. They were in her house for 20 minutes before leading her out and placing her into the back of one of the cars.

(4) Britain's 3 Million Homes In Which No Adult Has A Job

By Macer Hall

MORE than 4.8 million adults are now living in households where nobody has a job, new official statistics revealed yesterday. The number has increased by 500,000 over the last year as the recession takes its toll. The grim figures from the Office of National Statistics show there are now 3.3 million households where nobody works. It means one-in-six households in Britain are workless, the highest rate for a decade. And, worryingly, just under two million children are growing up in homes where no one works. The news emerged as the Tories released analysis showing that welfare benefits for the jobless have cost taxpayers £350 billion since Labour came to power.

The sum includes a sum of £36.6 billion for jobseeker's allowance, £92.5 billion in incapacity benefit, £90.7 billion for income support, £106.3 billion in housing benefit and £20.3 billion for council tax benefit. In a speech savaging Labour's benefits system today, Tory frontbencher Theresa May says: "The benefit bill for Labour's 12 years of welfare dependency totals over £300 billion. "But the social consequences of this failure have been even greater. "There are communities in Britain where more than half of working age adults are out of work and dependent on benefits. "Almost one-in-five children in the UK grow up in households dependent on out-of-work benefits. Worklessness has become a generational problem, passed from father to son, mother to daughter. "Report after report has laid out the problems children growing up in workless households face. "They are more likely to fail at school, become involved in criminal behaviour, develop addictions to drink and drugs and ultimately end up workless themselves. A vicious cycle has emerged."

She adds: "The tragedy is that we're talking about real people here, people who feel they have no future, who can't imagine getting a job, who don't know anyone else with a job. "They have been trapped on benefits for as long as they can remember and they can't see any chance of getting out." The figures show the number of working households was 10.7 million, down 410,000 over the same period. Two out of five single-parent households are workless.

The highest workless household rate was in the North-east at 23.2 per cent. The lowest was 12.2 per cent in the East of

England. Mrs May, Shadow Work and Pensions Secretary, said last night that it was a bleak picture. "It is scandalous that we have millions of adults unable to break out of the vicious cycle of worklessness," she added. "It is also extremely distressing that nearly two million children live in workless households, shattering Gordon Brown's pledge to halve child poverty by 2010."

Employment Minister Jim Knight said: "This is utter hypocrisy from the Tories who abandoned people in every recession and deliberately pushed unemployed people onto sickness benefits. "That neglect meant that unemployment stayed over two million for almost all the 1980s pushing up the bills of unemployment too."

UK NEWS

(5) Police Name Boy Who Drowned In Pond

Police have named an 11-year-old boy who drowned in a pond near a shopping centre.

Ross Carroll, of Barton Lane, Salford, vanished into the water at open land near the Trafford Centre complex in Manchester shortly before 6pm on Tuesday. A search by police officers and firefighters, supported by Bolton Mountain Rescue Team, was launched at Barton Embankment and the body was recovered two-and-a-half hours later.

A spokesman for Greater Manchester Police said: "Inquiries into the circumstances are continuing. "Ross was with friends who raised the alarm when he disappeared. Police said the first officers to arrive at the scene waded into the



The pond where 11-year-old Ross Carroll drowned.

pond to search for the boy. They were followed by firefighters from Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service's water incident unit and a police joint underwater search unit. The body was eventually found by members of the Bolton Mountain Rescue Team.

Two other boys were taken to Salford Royal Hospital and treated for shock. The pond lies in an isolated area of open wasteland and the site appears to be under construction. Signs warning of "deep water" and "soft ground" are scattered around the water, including one that states "keep out". A small wire fence surrounding the pond has been pushed to the ground by rescue teams.

(6) Feeling stressed? Then go mow the lawn, claims research

The sweet smell of freshly cut grass can relieve stress, scientists claim

By Richard Alleyne, Science Correspondent

Dr Lavidis said the aroma of cut grass worked directly on the brain, in particular the emotional and memory parts. Researchers have discovered that a chemical released by a mown lawn makes people feel happy and relaxed, and could prevent mental decline in old age. They claim it works directly on the brain, in particular the emotional and memory parts known as the amygdala and the hippocampus. Now they have developed a perfume, which "smells like a freshly-cut lawn", that relieves stress and help boost memory, scientists claim.

The Australian experts produced the "eau de mow" after seven years of research. Dr Nick Lavidis, a neuroscientist at the University of Queensland, Brisbane, came up with the idea for the perfume, named Serenascent, after going on



a forest trek in the US twenty years ago. "Three days in Yosemite National Park felt like a three-month holiday," he said. "I didn't realise at the time that it was the actual combination of feel-good chemicals released by the pine trees, the lush vegetation and the cut grass that made me feel so relaxed.

"Years later my neighbour commented on the wonderful smell of cut grass after I had mowed the lawn and it all started to click into place," he added. Dr Lavidis said the aroma worked directly on the brain, in particular the emotional and memory parts known as the amygdala and the hippocampus. He explained: "These two areas are responsible for the flight or fight response and the endocrine system, which controls the releasing of stress hormones like corticosteroids.

"The new spray appears to regulate these areas. "There are two types of stress. The first is when you are about to perform something or you know you are going to have to do something well. That's acute stress and can be a good form of stress.

"Bad stress is chronic stress and is associated with an increase in blood pressure, forgetfulness and a weakening of the immune system."

Chronic stress has been shown to damage the hippocampus by reducing the number of connections between communicating cells, leading to memory loss. In old animals the damage is permanent.

Students working on the Australian project found that animals exposed to Serenascent – which combines three chemical released when green leaves are cut – escaped damage to the hippocampus.

The scent is said to have the "pleasant aroma of a freshly-cut lawn or a walk through a lush forest". It will go into production next month and sell for around £4 a bottle. Dr Lavidis, who worked with pharmacologist Professor Rosemary Einstein, said: "It can be used as a room spray or a personal spray on bed linen, a handkerchief or clothing. Down the track we will look at incorporating the feel good chemicals into other products."

(7) Good Tips at the End of His Meals

QUESTIONS upon questions upon questions: they're a



restaurant critic's real diet, fed to him by friends and strangers, in phone calls and e-mail messages, at cocktail parties and the gym. Say the words, "I'm a restaurant critic," and the floodgates open.

"Where should I take my 92-year-old grandmother for brunch in Midtown, keeping in mind that I'm a vegan and she's not?" "Is there a Sri Lankan restaurant on the North Shore that you particularly like?"

I don't have answers to those two, which are of my own invention but not far afield from the norm.

I do, however, have answers to many actual questions that I never managed to address, lacking enough hours. To that end I'm using my last column as The Times's restaurant critic to correct lapses, attend to unfinished business, rummage through a cupboard of leftover advice and opine on an



A CRITIC'S MEMORIES Frank Bruni looks back on the Modern, owned by Danny Meyer.

array of matters that didn't come up often, or at all, in other articles.

What follows are questions that I was often asked or that I wished I'd been asked, along with responses. More of each can be found [on Diner's Journal](#), a Dining section blog.

WHAT'S THE BEST SUSHI PLACE?

I have to give two answers, because the absolute best I encountered in New York over the last five years is Masa, but that's a recommendation of limited usefulness. A meal there is upward of \$400 a person. I haven't been in a long time.

So I'd like to single out Sushi Yasuda as well. There you can have a wonderfully intimate, pampering omakase experience - a seat at the counter, a chef seemingly devoted to you and just a few other diners, sushi being prepared just moments before you eat it - for under \$100 a person, not counting drinks. Still a major treat, but much, much more manageable.

WHAT ABOUT THE BEST STEAKHOUSE?

There's no one answer to this, because steakhouse selection is so particularly dependent on a diner's mood and sensibility.

If a certain corny, musky ambience is what you like, and a steakhouse need only have one great steak, then a place like Sparks - and its strip - will please you mightily.

But if you want a steakhouse with an array of strengths, and you're after a more contemporary ambience, you'd do better at, say, Porter House New York or BLT Prime. Porter House has improved since my one-star review years ago; the porterhouse on my most recent visit was superb. And there's a decent, accessible wine list, something many steakhouses, including Peter Luger, don't have.

Peter Luger on its best night has an outstanding porterhouse, but the lights are always too bright and the service usually too gruff. That's the thing with this city's steakhouses: there's almost always a drawback, a limitation.

Harry's Steak down near Wall Street has a particular tucked-away charm. Strip House has great sides and an inimitably cheeky atmosphere. Keens has the most Old World charm; its mutton chop - a misnomer, but a glorious one at that - is

worth the trip alone.

Minetta Tavern, while not billing itself as a steakhouse, might be my favorite, but is near-impenetrable by anyone without inside connections between 6:30 and 10:30 p.m.

IS THERE ANY BEST, SAFEST WAY TO NAVIGATE A MENU?

Scratch off the appetizers and entrees that are most like dishes you've seen in many other restaurants, because they represent this one at its most dutiful, conservative and profit-minded. The chef's heart isn't in them.

Scratch off the dishes that look the most aggressively fanciful. The chef's vanity - possibly too much of it - spawned these. Then scratch off anything that mentions truffle oil. Choose among the remaining dishes.

WHAT DISHES FROM RECENT VISITS WOULD I BE SMART TO SEEK OUT?

The fusilli with tomato, octopus and bone marrow at Marea is a revelation: original and so very, very right. At a different restaurant a few years back, a dining companion noted that marrow had a "druggy" taste and effect all its own, and I thought that adjective was perfect. This fusilli dish is indeed druggy - and an example of what makes Michael White such an inventive, intuitive master of pasta.

(8) Hereditary diseases could be eradicated before birth by 'genetically modifying' eggs

Many hereditary diseases including cancers and diabetes could eventually be eradicated before birth after scientists found a way to "fix" the DNA of unfertilised eggs.

By Richard Alleyne, Science Correspondent

In a new technique which will reopen the ethical debate over embryo research, researchers have for the first time found a way to safely remove and replace genetically abnormal parts of an egg. The procedure will remove the risk of diseases being passed from mother to child.

The breakthrough could immediately eradicate rare diseases of the eye, muscle and mind and could eventually lead to cures for more common disorders with a hereditary element such as cancer, diabetes and infertility.

But the technique - which has already been successfully carried out in monkeys - would need a controversial change in the law to be used on humans, as many people

think it would be akin to playing God.

Under the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act, this kind of treatment - or any that involves genetically modifying an egg - remains illegal but the government has put in place a framework to relax the rules if and when science shows it can have positive impact on health.

The technique, perfected at the Oregon National Primate Research Center and Oregon Health & Science University, centres on diseases caused by inherited defects in the "power packs" of cells, known as mitochondria.

Most DNA in an egg is contained in its nucleus but there is a tiny amount in the mitochondria, which is only passed on from the mother.

If it is defective then the defect is passed on. A number of rare "mitochondria diseases" are already known and affect roughly one person in every 4,000 or 5,000.

But it is thought these defects also play a role in much more common diseases. In all, one in 200 people could be affected by abnormalities to the mitochondria, it is thought.

The new technique involves using a microscopic syringe to remove the nucleus of an egg from an affected women and transplant it into a healthy donor egg - one that does contain defects to its mitochondria.

The egg is then fertilised in a test tube and transplanted back into the original donor.

The resultant baby remains the woman's biological child but without her inherited defects to the mitochondria.

The US scientists, who reported their breakthrough in the journal *Nature*, have successfully carried out the technique in macaque monkeys with no signs of complications.

They believe it is so successful that they could begin human trials if the law allowed it.

Shoukhrat Mitalipov, co-author, said: "Assuming that regulation, funding and other logistics are cleared up, clinical trials could begin immediately."

He said that rare conditions were already known to be caused by the defects but many others may also be effected.

"Mitochondrial DNA mutations are also increasingly implicated in a range of socially recognisable conditions,

including Alzheimer's, Parkinson's and Huntington's diseases, obesity, diabetes and cancer," he said.

"It is still unclear whether these mutations were inherited or acquired during lifetime."

The findings were welcomed as "exciting" and with great potential by the scientific world.

Professor Peter Braude, head of the Department of Women's Health, King's College London, said it was "remarkable".

"This is a meticulously executed series of technically difficult experiments undertaken in the prestigious Oregon primate centre in the USA.

"For the first time, proof of principle has been demonstrated that transmission of mitochondrial disease might be avoided. So far the data are promising."

Douglas Wallace of the University of California, an authority on mitochondria, said the results were exciting and the technique is "potentially very interesting."

Dr Duane Alexander, director of the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, which provided funding for the study, said: "Pending further research, the findings hold the potential of allowing a couple to have a child who is biologically their own, but is free of any conditions associated with defects in maternal mitochondria."

A spokesman for the HFEA said: "If it looks like a likely candidate for an effective treatment then they could change the regulations."

Around 150 known disorders are directly caused by mitochondrial mutations, some of which cause terrible disabilities or shorten life.

The rare conditions include maternally inherited diabetes and deafness, Leber's hereditary optic neuropathy, which causes blindness, Leigh syndrome which attacks the central nervous system and eventually causes death.

Professor Ian Wilmut, head of the Medical Research Council's Centre for Regenerative Medicine at the University of Edinburgh, said: "It is a really exciting achievement.

"This brings us an important step nearer to being able to

prevent the birth of children with a particular type of inherited disease."

(9) Iran Preventing Ozone Deterioration

Iran is the most active country in preventing emissions harmful to the ozone layer. Announcing this, Hassan Asilian, the deputy head of Department of Environment for human resources, said many countries have made efforts to seriously confront the destruction of ozone layer "The ozone layer surrounds Earth's atmosphere and contains relatively high concentrations of ozone (O₃). This layer absorbs 93-99 percent of the sun's high frequency ultraviolet light, which is potentially harmful to life on earth," he said.

Commitments

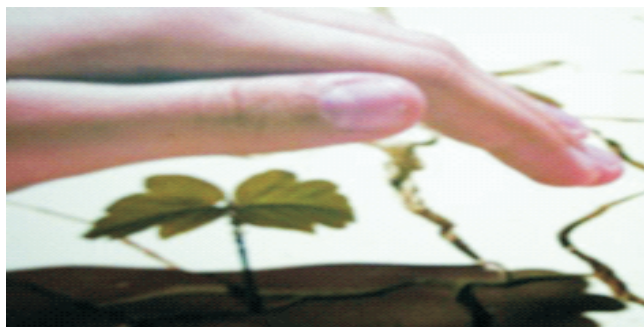
Iran joined the Convention on Protection of Ozone Layer, which was signed by 28 countries in 1985, as well as the Montreal Protocol on materials damaging to the ozone layer in 1989, Fars News Agency reported. "Iran's Parliament also ratified the subsequent amendments to the Vienna Convention and Montreal Protocol," he said.

Asilian pointed out that Iran and 190 other countries have played a key role in identifying and getting rid of materials harmful to the ozone layer over the past 14 years. "Iran fulfils its commitments by utilizing environment-friendly technologies," he said.

Referring to a memorandum of understanding signed between Iran and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), he said UNEP is responsible for cooperation in non-investment section of the MoU framework.

Collecting litter from green areas.

The first workshop on elimination and substitution of sprays harmful to human respiratory systems was held on the





premises of Department of Environment on Sunday. "The main aim of holding the workshop is to familiarize participants with the importance of ozone layer, introduce sprays that are harmful to human respiratory system and promote the use of non-freon technology in factories," he said.

He noted that the shrinking of ozone layer as well as respiratory sprays were studied at the workshop. Asilian thanked the Health Ministry for its cooperation with pharmaceutical companies in stopping the production of freon sprays.

Tsunami

Meanwhile, the Iranian National Center for Oceanography (INCO) said a tsunami will happen sooner or later in the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman.

INCO Director Vahid Chegini said a warning system is needed to detect tsunamis and tornados in order to prevent the loss of life and property.

"A rise in the Caspian Sea level is also anticipated," he said. Chegini expressed concern over the appearance of the red tide in the Persian Gulf and called on Disaster Management Organization to form a working group to reduce marine risks.

Stressing the importance of the country's development plans, he called for paying attention to offshore and onshore energy plans.

Referring to the fact that the world oceans cover about 70 percent of the Earth's surface, Chegini said no efforts should be spared to familiarize the world with Iranian oceanographers.

(10) Illegal Firework Factory Busted

The city police closed an illegal firework factory in east Tehran on Sunday.

Colonel Jafari, an official of the information and security police, told Mehr News Agency that the factory produced 3,000 types of dangerous fireworks.

He said the products bore fake logos and were ready for market distribution in nationwide," he added.

"The factory sold its products through three major wholesalers that marketed near the end of every Iranian year, many people, especially the youth, are badly burned by fireworks.

The night before the last Wednesday of the year is celebrated by Iranians as Chaharshanbeh-Suri, meaning Wednesday Fireworks, which is the Iranian festival of fire. The Iranian New Year occurs on the first day of spring, which coincides with March 21 this year.

(11) Difficult Better!

Try the following experiment with two young children. Hold a toy out just beyond the grasp of one child and watch him/her bounce all over the place trying to reach it. With the second child, just hand the toy over.

Is the first child likely to find the toy more interesting than the other child? When we are pursuing a goal, we need to carefully consider the best ways of achieving it. If we come across something very difficult, how will that affect our ability to meet our goal? University of Chicago psychologists Aparna A. Labroo and Sara Kim investigated the extent that subjective feelings of difficulty are associated with an increased appeal towards a product, Physorg reported.

A group of students were assigned with the goals of feeling good or being kind. Then they were presented with ads for



chocolate (the group who had the goal of feeling good) and a children's charity (the group who had the goal of being kind). The volunteers were shown one of two versions of the ads--a clear, easy to read ad or a blurry, difficult to read ad (the content in both of the ads was identical). The students then completed questionnaires about how much they desired the chocolates and their thoughts about the charity. Volunteers who were shown the charity advertisement were also given the option of donating money to the charity.

The results, described in *Psychological Science*, a journal of the Association for Psychological Science, were very interesting. The students who viewed the ads for chocolate were more likely to desire the chocolates in the blurry ad than the ones in the clear, easy-to-read ad. In addition, the volunteers who watched the charity advertisement donated more money to the charity, but only after seeing the blurry, difficult to read ad.

These findings reveal that when something is difficult, we tend to believe that because it is difficult, it must be important in helping us achieve our goals. These results were surprising because they are counterintuitive to earlier studies which showed that objects are liked more when they are easy to process and understand.

The authors suggest that when we have goals, we need to be careful as we consider just how useful certain actions and products will be in helping us meet those goals--and that difficult is not necessarily better.

(12) Georgian Church Influence Soars

When the head of Georgia's Orthodox Church offered to become godfather to every third child born to a family last year, the response was nothing short of miraculous. Birth rates among Georgian families soared by nearly 20 percent and within a year the patriarch, Ilia II, had presided over enough mass baptisms to become godfather to more than 2,000 children, AFP reported.

Nearly two decades after Georgia split from the staunchly atheist Soviet Union, such is the influence of the country's Orthodox Church, which has undergone a remarkable resurgence to become one of the most trusted and powerful institutions in Georgia.

From politics to diplomacy, even to what's shown on state television, the church has extended its influence into every corner of Georgian society.

Its many supporters hail the church for returning Georgia to its spiritual roots as one of the world's oldest Christian nations and for acting as a unifying force in a country often wracked by divisions.

But some in Georgia are beginning to worry about its growing power and are asking questions about the blurring of lines between church and state, as well as alleged intolerance toward religious minorities.

"Today the Church is the most influential institution in Georgia, and this influence is growing," said Giorgi Khutsishvili, director of the Tbilisi-based International Center for Conflicts and Negotiation.

In a poll conducted by the center last year, 87 percent of Georgians ranked the church as the country's most trusted institution, up from 39 percent in 2003.

Patriarch Ilia II also ranked as the most trusted figure in Georgia, with nearly 95 percent of those polled expressing trust in the Church leader. President Mikheil Saakashvili enjoyed the trust of just 33 percent of those polled. "The Orthodox Church's funding from the state budget has increased enormously and this is illegal as the state budget is collected from taxpayers from all confessions, not just Orthodox Christians," said Beka Mindiasvili, a religion expert with the Georgian ombudsman's office. He said 16 percent of Georgians profess a faith other than Orthodox Christianity and that many feel discriminated against.

Muslims living on Georgia's Black Sea coast have complained of facing obstacles in getting permission to build mosques, for example, and Armenian Christians have been embroiled in numerous disputes with the Georgian Church.

"The church interferes in political decision-making, cultural and educational issues," Mindiasvili said.

Criticism of the church is exceptionally rare. When a reformist deacon, Basil Kobakhidze, raised concerns about intolerance and corruption within the church in 2003, he was promptly expelled from the church hierarchy.

(13) Skeletal Disorders Linked to Furniture



A specialist in behavioral sciences blamed 45 percent of skeletal disorders in students on school desks and chairs. "School furniture is a contributing factor in 45 percent of skeletal disorders found in children," sociologist Majid Abhari said.

"More consideration should be given to equipping schools, since this is where our children spend most of their time." Talking to Mehr News Agency, Abhari stressed that classroom furniture is not up to standard, which results in children suffering from skeletal problems.

According to official figures, more than eight million--an estimated 64 percent--of Iranian students suffer from height and skeletal disorders.

Girls account for over 70 percent of cases of skeletal disorders in the country.

Lack of exercise is another factor blamed for the high incidence of skeletal disorders among girls.

Moreover, urban students, due to lack of space for physical activities, are more likely to suffer from height and skeletal disorders. Commenting on classrooms, the sociologist said



some colors strain the eye and cause psychological disorders when children are exposed to them for too long. He emphasized the importance of making use of warm and bright colors to increase the attractiveness of classes and improve the learning abilities of students. To reduce respiratory diseases caused by overexposure to chalk dust, Abhari stressed the need for using whiteboards in schools.

Abhari called for improving standards of hygiene in schools to curb the spread of infectious diseases among students, especially girls.

(14) Helping children cope with separation and divorce *By Catrina McKechnie*

Adults and children both feel the effects of divorce but helping your children cope is crucial!

Children from divorced families are more likely to have academic problems. They are more likely to be aggressive and get in trouble with school authorities or the police. These children are more likely to have low self-esteem and feel depressed. Children who grow up in divorced families often have more difficulties getting along with siblings, peers, and their parents.

Also, in adolescence, they are more likely to engage in delinquent activities, and to experiment with illegal drugs. In adolescence and young adulthood, they are more likely to have some difficulty forming intimate relationships and establishing independence from their families.

As parents making a transition is extremely important in helping to dissolve possible problems. As parents making



sure not to play the "blame game" and putting your children in the middle of any arguments is also very important.

Your children look to you to help make sense of the world around them.

There are in excess of fifteen million children in the U.S. who have experienced first hand the dissolution of their family by the process of divorce. Divorce unfortunately brings out the worst in people and parenting skills seldom improve.

Even when parents are able to see beyond their own emotional, physical and economic chaos they make mistakes that will impact the relationship with their children for years to come. In their attempts to reassure their children parents lie and obfuscate.

In their attempts to look good in their children's eyes they resort to buy their love, or demeaning the other parent. In their anxiety to spend enough time with their children they curtail the opportunities for them to form meaningful new relationships. In their need to move on with their own lives they may leave behind their children's.

During the process of divorce children suffer multiple losses. Not only do they lose the nuclear family we hold up to them as the ideal, but each loses the parents they knew, as both parents change to accommodate their new life situation. Some children are forced to suffer not only changing relationships with their parents, but abandonment-a loss greater than bereavement, as it carries with it the hope of reconciliation and the fear of not being worthy-enough for that reconciliation to happen.

Some lose their childhood and become burdened with the physical and economic responsibilities of helping a single parent. Some lose their peers, as they become the "buddy," or the "rock" on which their parents' fragile egos rest.

Many children lose their self-esteem as they struggle with their belief they were at fault and their consequent obligation to put everything right again. Their schemes, based on a false premise, seldom succeed, adding to their sense of failure.

No good parent intentionally put's their child in harms way, however often times, parents put themselves in front of their

children. Sometimes to the point of ignoring the children so as not to deal with what ever pain it is they may be feeling. This is the problem. Children have a self centered innocence and automatically assume that something they did caused the problems.

Children are often uprooted from everything it is that they know and love. Children most often loose the close relationships with their parents, regardless of who it is they live with the biggest portion of the time. Many children loose confidence in their parents and feel that if their parents could separate, it's possible that their parents will want to leave them as well.

Logically, as an adult, we know this isn't the case, however children do not. It is very important to encourage your children to express their feelings. No matter how painful these feelings are for you as a parent, they are 100 times more painful for a child. Allow your child to talk about the situation and encourage this. Do NOT shut your children out.

When your children ask you questions; answer honestly and do not lie. Do not substitute gifts for time, love and attention. Your children will remember that and be harmed. Encourage your child to have private, conversations and time with the other parent. Let them know that you trust your ex-spouse and never shield your child from the other.

Don't use your child as a messenger. Your child is just that, a child. Perhaps when the time comes and your child chooses to be a letter carrier this is null and void, but until then it's not fair.

Do NOT ask your child to keep secrets from the other parent. This is putting an unneeded stress on your child and again, this is not fair and not a way to show trust.

Support relationships to both extended families. Your child loves each family equally and it is not fair to encourage one more than the other. This can also cause a rift with you and your child.

Do not expose your children to short term relationships that you may have (i.e. one night stands). Most importantly, do not divorce your children.

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