



The Effect of Task-based Reading Activities on Vocabulary Learning and Retention of Iranian EFL Learners

Bahareh Kamalian

Islamic Azad University, Science and Research Branch, Qom, Iran

Hassan Soleimani

Payame Noor University (PNU), Qom, Iran

Mahmud Safari

Hazrat-e Masoumeh University, Qom, Iran

Task-based reading activities are of crucial value today, and consequently learners' proficiency is more important than their abstract knowledge of language rules. It seems that learners' familiarity with task-based reading activities may increase learners' proficiency. Therefore, this study investigated the effect of task-based reading activities such as text completion and pupil generated questions on vocabulary learning and retention of Iranian intermediate EFL learners. To conduct the study, three intact classes of learners who had already finished *Top Notch Fundamental A* and *B* (Saslow & Ausher, 2011) in previous semesters in an English language institute were selected as the participants of the study. To ensure the homogeneity of the participants, those who got a score between 30-47 from the total score of 60 in OPT were selected as the intermediate level for main participants of the study (N=47). As the data were normally distributed, one way ANOVA and repeated measure ANOVA were employed for the statistical analyses of the study. The findings indicated that using task-based reading activities such as text completion and pupil-generated questions has significant and meaningful impacts on Iranian EFL learners' vocabulary learning and retention. The implementations of the study are discussed.

Keywords: task-based language teaching, task, reading activities, vocabulary retention, vocabulary knowledge

Introduction

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) has recently become a widespread approach in many educational settings (Carless, 2004; Littlewood, 2007; Nunan, 2003). Littlewood (2007) stated that task-based approach has achieved something of a status of a new orthodoxy that teachers in a wide range of settings are being told by curriculum leaders how to teach. Along with this, publishers almost everywhere are describing their new textbooks as task-based. There has also been a steady increase in the number of studies in which tasks are the organizing unit of learning activity (Ellis, 2003, 2009; Wood, 2010). For example, Ellis (2009) believes that TBLT has drawn extensively on research into L2 acquisition. TBLT considers a task as a basic unit of instruction. Besides all the characteristics that a task should have (i.e. meaning, gap, need for learners' resources, etc), it should be clearly distinguished from other types of

activities such as situational grammar exercises. TBLT also entails both design and methodology. Ellis (2009) speculates that decisions should be made regarding the types of tasks we include in a course, the content of the tasks, and the way of sequencing the tasks to facilitate learning. He also states that methodological decisions concern how to structure a task-based lesson and what type of participatory structure to employ.

A task-based lesson, according to Kim and Tracy-Ventura (2013), has three phases: Pre-task, the main task and post-task. There are different modes for performance based on the types of tasks and phases. Tasks can be performed in a whole-class context, in pairs, in groups, or by learners working individually. According to Ellis (2009), the post-task phase provides an opportunity for a repeated performance and encourages reflection on how the task was performed and encourages attention, in particular, to forms that proved problematic to the learners when they performed the task. TBLT has gained popularity in the field since the last decade of the 20th Century and scholars have joined the discussion and increased the amount of analytical studies on the issue (Mellati, et al, 2015; Hei, Strijbos, Sjoer, & Admiraal, 2016). The search for new and more efficient methods is a consequence of our social organization and the requirements for fluid communication (Nahavandi & Mukundan, 2013). Task Based Language Teaching (TBLT) must be placed within this context, at the end of the 20th Century. It is not an isolated or unique methodological event. TBLT can only be fully understood if you contrast it with preceding methods and analyze it within mainstream communicative methodology (Keihaniyan, 2014).

Lyster (2014) specified that a task involves a set of activities, implies a problem which must be solved, activates interaction of various kinds, and pursues a goal. The task is to be performed within a social environment. This definition also clearly refers to tasks performed in the classroom, preferably of a communicative nature. Basically, it is to be assumed that the language used for carrying out the task has to be considered as instrumental. Learners will gain in their linguistic skills through the language practice needed to perform the task, reactivating their own linguistic resources or searching for new ones when the knowledge available is insufficient (Iranmehr, Erfani, & Davari, 2011; Mozgalina, 2015; Nation, 2013; Nunan, 2006; Khademi, Mellati, & Notghi, 2017).

One of the challenges of task-based learning and instruction is that engaging students in a variety of tasks is necessary to promote acquisition. Students have many pedagogical needs which often necessitate a different approach to teaching. Unfortunately, Iranian EFL contexts use a combination of the Grammar-Translation Method (GTM) and the audio-lingual method that overlook learners' needs and interests (Fahim & Samadian, 2011; Mellati & Khademi, 2015). Despite the need for effective vocabulary teaching and learning methods, the employment of outdated teaching techniques is still a key problem in Iranian EFL contexts. As Gu (2003) stated, the traditional approach of lectures provides the necessary foundation of knowledge, but it often limits students' participation in the learning process, whereas vocabulary acquisition is a learner-centered activity which can promote motivation towards new vocabulary acquisition.

As these approaches emphasize content and rote-learning, English vocabulary lessons commonly require teachers to translate lessons into Persian, the learners' native language, before providing them with the meaning of new vocabulary. This one-way learning method essentially means that learners rely heavily on their teachers and do not have the opportunity to be engaged in active learning (Shafaei, 2008). Such ineffective classroom methods naturally do not promote learners' vocabulary development. Outside the classroom, the foreign language context further compounds learners' problem of poor vocabulary development as there is hardly any opportunity for learners to use the language for every day interactions. Even with new ways of learning that are available with the advancement of technology as well as the Internet, there seems to be little improvement in teaching methods. In other words, despite the opportunities, vocabulary teaching strategies remain uninteresting and ineffective, with little focus on context and active learning (Kamyab, 2007). Due to these challenges and also to shed light on the latent layers of TBLT in Iranian ELT contexts, the present study investigated the effect of task-based reading activities on vocabulary learning and retention of Iranian intermediate EFL learners.

Since vocabulary is a crucial part of learner's linguistic repertoire, it is fundamental to consider the

challenges involved in learning and acquiring it. This is essentially because vocabulary knowledge is measured not only in terms of number of words, but also in terms of quality. Therefore, vocabulary acquisition involves several different learning processes, and employing effective vocabulary instruction is fundamental to ensure learners retain new vocabulary knowledge. In other words, the teaching techniques used in the classroom should ensure that learners not only learn, but also retain new words of the target language (Dobinson, 2006). The present study investigated the new teaching method of TBLT in teaching vocabulary to obviate the present problems of Iranian learners outside the classrooms and learn vocabulary more effectively in their classrooms; therefore, the study investigated the effect of task-based reading activities on vocabulary learning and retention of Iranian intermediate EFL learners.

Literature Review

One of the major developments during the 1980s was the replacement of the term communicative activity with the term task (Ajideh, 2003). The other development was different task-based approaches to instruction (Skehan, 2009). Linguists have suggested a wide range of task definitions. The term task has been defined and seen from various perspectives in language teaching literature for years. Some experts such as Prabhu (1987) view language acquisition not as an instant one step procedure but define a task as follows: An activity which required learners to arrive at an outcome from given information through some process of thought, and which allowed teachers to control and regulate that process, was regarded as a “task” (p.46).

In spite of quite a few differences and various approaches, they all share some criteria in common, namely having a goal or objective and being concerned with communicative language use in which the user’s attention is focused on meaning rather than grammatical form (Nunan, 2003). In the final place, the research would like to borrow Nunan’s definition of task as an indication of her agreement with his stance. It is, henceforth, Nunan’s definition of task that this paper uses for the term:

A task is a piece of classroom work that involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is focused on mobilizing their grammatical knowledge in order to express meaning, and in which the intention is to convey meaning rather than to manipulate form. The task should also have a sense of completeness, being able to stand alone as a communicative act in its own right with a beginning, middle and an end. (p. 17)

The concept of TBLT was first introduced by Prabhu (1987) in his *Banglore Project* in which he focused on communication, not on explicit grammar teaching, by engaging learners in doing a ‘task’. The major premise of TBLT is that language acquisition takes place when learners negotiate meaning to perform a particular task. In TBLT, learning is fostered through performing a series of activities as steps towards successful task realization. The focus is away from learning language items in a non-contextualized vacuum and instead using language as a vehicle for authentic, real-world needs. By working towards task realization, the language is used immediately in the real-world context of the learner, making learning authentic. In a TBLT framework the language needed is not pre-selected and given to the learners who then practice it but rather it is drawn from the learners with help from the facilitator, to meet the demands of the activities and task (Ellis, 2003).

In this approach, motivation for communication becomes the primary driving force. It places the emphasis on communicative fluency rather than the hesitancy borne of the pressure in more didactic approaches to produce unflawed utterances. Exposure to the target language should be in a naturally occurring context. This means that, if materials are used, they are not prepared especially for the language classroom, but are selected and adapted for authentic sources (Ellis, 2009). Like many other innovations, task-based teaching entered the language field from the educational mainstream. Studies of teachers at

work demonstrated that, while teacher education programs taught trainees to plan, implement, and evaluate their programs according to the rational model which begins with objectives and moves through tasks to evaluation, the reality was that once they began practicing, teachers tended to focus on pedagogic tasks (Huang, Eslami, & Willson, 2012). This insight from research into teachers professional planning and decision-making processes enhanced the status of tasks as a curriculum planning tool. Task-based learning is also linked to mainstream education by its close relationship with experiential learning. This relationship is evident in the following description of experiential learning: In experiential learning, immediate personal experience is seen as the focal point for learning, giving life, texture, and subjective personal meaning to abstract concepts and at the same time providing a concrete, publicly shared reference point for testing the implications and validity of ideas created during the learning process.

Ideally, task selection should occur with reference both to target task rationale and psycholinguistic principles. The way that this might be achieved is illustrated in the procedure set out in Figure 1, adapted from a recently published task-based course book. The pedagogic task is selected with reference to the real-world or target task of giving information in a job interview. Learners are given a model of the target language behavior, as well as specific practice in manipulating key language items. The actual pedagogic task, a simulation, is also consistent with research on the facilitative effects of classroom interaction (Nakata, 2008). Most tasks take as their point of departure input data of some sort. Such data may be linguistic (that is, reading and listening texts of various sorts) or nonlinguistic (for example, diagrams, photographs, picture sequences). This area is considerably better researched than that of goals. A key question underlying research on input tasks is: what factors are implicated in the difficulty of aural and written texts? In a large-scale investigation of the listening comprehension of secondary students, Javanbakht (2011) found that two factors significantly affected the difficulty of reading texts. The first factor related to the number of elements in the text and the ease and difficulty of distinguishing between them. The second significant factor was the text type. All other things being equal, descriptions were easier than instructions, which were easier than stories. Arguments or opinion-expressing texts containing abstract concepts and relationships were the most difficult.

In the area of reading comprehension, Alavi and Keyvanshekouh (2012) found that similar elements were implicated in the difficulty of school texts for secondary level students. They looked at, among other things, the difficulty of different types of textual relationships as well as at the effect of content familiarity. They found that logical relationships of the type marked by conjunctions were more difficult than referential and lexical relationships. They also found that content familiarity was more significant than grammatical complexity in determining the difficulty of reading texts. The bulk of task-based research has focused on the activities or procedures which learners carry out in relation to the input data. The key question here has been: what tasks seem to be most helpful in facilitating second language acquisition? In the first of a series of investigations into learner-learner interaction, Ellis (2009) found that two-way tasks (in which all students in a group discussion had unique information to contribute) stimulated significantly more modified interactions than one-way tasks (that is, in which one member of the group possessed all the relevant information). Similarly, Gholami (2011) found that required information-exchange tasks generated significantly more modified interaction than tasks in which the exchange of information was optional.

Vocabulary Learning

Vocabulary learning is one of the significant components of language learning. Hassan Abadi (2003) stated that it is impossible to learn a language without learning its vocabulary and vocabulary learning plays a pivotal role in any language teaching context. Derakhshan and Khodabakhshzadeh (2011) in their review of vocabulary learning demonstrated that one of the main obstacles in vocabulary learning is the number of words needed to acquire for fluency in L2 and that many teachers may not know how to support their learners to overcome that obstacle. Fahim and Vaezi (2011) confirmed that knowledge of lexical collocations is a fundamental component of language proficiency which makes a positive

contribution to the ways learners listen, speak, read and write. Leech (2000) stated that comparisons of both written and spoken corpora demonstrate that collocations are even more frequent in spoken language.

Learning the vocabulary of a language and its appropriate use is one of the most important aspects of learning that language. In other words, learning a language is not possible without learning its vocabulary. In fact, vocabulary learning is at the center of language learning, so, great attention should be paid to the issues related to vocabulary teaching and learning (Hasan Abadi, 2003). In contrast to grammar, vocabulary has been neglected in teaching. Traditionally, vocabulary has been taught through other skills but grammar has been taught as a separate module (McDonough & Chaikitmongkol, 2007). Also, one of the main obstacles that L2 learners face with in vocabulary learning is the number of words they need to acquire in order to be fluent in L2. Teachers may understand this need but may not know how to support their students in this endeavor. Therefore, there is a need for research that helps to recognize learning tasks that provide opportunities for L2 vocabulary learning (Derakhshan & Khodabakhshzadeh, 2011). This particular study investigated the effect of task-based reading activities on vocabulary learning and retention of Iranian intermediate EFL learners. Recently, task-based language teaching has gained special attention in every language teaching context and the Iranian context is not an exception. Like many other fields of study, Iranian scholars have focused on the hot topics of the day and have conducted a wealth of empirical research across various fields of study. Nahavandi (2011) investigated the effect of task-based activities on EFL learners' reading comprehension and suggested that reading comprehension can be improved by using TBLT, especially information-gap, opinion-gap, reasoning-gap and problem-solving tasks, when students have part of the information that another student does not have, they try to fill the gaps of their understanding by sharing their ideas and to solve the problems they face in answering comprehension questions. Nahavandi and Mukundan (2013) focused on task-based language teaching and investigated the effect of task-based cycle in reading comprehension classes. The results of the study showed that applying the elements of task-based cycle affected students' reading comprehension positively. Keihaniyan (2014) investigated the effect of post-reading questions on vocabulary learning. The results indicated that there is a high correlation with reading comprehension and incidental vocabulary learning. Iranmehr, Erfani, and Davari (2011) investigated integrating task-based instruction as an alternative approach in teaching reading comprehension in English for special purposes. The study involved 75 and 65 students majoring chemistry at Damghan University and Shahrood University of Technology, respectively. The researchers found that task-based instruction could have a significant effect on improving the ESP reading comprehension of Iranian university students. This quasi-experimental study aims to shed light on the effect of task-based reading activities such as text completion and pupil generated questions on vocabulary learning and retention of Iranian intermediate EFL learners by addressing the following questions:

- RQ1:** Is there any statistically significant difference between the effect of using task-based reading activities and conventional reading activities such as text completion and pupil-generated questions tasks on vocabulary learning of Iranian intermediate EFL learners?
- RQ2:** Is there any statistically significant difference between immediate uptake and long term vocabulary recall in task-based reading activities and conventional reading activities by Iranian intermediate EFL learners?

Methodology

Participants

In order to adequately answer the research questions of the current study, three intact classes of intermediate students who had already finished *Top Notch Fundamental A* and *B* (Saslow & Ausher, 2011) in previous semesters in the Takamol English language institute in Qom, Iran were selected as

participants of the study. All three intact classes were studying *Top Notch 1A* for the new semester. The participants were both male and female and Iranian with Farsi as their L1 and their mean age was 23. All of them had already studied English as a compulsory subject in their High School and they were studying different fields in university. In order to classify them in almost homogenized groups and elicit the required number of participants for the purpose of the study, the researchers administered the Oxford Placement Test (OPT) to determine students' levels of proficiency in English. After scoring the papers, those who scored one standard deviation above and below the mean (i.e., $\text{mean} \pm 1$) were selected for the main part of the study. To ensure the homogeneity of the participants, those with scores in the range of 30-47 from the total score of 60 on the OPT were selected as the intermediate level for main participants of the study. In other words, 47 learners got scores between 30-47; therefore, the total number of participants in the main study was 47 ($N=47$). And those 13 students with scores below 30 and above 47 were excluded from the study because they were regarded as heterogeneous.

Materials and Instruments

The researchers employed the following materials and instruments to conduct the study.

Oxford Placement Test (OPT): Based on the criterion of the institutes' placement test, all of the students were at an intermediate level of proficiency. But in order to have a representative sample of the population under study the OPT was administered as the standard of homogeneity of the learners. This test contains two sections: grammar and vocabulary. The grammar section has two subcategories: 15 cloze test items and 10 multiple-choice items. The vocabulary section also has the same subcategories: 25 multiple-choice items and 10 cloze test items. According to the standards of the OPT, those learners whose scores are between 0-29 are counted as elementary level (level A, according to the council of Europe), those scoring between 30-47 are counted as intermediate level (level B, according to the council of Europe) and the participants scoring between 48-60 are counted as advanced level (level C, according to council of Europe). The researchers selected those learners whose scores were from 30 to 47 as intermediate learners for the purpose of this study. The results of the test served to identify the present level of students in English and the researchers decided to choose the participants whose score range was one standard deviation above and below the mean (i.e., $\text{mean} \pm 1$). The rationale behind such application was to make sure that the EFL learners of all three intact groups were all at intermediate level of language proficiency according to the standards of the OPT and therefore could serve the purpose of the researchers.

Vocabulary pre-test: Before the instructional treatment started, the participants were pre-tested in order to ensure that all three groups were equivalent in terms of their knowledge of vocabulary prior to the study. The researchers developed a vocabulary test from the *Select Reading Textbook* (intermediate) by Lee and Gundersen (2011). This test evaluated vocabulary knowledge of the participants. The test also determined whether the participants knew the new words or not. This test included 40 multiple-choice vocabulary items for students to answer in 45 minutes. The test was piloted with 20 learners of similar test-takers at the beginning of the study. Cronbach's Alpha formula for the multiple choice items was employed and the results showed a reliability index of .75 ($r = .75$).

Vocabulary achievement post-test: A vocabulary achievement post-test was developed from *Select Reading Textbook* (intermediate) by the researchers to determine the learners' vocabulary achievements at the end of the research and after the treatment. This course-based test contained 40 vocabulary multiple choice items with words chosen from the lessons that worked during the course and based on subject matters. This test was piloted with 20 learners of similar test-takers. Cronbach's Alpha formula for multiple choice items was employed and the results showed a reliability index of .74 ($r = .74$).

Vocabulary delay post-test: A delayed vocabulary delay post-test was developed by the researchers and administered to check learners' retention of new vocabulary items after one month. This test was parallel to the post-test in format and number of items. Cronbach's Alpha formula for the multiple choice items was employed and the results showed a reliability index of .77 ($r = .77$).

Procedures

The whole study was conducted within 1 month (8 sessions). During the eight-session treatment period, the assigned tasks were taught and practiced in each group (reading tasks such as text completion and pupil-generated questions).

Experimental group 1: Eight reading passages were selected randomly from the *Select Reading Textbook (intermediate)*, which was designed for participants (chapters 2, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, and 13). In the task-based reading classes, the teachers employed task-based reading activities such as text completion and pupil-generated questions. It should be noticed that teachers taught learners how to do these tasks in the classroom in the first session of the study. The text completion task was employed in experimental group one. The objective of this task was to practice how to answer sentence completion tasks. Frequently in the reading, learners were asked to complete a sentence. In this type of task, learners were given sentences from the reading with a gap in them. They had to fill it in with words taken directly from the reading. Teachers could choose the exact words or paraphrase answers.

Experimental group 2: The pupil generated task was employed in experimental group 2. Student generated questions are intended to allow students to display a deeper understanding of the objectives and develop independent learners. When students generate their own questions about a story, text, problem, or topic, it arouses student interest and gives them a purpose for reading. Student generated questions allow students to demonstrate understanding of the content, clarify content, make connections to other content, and reflect on learning (Nunan, 2006). Students generated questions about the reading that was taught in the class during the lesson and answered them at the end. Students could bring questions to the board, or stick them to their desks. The students had freedom to use their creativity in their tasks. The researchers asked the subjects to bring the needed tools for doing the task of the next session. In the next session, the first half hour was used for reviewing the new words of the previous session and answering the questions. Then, the researchers introduced the new topic and gave students clear instructions on what they needed to do to perform the task. The teacher helped the students recall some vocabulary that could be useful for the task. The rest of the time was used for doing the task. The students completed the task individually or in pairs. Meanwhile, the teacher was available for the students to ask questions to clear up any language problem they had. In all the stages of performing the research, the researchers tried to keep the same time, topic and vocabulary in both classes.

Control group: In conventional reading class, the students worked on some readings from the same book (*Select Reading Textbook, intermediate* by Lee & Gundersen, 2011) and some new words. They received conventional reading activities such as finding synonyms for new vocabulary and gave the dictionary definition of every word.

Prior to the main study, the vocabulary pre-test, the vocabulary achievement test, and the vocabulary delay post-test were piloted on 20 EFL students of similar age and level of English language proficiency as those of the present study. Sixty students were selected as the research sample. In order to homogenize the participants in terms of their language proficiency, all of them took the Oxford Placement Test (Solution Placement Test, Edwards, 2007) as a placement test. Among the original 60, 47 students were selected to participate in the study. The researchers administered the pre-test (vocabulary test) in order to measure EFL learners' vocabulary knowledge before the study and to make sure that the participants were

not familiar with the new vocabulary. It also ensured that the three groups were at the same level and belonged to the same population in terms of vocabulary skill. The next step was the administration of the vocabulary achievement test. The researchers administered this test to determine the participants' vocabulary knowledge after the treatment. The vocabulary achievement post-test was developed from *Select Reading Textbook (intermediate)* by the researchers. This course-based test contained 40 vocabulary multiple choice items. Finally, the delayed vocabulary post-test was administered to check learners' retention of new vocabulary items after one month. For this test, the experimental groups completed reading tasks such as text completion and pupil-generated questions. This test was similar to the post-test in format and number of items.

The quantitative data for the current study were the learners' responses to the pre-test, post-test, and delayed post-test. These responses were entered into a data file and analyzed statistically using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), version 18. Preliminary statistical analyses were carried out on the data for choosing appropriate statistical procedure and better understanding the characteristics of them in the study. Data were collected and analyzed through descriptive and inferential statistics. As the data were normally distributed one way ANOVA and repeated measure ANOVA were employed for the statistical analyses of the study.

Results and Discussions

TABLE 1
Descriptive Statistics for Pre-test Scores

Groups		Statistic	Std. Error
Experimental 1	Mean	25.24	1.256
	Variance	26.816	
	Std. Deviation	5.178	
Pretest Experimental 2	Mean	25.87	1.238
	Variance	22.981	
	Std. Deviation	4.794	
Control	Mean	24.20	1.231
	Variance	22.743	
	Std. Deviation	4.769	

As the results of Table 1 show, there is not a significance difference among the mean values of the three groups (Ex 1 Mean= 25.15, Ex 2 Mean= 25.85, Con Mean= 24). The results also demonstrate that there are no outliers in the three groups, as there is no big difference among means and their 5% Trimmed Means.

TABLE 2
Results of ANOVA for Pre-test

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	21.276	2	10.638	.438	.648
Within Groups	1069.192	44	24.300		
Total	1090.468	46			

To ensure true homogeneity of the participants' vocabulary knowledge (N=47), ANOVA was conducted. According to the results of Table 2, the *p* value is less than .5 (*p*= .648) which shows there were no significant difference in vocabulary knowledge among the three groups on the outset of the study. To find the differences in ability of the participants' vocabulary knowledge and the effect of treatment,

ANOVA was conducted.

TABLE 3
Descriptive Statistics for Post-test Scores

Groups		Statistic	Std. Error
Experimental 1	Mean	27.12	1.021
	Variance	17.735	
	Std. Deviation	4.211	
Experimental 2	Mean	27.67	1.054
	Variance	16.667	
	Std. Deviation	4.082	
Control	Mean	22.73	.997
	Variance	14.924	
	Std. Deviation	3.863	

As the results of Table 3 show, there is approximately a substantial difference among the mean values of Ex 1 and Ex 2 groups and control group (Ex 1 Mean=27.19, Ex 2 Mean=27.52, and Con Mean=22.59).

TABLE 4
Results of ANOVA for Post-test

	Sum of Squares	<i>df</i>	Mean Square	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Between Groups	222.437	2	111.218	6.740	.003
Within Groups	726.031	44	16.501		
Total	948.468	46			

The results of the ANOVA test (Table 4) show that the difference among the three groups was statistically significant. The *p* value ($p=.003$) was considerably below the critical value; therefore, the differences in vocabulary knowledge was significant among three groups. To check the between group differences Post-hoc comparison was conducted.

A one-way between-groups analysis of variance was conducted to explore the impacts of task-based reading activities on EFL learners' vocabulary learning, as measured by the vocabulary post-test. There was a statistically significant difference at the $p<.05$ level in vocabulary test scores for the three groups: $F(2, 44)=6.740, p=.003$. Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for Ex 1 group ($M=27.12, SD=4.211$) was significantly different from the control group ($M=22.73, SD=3.863$). Ex 2 group ($M=27.67, SD=4.082$) did not differ significantly from Ex 1 group; however, it was significantly different from the control group. To check the effect of treatment after one month, the researchers conducted ANOVA for the delayed post-test.

TABLE 5
Results of Post-hoc Comparisons for Post-test

Multiple Comparisons					
	(I) Groups	(J) Groups	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Tukey HSD	Experimental 1	Experimental 2	-.549	1.439	.923
		Control	4.384*	1.439	.011
	Experimental 2	Experimental 1	.549	1.439	.923
		Control	4.933*	1.483	.005
	Control	Experimental 1	-4.384*	1.439	.011
		Experimental 2	-4.933*	1.483	.005

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

TABLE 6
Descriptive Statistics for Delayed Post-test

Delayed Posttest				
	N	Mean	SD	Sig.
Experimental 1	17	28.82	3.127	.758
Experimental 2	15	29.53	3.357	.867
Control	15	24.40	3.269	.844
Total	47	27.64	3.898	.569

As the results in Table 6 show, mean and standard deviation of the three groups are (M=28.72, SD=3.127) for Ex 1 group and (M=29.53, SD=3.357) for Ex 2 group, and (M=24.40, SD=3.269) for control group respectively.

TABLE 7
Results of ANOVA for Delayed Post-test

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	235.047	2	117.524	11.149	.000
Within Groups	463.804	44	10.541		
Total	698.851	46			

A one-way between-groups analysis of variance was conducted to explore the impacts of task-based reading activities on EFL learners' vocabulary retention, as measured by the vocabulary test (delayed post-test). There were statistically significant differences at the $p < .05$ level in vocabulary test scores among the three groups: $F(2, 44) = 11.149, p = .000$. To check the effect of treatment one-month follow-up or the effect of time on vocabulary retention, repeated measure ANOVA was calculated.

TABLE 8
The Results of Multivariate Tests

	Effect	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Test	Wilks' Lambda	.517	21.035 ^a	2.000	45.000	.000	.483

a. Exact statistic

b. Design: Intercept

Within Subjects Design: Test

The results of Table 8 show that the value for Wilks' Lambda is .517, with a probability value of .000 (which really means $p < .0005$). The p value is less than .05; therefore, we can conclude that there is a statistically significant effect for time. This suggests that there was a change in scores across the three different time periods. The effect size of this result is depicted in Partial Eta Squared. The obtained value in this study is .483 which suggests a moderate effect size. To check the differences between each group in three times test administration, pairwise comparison was conducted.

TABLE 9
The Results of Pairwise Comparisons

Test	(J) Test	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig. ^a	
1	dimension2	2	-.787	.376	.126
		3	-2.532*	.486	.000
dimension1	2	1	.787	.376	.126
		3	-1.745*	.273	.000
3	dimension2	1	2.532*	.486	.000
		2	1.745*	.273	.000

Based on estimated marginal means

a. Adjustment for multiple comparisons: Bonferroni.

*. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

The results of Table 9 show which groups or set of scores (in this case, pre-test, post-test, and delayed post-test) differ from one another. The result of the delayed post-test was significantly different from pre-test and post-test. In sum, a one-way repeated measures ANOVA was conducted to compare scores on the vocabulary retention with the pre-test (before treatment), post-test (after the course), and delayed post-test (one-month follow-up). The results demonstrate that there was a significant effect for time, Wilks' Lambda=.517, $F(2, 45)=21.035$, $p < .0005$, multivariate partial eta squared=.483.

To test the first research question, the researchers conducted a one-way between-groups analysis of variance to explore the impacts of task-based reading activities such as text completion and pupil generated questions on EFL learners' vocabulary learning, as measured by the vocabulary test. The results indicated that task-based reading activities have positive and significant impacts on vocabulary learning. To test the second research question, the researchers administered a delayed post-test one month after the post-test. Repeated measure ANOVA was conducted to determine the effect of time on vocabulary retention. The results demonstrated that there is a statistically significant effect for time. This suggests that there was a change in scores across the three different time periods. The effect size of this result is depicted in Partial Eta Squared which suggested a moderate effect size.

The findings are consistent with the findings of Nahavandi (2011) who stated that reading comprehension can be improved by using TBLT, especially information-gap, opinion-gap, reasoning-gap and problem-solving tasks, in which students have part of the information that another student does not have. They also confirm Chalak's (2015) findings that student-to-student interaction while performing tasks provided opportunities for them to talk about vocabulary and monitor the language they used. Task-Based Instruction (TBI) improved their interaction skills and maximized their use of TL. During the tasks, learners exchanged their ideas and negotiated to learn their peers' ideas, attitudes, or beliefs on certain issues, and became familiar with a lot of words related to the topic. Of course, learners had the chance to receive feedback from their teacher and also their classmates.

The findings of the present study are consistent with Kumaravadivelu (2001) who states TBLT empowers teachers with the knowledge, skill, attitude, and autonomy necessary to devise for themselves a systematic, coherent, and relevant alternative method that is informed by the pedagogic parameters of particularity, practicality, and possibility. They will be able to generate locally grounded, need-based micro-strategies, ultimately developing the capacity to theorize from their practice and practice what they theorize. Practicing and prospective teachers will rise up to the challenge if given an appropriate

framework that strikes a balance between giving teachers the guidance they need and want, and the independence they deserve and desire. As Brown (2000) illustrates, different social contexts contribute to the emergence of various communicative competences and functions in an L2 speech community, thereby influencing L2 learning and use in significantly different ways. In these contexts, the target language plays a role that is complementary or supplementary to the local or regional language. The competences and functions invariably determine the nature and quality of input that is available to the learner. Most often, learners are not exposed to the full range of their L2 in all its complexity that one would expect in a context where it is used as the primary vehicle of communication.

Conclusion

The present study investigated the difference between using task-based reading activities and conventional reading activities in vocabulary learning and retention of Iranian intermediate EFL learners. The findings indicated that using task-based reading activities such as text completion and pupil-generated questions had significant and meaningful impact on Iranian EFL vocabulary learning and retention. The findings of the present study indicated that reading comprehension can be improved by using Task-Based Instruction, especially information-gap, opinion-gap, reasoning-gap and problem-solving tasks. It also shows there is a high correlation with TBI and incidental vocabulary learning, and that TBI could have significant effect on improving the vocabulary knowledge of Iranian university students that are similar with the particular findings of this study. The results of the study also revealed that the participants in TBI, who were asked to do the tasks, improved their performance. The student-to-student interaction while performing the tasks provided opportunities for them to talk about vocabulary and monitor the language they used. TBI improved their interaction skills while they did tasks in the classroom.

Clearly, the role of the teacher is crucial for the success of any post-method pedagogy. The macro-strategic framework seeks to transform classroom practitioners into strategic teachers and strategic researchers. As strategic teachers, they spend time and effort reflecting on the processes of learning and teaching; stretching their knowledge, skill and attitude to stay informed and involved; exploring and extending macro-strategies to meet the challenges of changing contexts of teaching; designing appropriate micro-strategies to maximize learning potential in the classroom; and monitoring their ability to react to a myriad of situations in meaningful ways.

Generally speaking, based on the results of this research, the following pedagogical implications might be presented. First, task-based language teaching, which focuses on the ability to perform a task or an activity and not on the explicit teaching of grammatical rules or on vocabulary memorization and has attracted the attention of many researchers, language instructors and syllabus designers, can be an innovative alternative for university classrooms in the Iranian context. Second, the researchers' observations revealed that the procedures used in the experimental group triggered the students to participate more actively in discussions and devoted more attention and interest to the topic.

Further research can be conducted using task-based instruction as assessment tools as a result of the instruction and design and problem-solving activities in education classrooms. A method for examining the students' understanding of a lesson can be used by applying TIA. Educators may use experiences of experts to help guide in instruction and lessons. The task-based activities of experienced teachers may be compared to those of novice teachers' task-base. Task-based activities should not be utilized as a method of scoring or grading, but instead as a way to evaluate student cognition. Future research could be conducted on the usage of task-based activities in education classrooms to help students develop propositional statements when constructing new tasks, thus to further help assess the students conceptual knowledge of the domain of knowledge and the representation of technical knowledge. The duplication of this research study with another grade level, such as middle school or high school, would help to confirm the evidence found in this study. In addition, a duplication of this study might reveal evidence that was

not obtained in this study.

Acknowledgements

This paper is based on my thesis. The research was supported by the Department of English, Islamic Azad University, Science and Research Branch, Qom, Iran.

The Authors

Bahareh Kamalian (corresponding author) is a M.A. student of Department of English, Islamic Azad University, Science and Research Branch, Qom, Iran.

Department of English, Islamic Azad University, Science and Research Branch, Qom, Iran
PO box 37185-364, Pardisan, Qom, Iran
Mobile: + 989122517918
Email: baharaehkamalian@gmail.com

Hassan Soleimani is an associate professor at the Department of Applied Linguistics, Payame Noor University (PNU), Qom, Iran.

Email: arshia.soleimani@gmail.com

Mahmood Safari is an assistant professor at the English Translation Department, Hazrat-e Masoumeh University, Qom, Iran. His fields of interest include corpus linguistics, vocabulary, grammar and interlanguage pragmatics. He has published some articles in these areas

Email: mahmoodsafari@gmail.com

References

- Ajideh, P. (2003). Schema theory-based pre-reading tasks: A neglected essential in the ESL reading class. *The Reading Matrix*, 3(1), 1-14.
- Alavi, S., & Keyvanshekouh, A. (2012). Using the Moodle reader as an extensive reading tool and its effect on Iranian EFL students' incidental vocabulary learning. *English Language Teaching*, 5(6), 135-145.
- Brown, H. D. (2000). *Principles of language learning and teaching*. White Plains, NY: Addison Wesley Longman, Inc.
- Carless, D. (2004). Issues in teachers' reinterpretation of a task-based innovation in primary schools. *TESOL Quarterly*, 38(4), 639-662.
- Chalak, A. (2015). The effect of task-based instruction on reading comprehension of Iranian EFL learners. *Applied Research on English Language*, 4(1), 19-29.
- Derakhshan, A., & Khodabakhshzadeh, H. (2011). Why CALL why not MALL: An in-depth review of text-message vocabulary learning. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 1(9), 1150-1159. doi:10.4304/tpls.1.9.1150-1159
- Dobinson, T. (2006). *Investigating why learners recall certain items of vocabulary from lessons*. Paper presented at the EA Education Conference.
- Ellis, R. (2003). *Task-based language learning and teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ellis, R. (2009). The differential effects of three types of task planning on the fluency, complexity, and accuracy in L2 oral production. *Applied Linguistics*, 30(4), 474-509.

- Fahim, M., & Samadian, T. (2011). Sensory style preference of EFL students in Iran. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 1(6), 644-65. doi:10.4304/tpls.1.6.644-651
- Fahim, M., & Vaezi, R. (2011). Investigating the effect of visually-enhanced input on the acquisition of lexical collocations by Iranian Intermediate EFL Learners: A case of verb-noun lexical collocations. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 2(3), 552-560. doi:10.4304/jltr.2.3.552-560
- Gholami, R. (2011). Gender differences in task-based performance of EFL students. IEEE Colloquium on Humanities, Science and Engineering Research, Penang, Malaysia.
- Gu, P. Y. (2003). Vocabulary learning in second language: Person, task, context and strategies. *TESL-EJ*, 7(2). Retrieved 1 September, 2011, from <http://writing.berkeley.edu/TESL-EJ/ej26/a4.html>
- Hassan Abadi, S. (2003). A study of the learning of English lexical and grammatical collocations by Iranian EFL learners. *Social Sciences and Cultural Studies*, 4, 45-59.
- Hei, M., Strijbos, J. V., Sjoer, E., & Admiraal, V. (2016). Thematic review of approaches to design group learning activities in higher education: The development of a comprehensive framework. *Educational Research Review*, 18, 33-45. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.edurev.2016.01.001>
- Huang, S., Eslami, Z., & Willson, V. (2012). The effects of task involvement load on L2 incidental vocabulary learning: A meta-analytic study. *The Modern Language Journal*, 96(4), 544-557. doi: 10.1111/j.1540-4781.2012.01394.x
- Iranmehr, A., Erfani, S. M., & Davari, H. (2011). Integrating task-based instruction as an alternative approach in teaching reading comprehension in English for special purposes: An action research. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 1(2), 142-148. doi:10.4304/tpls.1.2.142-148
- Javanbakht, Z. O. (2011). The impact of tasks on male Iranian elementary EFL learners' incidental vocabulary learning. *Language Education in Asia*, 2(1), 28-42.
- Kamyab, S. (2007). An overview of the education system of Islamic Republic of Iran. 8 February, 2014, from http://handouts.aacrao.org/am07/finished/F0345p_S_Kamyab.pdf
- Keihaniyan, M. (2014). The effect of post-reading questions on vocabulary learning. *International Journal of Management and Humanity Sciences*, 3(1), 1197-1202. Available online at <http://www.ijmhsjournal.com>
- Khademi, M., Mellati, M., & Notghi, S. M. (2017). The impacts of post-task activities on Iranian EFL learners' reading achievements. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 8(1), 106-114. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.17507/jltr.0801.13>
- Kim, Y., & Tracy-Ventura, N. (2013). The role of task repetition in L2 performance development: What needs to be repeated during task-based interaction? *System*, 41, 829-840. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2013.08.005>
- Kumaravadivelu, B. (2001). Toward a postmethod pedagogy. *TESOL Quarterly*, 35(4), 537-560.
- Lee & Gunderson, (2011). *Select reading: Intermediate*. (2nd Edition), Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Leech, L. (2000). Grammars of spoken English: New outcomes of corpus-oriented research. *Language Learning*, 50, 675-724.
- Littlewood, W. (2007). Communicative and task-based language teaching in East Asian classrooms. *Language Teaching*, 40(3), 243-249.
- Lyster, R. (2014). Using form-focused tasks to integrate language across the immersion curriculum. *System*, 43, 1-10. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2014.09.022>
- McDonough, K., & Chaikitmongkol, V. (2007). Teachers' and learners' reactions to a task-based EFL course in Thailand. *TESOL Quarterly*, 41(1), 107-132.
- Mellati, M. & Khademi, M. (2015). The impacts of distance interactivity on learners' achievements in online mobile language learning: social software and participatory learning. *International Journal of Web-Based Learning and Teaching Technologies*, 10(3), 19-35. DOI: 10.4018/ijwltt.2015070102
- Mellati, M., Zangoei, A., & Khademi, M. (2015). Technology integration: EFL learners' level of anxiety and their performance in writing tests. *International Journal of Social Sciences & Education*, 5(2),

240-252.

- Mozgalina, A. (2015). More or less choice? The influence of choice on task motivation and task engagement. *System*, 49, 120-132. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2015.01.004>
- Nahavandi, N. (2011). The effect of task-based activities on EFL learners' reading comprehension. *Advances in Language and Literacy Studies*, 2(1), 56-68. doi:10.7575/aiac.all.v.2n.1p.56
- Nahavandi, N., & Mukundan, J. (2013). Task-based cycle in reading comprehension classes. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics & English Literature*, 2(2), 107-113. doi:10.7575/aiac.ijalel.v.2n.2p.107
- Nakata, T. (2008). English vocabulary learning with word lists, word cards and computers: Implications from cognitive psychology research for optimal space learning. *ReCALL*, 20(1), 2-30.
- Nation, P. (2013). Designing reading tasks to maximize vocabulary learning. *Applied Research on English Language*, 3(1), 1-8.
- Nunan, D. (2003). The impact of English as a global language on educational policies and practices in the Asian-Pacific region. *TESOL QUARTERLY*, 37(4), 589-613.
- Nunan, D. (2006). Task-based language teaching in the Asia context: Defining 'task'. *Asian EFL Journal*, 8(3), 12-18.
- Prabhu, N. S. (1987). *Second language pedagogy*. Oxford University Press.
- Saslow, J., & Ausher, A. (2011). *Top notch fundamental*. NY: Pearson Education.
- Skehan P. (2009). A framework for the implementation of task-based instruction. In Van den Branden, K., Bygate M., & Norris J. (Eds.), *Task based language teaching: A reader*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins
- Shafaei, A. (2008). *Review of English teaching methodologies: Obstacles of implementing new methods in Iran*. Paper presented at the Global Practices of Language Teaching: Proceedings of the 2008 International Online Language Conference (IOLC 2008).
- Wood, D. (2010). *Formulaic language and second language speech fluency*. London: Continuum International Publishing Group.