

## The Effect of TV Commercials on Iranian EFL Learners' L2 Vocabulary Recall

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### Abstract

Without an adequate understanding of words language users cannot understand others or convey their own ideas. It gives us the ability to express our needs in desired manner. Since the inherent role of vocabulary teaching strategies cannot be denied the present study aimed at investigating the effect of ads on L2 vocabulary learning. The design of the study was quasi-experimental and carried out on sixty female EFL learners at elementary level. Cambridge Mover Test was run before the program in order to assure the level of the participants. Afterwards, one pretest on their word-knowledge was administered. When the program was finished one posttest was run on their vocabulary knowledge in order to measure the efficiency of ads. The results of the study revealed that ads had a significant effect on word-acquisition. This might be due to the authenticity of the ads that help learners get new words in context and with real aims.

**Keywords:** advertisement, Iranian EFL learners, vocabulary learning, traditional instruction

### INTRODUCTION

"Vocabulary learning is referred to as learning a collection or the total stock of words in a language that are used in particular contexts" (Siriwan, 2007, p. 19). Along with Hubbard (1983) vocabulary can be characterized as a powerful carrier of meaning. The most fundamental point in lexis development is how words are learned. The point might be the issues relating to direct/indirect vocabulary teaching. It is sometimes accepted that exposing learners to a plenty of input is of great importance in their word learning. Based on this view vocabulary learning through listening and reading is very effective than that of direct manner. But obviously there are occasions that there is a strong need to teach directly (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2002). Even if some learners may come to a necessary understanding of a word following one exposure, all students need extra encounters in different situations to make sure that they expand affluent "orthographic, phonological, and semantic knowledge" of the word (Perfetti & Hart, 2002). 'Exposure

to real language and its use in its own community' is very crucial in the process of vocabulary learning. Actually according to Rogers and Medley (1988) exposure to such a material means making use of authentic materials. He also adds to her claims on authenticity as 'appropriate' and 'quality' in terms of goals, objectives, learner needs and interest and 'natural' in terms of real life and meaningful communication (p. 467). Regarding to the mentioned points relating to authentic materials the intervention of the current study is very effective one for vocabulary teaching, since ads are prepared in real contexts for real needs of the native users, no for educational purposes.

## REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

### Vocabulary

It is certain that Vocabulary is the key means of learning a language. Words are bases of languages. Vocabulary is a fundamental element of language use. The striking effect of vocabulary knowledge on second or foreign language learning has been underscored recently (Zahedi & Abdi, 2012). It can be stated that poor vocabulary repertoire is deemed as a kind of deficiency with the intention of recognizing what someone hears and reads and also in order to communicate efficiently with other people vocabulary size is of serious role (Shoebottom, 2013). Wilkins (1972) on the significance of vocabulary knowledge in communication states "'without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed" (as cited in Schmitt, 2010, p.3).

On the value of vocabulary, Krashen (1989) stated that "a large vocabulary is of course, essential for mastery language"(as cited in Schmitt 2010, p.4). As Schmitt (2010) noted, "learners carry around dictionaries and not grammar books" (p. 4). Speaking appears to the majority of people as naturally as breathing. On various times our words are produced without mindful thought. In effect we hardly ever stop and think about what we are uttering. Thousands of words pour of our mouths every day as our considerations, beliefs, judgments and ideas are unreservedly expressed. Over and over again, we experience serious difficulties in second/foreign language contexts when we don't have adequate amount of words in our mental dictionaries.

Consistent with Richards (1976) and Nation (1990) depth of knowledge means how well items are taught. The receptive-productive aspect is about the receptive skills of reading and listening and the productive skills of writing and speaking. Language researchers and language teaching professionals need to verify what knowing a word means, and also deem what type of knowledge learners are to gain through meticulous class activities (as cited in Tsubaki, 2012). According to Blachowicz (2007) there are principles for an efficient vocabulary tuition one of which is that: "vocabulary learning takes place when students are impressed in words", students learn words more effectively when they are read to and when teacher engages them in conversations. Secondly "vocabulary learning takes place when students are in dynamic way of determining ways in which words are linked to practices and to one another", research demonstrates that when learners can make a net of sense for a new word in her/his

own way, she/he would learn better, that is when they are active in learning process they are so successful.

Third one is that “vocabulary learning takes place when students personalize word learning”. When learners use their past experiences for learning new words, they learn more fruitfully the other principle is “vocabulary learning builds on multiple source of information”, when students should learn specific words, they need to use various sources of information. Fifth principle is that “vocabulary learning takes place when students `gaining control over their own learning”, research shows that when students select vocabulary themselves, may learn better. The sixth one is that “vocabulary learning takes place when students are aided in developing self-sufficient strategies”, by independent strategies she means using context and using dictionary, it can be said that when learners read the words in context, their general vocabulary is also developed. The last principle according to her is “vocabulary leaning is long lasting whilst learners use words in meaningful ways”, when learners are rendered to new words with special types of training, so different depths and types of learning may have been answered.

### **Authenticity**

Palmer (1998) believes that: teachers should have an authentic call to teaching. This call draws from inside. For many years authenticity of materials has been clarified through authenticity debate. A point of which has been emphasized is that it should be defined as the relationship between the learner and the input text, and the learner's response to it, rather than the input text itself (Widdowson 1978, p.80). According to McGrath (2002), authenticity denotes: a feature of which confirms the learner's connection with the material. Moving from text to task in the authenticity debates might be featured to some factors. One of which is that the first 'battle' of the dispute has mainly been won given that globalization and the Internet have seen to that. (McGrath 2002).

Although utilizing authentic materials in the classroom have become a broad practice during the preceding 30years, the matter of authenticity has been one of the most arguable facets in the ground. Though, the need or utility of authentic materials has been increasingly identified especially in non-native countries as Iran. Empirical studies have exhibited the positive effects of applying authentic texts by language learners Miller, 2005; Otte, 2006; Thanajaro, 2000). Furthermore, some other studies have verified that using authentic materials has massive influence on developing reading comprehension by presenting new words and expressions to students (Bacon & Finneman, 1990; Berardo, 2006). Harmer (1991) reveals that these are merely authentic materials which in fact develop students' listening and reading skills. Additionally Allen et al (1988) cites that developing students' strategies in comprehending authentic texts will cause developing their writing proficiency in the target language learning (as cited in Baird, 2004).

## TV Commercials

Ads are notices or announcements in a public medium promoting a product, service, or event or publicizing a job. Some TV commercial investigators and clients have been advocating commercials as language learning means for years; however, this resource never really took root in the L2 classroom (Erkaya, 2005). Television and commercials are of noteworthy advantages and disadvantages to children, teenagers, adults and consumers alike. Nonetheless this form of media which depicts daily people and their culture is an efficient learning means. In addition to being "short, compact and concise", television commercials are abounding with cultural constituents of which are simply developed in foreign language learning (Etienne & Vanbaelen: 2006). Harben (1999) asserts that visual context offered by constituents such as setting; body language and facial expressions can aid comprehension as well as activate learners' prior knowledge of the social and cultural aspects of language. Besides, for students learning French as a foreign language, the use of the target language is reasonably limited. Then, through this form of media, students are given the occasion to realize and discover French through the perception of a native speaker. It is a perfect stage to showcase situations which are culturally pertinent to the learning of this foreign language (Tuzi *et al*, 2008, p.6-7).

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES

1- Do TV commercials have any effect on Iranian EFL learners' L2 vocabulary learning?

2- Do TV commercials result in improving Iranian EFL learners' L2 vocabulary learning?

H1- There are no significant differences in the effect of TV commercials on Iranian EFL learners' vocabulary learning

H2- There are no significant differences in the effect of TV commercials on Iranian EFL learners' vocabulary learning

## METHODOLOGY

### Design of the study

The design of the present research is quasi-experimental, that is without randomization. The Independent variable of the study was TV commercials and the dependent variable was EFL vocabulary learning.

### Participants

A total of 60 elementary language learners with an age range of 7-11 contributed in this program of which lasted for one academic semester. All the participants were from Turkish background. They were selected from 6 classes. All subjects were students of Gol language institution.

## Instruments

In the attempts to collect quantifiable data the researchers utilized the subsequent instruments. First of all *Cambridge Movers Test* was run for assuring the level of the participants. Afterward one Pre-test on participants' word knowledge was administered. At last one post test was conducted for measuring the efficacy of the intervention.

## Procedures

Before starting the program *Cambridge Movers Test* was run on learners' Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing, for reassuring their proficiency level. Later one pre-test was ordered for verifying the comparability of both groups on their word inventory. Subsequently the researchers sat up the program. The researchers selected the words of which are of appropriate for the level of the participants. The investigators trained new words in Experimental group through providing them with TV commercials, whereas in control group learners learned the same words through traditional instruction. After 14 sessions, one post-test was run to both groups. The collected data was analyzed via (SPSS).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The response for the loaded question of the research is yes, as long as in fact the scores of the post-test in the experimental group have changed notably. Let's focus on the second question of the current exploration It is worth to declare that both groups were roughly at the same level of the word knowledge at the beginning of the study it can be inferred from the means of both groups in pre-test for experimental group 12.41 and for control group it was 12.14 while in post-test that of experimental group enhanced to 16.71 with SD of 0.78, while in control group it remains approximately in the same row i.e. 12.87 with SD of .92.

**Table 1.** Paired Samples Statistics-Experimental Group

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Posttest	16.7177	30	.789588	.13705
	Pretest	12.4188	30	1.16688	.21688

**Table 2.** Paired Samples Statistics-Control Group

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 2	Posttest	12.8744	30	.924488	.16177
	Pretest	12.1444	30	1.04170	.19511

In the following table it is quite evident that the experimental group unlike control group, high scored in the post-test.

**Table 3.** Paired Samples Test - Experimental Group

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
Pair	Posttest - Pretest				Lower	Upper			
1		4.74422	1.00820	.18224	4.11011	4.72411	24.457	29	.000

Table 2 signifies that the mean-increase in vocabulary scores was 4.74 with a 95% confidence interval ranging from 4.11 to 4.72. It is also demonstrated that the mean increase in the vocabulary posttest was statistically significant ( $t = (29) = 24.45$ ,  $P = .000$ ). Accordingly the Null Hypothesis is rejected and the Alternative hypothesis is supported. Since there are a handful of studies on the role of commercials on vocabulary learning regarding to the authentic nature of the commercials it can be concluded that the findings of the present research are in line with all the studies which reported positive supports for the efficiency of authentic materials. There might be only one study on the effect of ads on word learning which was conducted by Heidari and Pashayi (2015). They also reported strong reasons for the effectiveness of the ads in word-acquisition. Tomalin (1990) also consider that people's interest is endorsed when language is given in an active mode through television and video. They persisted on their beliefs and affirmed that, "this combination of moving picture and sound can present language more comprehensively than any other teaching medium and more realistically too. A video sequence watched in class, makes students more ready to communicate in the target language" (cited in Heidari & Pashayi, 2015).

According to Gilmore(2007) since it is found that authentic materials promote the curiosity and interest along with the learners, teachers are trying to utilize more authentic materials rather than simplified ones to make the learners involved and also interested in what they are asked to acquire. Simplified input is generated in order to facilitate comprehension rather than leading to learning. Thus, authentic materials are a rich and wealthy source of target language input. Looking at the results of the current study, a strong support for all of the previously mentioned reports has been proved.

## CONCLUSION

Generally speaking authentic materials in general and TV commercials in particular have undeniable advantages in word acquisition that make them efficient in vocabulary teaching programs. Firstly they facilitate the attempts for preparing learners for the 'real world language use' Secondly they direct learners' attention to the vocabulary items they need for in particular contexts; and that authentic materials enhance motivation of learners to communicate for using the learned items, because they aim at making communication in its 'real' sense.

The results of the present study also recommend some points for tutors and syllabus designers. These are due to the inherent advantages of the commercials. In sum the

advantages can be classified as being related to their: richness, diversity, and multisensory, speed, and shortness, strength, convenient, authentic and flexible. It can be said that in our context because using TV commercials in the classroom is a novel idea, thus learners were more motivated in comparing with other materials. TV commercials bring in specific grammar structures in their scripts. The commercials characteristically repeat words and phrases, which promote meaningful memorization. In the current study many participants were watching commercials in English for the first time, and they appeared to be curious to see them. It would be better to apply commercials in classrooms for having access to less stressful and effective tools of teaching. Now the limitations of the study: the number of the participants was quite inadequate for generalizing the results; also the participants were all female, and the last but not the least would be the degree of which commercials are appropriate for all types of words.

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