



## The Effect of Writing Composition on Iranian Young EFL Learners' L2 Vocabulary Learning

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### Abstract

Vocabulary is the essential part of language learning. The richness of vocabulary repertoire you have is really important in learning and using a language. The more words someone knows the more s/he would be able to comprehend what s/he hears and reads, and therefore would write in more effective manner. Accordingly, the present quasi-experimental study aimed at investigating the effect of writing composition on L2 vocabulary learning. Thus, the researcher selected 60 male students and separated them into two groups of experimental and control, 30 in each. The researcher carried out the language proficiency test that was the Cambridge Mover's Test (Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing) for assessing the proficiency level of the contributors. In experimental group participants were asked to write compositions including new words, but in the control group the same vocabulary items were taught through traditional instruction. The outcomes of the study signified that writing compositions enhances vocabulary learning notably because when learners are asked to write through using new words, there is a contextualized way for word acquisition. Contextualized learning enhances the meaningfulness of the instruction

**Keywords:** composition, Iranian EFL learners, vocabulary learning

### INTRODUCTION

Psychologists, linguists and language teachers put emphasis on vocabulary learning strategies for long time. Word knowledge is of vital role in learning and using a language. Vocabulary is basic entrance to language, and is the major point to learn a language. It is undeniable that language learners of early levels are not very successful in using efficient methods in active use of the words. (Zahedi & Abdi *et al*, 2012). The number of words is of active role in speaking or writing or reading in a foreign or second language. Thus educators are to pay more attention to have meaningful vocabulary lessons for language learners. Learning vocabulary might seem as one of the easiest steps in learning a language but in reality it is one of the hardest things to do. This is more challenging when it comes to foreign language learners with their limited exposure to language and not having enough chance of using learnt words in real

situations. Consequently, they experience serious problems, for example in reading skill; there is no doubt that reading is one of the most imperative parts of experiencing a foreign language. Educators, linguists, and language teachers tried to study vocabulary learning strategies. There are so many studies about the retention of words that are results of by means of different vocabulary strategies, this provides strong supports for the effectiveness of various strategies in how of teaching (Yongqi Gu, 2003).

## **WRITING AND VOCABULARY LEARNING**

Second and foreign language teachers/learners concur that vocabulary achievement is a main objective of language teaching (Walters, 2004). It is therefore important how strong your word repertoire is in how successful language user you are. Consequently instructors are to pay attention to have meaningful vocabulary teaching programs for language pupils. Nowadays so much attention has been given to the role of words in language learning. Thus there are increased number of studies of which aimed at finding the most effective ones in this process (Zahedi & Abdi, 2012). There is inadequate number of works on the effect of writing on vocabulary learning, for example: Nosratinia et al (2013), conducted a study on the comparative effect of keeping a vocabulary notebook with definitions and a vocabulary notebook with pictures on extrovert and Introvert EFL Learners vocabulary retention, they reported that keeping vocabulary notebooks with pictures had a significant effect on extrovert EFL learners' vocabulary retention. They have found that given that all learners were regulated with respect to their English reading and writing proficiency and then haphazardly allocated to the four groups previous to the treatment, the final important disparity among the achievement post-test could be attributed to the disparity in the kinds of vocabulary strategy they utilized. They have found that the extrovert students keeping notebooks with pictures outperformed the extrovert students keeping notebooks with definitions on the post-test of vocabulary retention. Huang and Chen (2011) worked on Enhancing EFL Learners' Vocabulary Retention by Integrating New Words into Writing Activities as well. They have reported that the group was assigned to create an article had distinguished performance. They remembered the meaning and the spelling alike. It was also reported that learners might get a number of new words incidentally in the process of composing an article or making a sentence. This incident is chiefly noticeable in the composition group. The "filling out the blank" group is removed of this benefit of enlarging the vocabulary size; they suggested that EFL teachers persuade learners to incorporate a number of new words into a composition. In this way, the learners may not only remember those target words better but also learn new words at the same time. Tajeddin and Daraee (2013), also studied Vocabulary acquisition through written input, they have reported that reading alone is sufficient for vocabulary learning. Hashemzadeh (2012) also examined the effect of exercise types on EFL learners' Vocabulary retention. She finds that regarding the role of recognition exercises and production exercises on EFL learners' vocabulary retention, it was found that recognition exercises -fill in the blank and matching- were more effective than production exercises (paraphrasing, and glossing). Therefore, teachers are recommended to provide more opportunities for the learners to work on vocabulary

items through using recognition exercises rather than production exercises in their classes. Additionally, the findings indicated that learners' scores in immediate tests were better than delayed tests. Shoari and Davatgari (2015), also worked on the effect of making sample sentences on improving vocabulary learning, they make cleared that through making sample sentences first of all learners have been motivated, because they were free in type of sentences of which they were to create. These features resulted in a relaxed atmosphere for learners, and this facilitated learning. The results of the study indicated that there was significant difference in the effect of making sample sentences on vocabulary learning. Laufer (1991) carried out a study on vocabulary learning of advanced learners. 47 students participate in this study which was a longitudinal one. They wrote an essay before the program and they wrote another one on the same topic after one semester. The findings were signs of the fact that advanced learners had no noteworthy improvement. Active Vocabulary Threshold Hypothesis suggests that the development of receptive vocabulary takes place for a lifelong that occurs only when L2 grammar rules have been acquired, but "productive vocabulary knowledge develops only until it reaches a certain level of achievement". In sum if a learner is at an average proficiency level her / his progress in vocabulary learning will be limited. According to results of Laufer's (1991) study advanced learners even if receive comprehensible input in the academic situation, it is uncommon to have any significant growth in vocabulary learning in the form of writing.

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES**

Q1. Does writing composition have any effect on Iranian young EFL learners' vocabulary learning?

- ❖ There are no significant differences in the effect of writing composition on Iranian young EFL learners' vocabulary learning.

Q2. Does writing composition, result in any improving Iranian young EFL learners' vocabulary learning?

- ❖ There are no significant differences in the effect of writing composition on Iranian young EFL learners' vocabulary learning.

## **METHOD**

### **Design of the study**

In the current investigation the design is quasi-experimental. The independent variable of the study was writing compositions and the dependent variable was vocabulary learning.

### **Participants**

Sixty male Iranian language learners with an age range of 8-12 participated in this study which lasted for one academic semester. All the subjects were all from Turkish background. They all selected from 9 classes. The subjects were learners of the Alborz institution in Tabriz, Iran.

## Instruments

In the attempts to gather the data the researcher made use of the following materials: one language proficiency test which was given before opening the program, one pre-test which was performed on students' word knowledge. All of the words were selected from the term book of the learners, the compositions which were used in the experimental group, including the new words which were of focus based on the source book, and one post-test which was for determining the efficiency of the writing various compositions.

## Procedures

The researcher has given one language proficiency test on four skills. Later on one pre-test on word knowledge of the pupils was carried out for confirming the comparability of both groups. Afterward the treatment was implemented. In the experimental group the researcher has asked the learners to write compositions using the new words of each lesson. He also asked them to lengthen the compositions by time. The students were free in the type and the title of the compositions. There was a positive competition amongst them in finding the most relevant topic to write. After 15sessions, one post-test was administered to both groups. The gathered data has been analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The answer for the loaded question of the study is yes, given that truly the scores of the post-test in the experimental group have varied significantly. Let's go to the second and the main question of this investigation. It is worth to declare that both groups were around the same level of the word knowledge at the beginning of the study it can be got from the means of both groups in pre-test for experimental group 12.15 and for control group it was 12.55, whilst in post-test that of experimental group increased to 17.67 with SD of 0.71, while in control group it continued just about in the same line i.e. 12.99 with SD of .94 .

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

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Posttest	17.6711	30	.719544	.13708
	Pretest	12.2255	30	1.16688	.21611

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

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 2	Posttest	12.9944	30	.941167	.15655
	Pretest	12.5522	30	1.04480	.18411

In the succeeding table it is pretty obvious that the experimental group unlike control group, high scored in the post-test:

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

Paired Differences								
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
				Lower	Upper			
Posttest - Pretest	4.44499	1.00888	.18248	4.18081	4.86282	24.664	29	.000

Table 3 represents that the mean increase in vocabulary scores was 4.44 with a 95% confidence interval ranging from 4.18 to 4.86. It is also clarified that the mean improvement in the vocabulary posttest was statistically significant ( $t = (29) = 2.66$ ,  $P = .000$ ). As a result the Null Hypothesis of the study has been rejected and the Researcher hypothesis is supported. There is truly a handful of studies on the effects of writing on vocabulary learning. The findings of the current study provide strong support for those limited ones. Ellis (1994) also is amongst the researchers who believe that explicit learning for educational purposes is very efficient one. Schmitt (2002) considers that intentional vocabulary learning yields in longer retention. Walters & Bozkurt (2009) studied the effect of writing composition on vocabulary learning. They found that students engaged with new target words more successfully through writing compositions, since creativity is a very powerful support for learning, through writing composition learners learnt new terms in a critically meaningful manner.

Tajeddini, (2013), also has discovered that direct vocabulary learning is more focused and consequently results in more successful word learning. Goya et al, (2011) studied the effect of writing composition on vocabulary learning. It was found that there is close relationship between topical familiarity and new words use of the participants. There is close relationship between topic familiarity and new words use of the participants. It was specified that there is significant difference in scores for target words but the difference for non-target words was not significant. Shoari & Davatgari (2015) also studied the effects of making sample sentences & reported positive effects. Baicheng (2009) also has reported that the writing as an efficient instructional tool for training vocabulary. The results of the current study also are in agreement with the results of the mentioned investigations. The researcher supposes that in general the positive effect of writing is due to its impact on deeper engaging in the process of word learning, and also aiding learners in being more self- regulated and autonomous pupils.

## CONCLUSION

The findings of the current research are of some important points that need to be taken into account by teachers and learners. Through writing compositions learners master language use, this not only is effective in word acquisition but also help them to produce language more successfully in oral form. Writing compositions enhance critical thinking in learners. Learners felt free because they found the instruction useful, and they believed that they have done something valuable. They found that through writing composition they remember the new words through recalling the contexts of which they have used them. The effectiveness of the writing compositions can be supported by

involvement load hypothesis, because learners were deeply engaged in learning and using the terms. About the limitations of the study it can be obviously stated that the number of the participants is a very important limitation, the second point surely is the gender of the subjects (all male), the third issue was that the level of the participants which was elementary, consequently further research studies are required on female learners at higher levels with more participants in order to increase the generalizability of the findings.

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