

# The effect of paragraph writing on vocabulary learning of Iranian intermediate EFL students

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## ABSTRACT

This study aimed to investigate the effect of paragraph writing on vocabulary learning of Iranian intermediate EFL students. The main question this study tried to answer was whether Paragraph Writing might enhance higher knowledge of vocabulary in Iranian learners of English. To answer the question, 30 English intermediate students (male & female) participated in the experiment of the study. They were selected via an OPT test score which had its own criteria to select a homogenous group. Then they were divided into two groups and were randomly assigned to an experimental and a control group. The participants of this study were all students at Azad University of Tonekabon. Next, a pre – test of English vocabulary taken from TOEFL book, was administered to both groups. The pretest consisted of 20 multiple – choice of vocabulary each had 1 point as their score. Then, they were taught vocabularies for 10 sessions but with different methodologies: the experimental group received the treatment of Paragraph Writing for ten sessions, using the vocabulary they were taught. However, the control group received the existing methods of teaching vocabulary like translation and synonyms, etc. A post – test of English vocabulary which was parallel with the pretest but had different items was then administered to both groups. The data of the study were analyzed using an independent sample t – test to indicate the groups' post – test mean difference. The degree of progress from the pre – test to the post – test in the two groups of the study was indicated by calculating two separate ANCOVA coefficients. The result indicated that the Iranian EFL learners in the experimental group received higher scores, though not significantly, in vocabulary after being treated with 10 sessions of the treatment.

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## Introduction

Learning vocabulary is one of the first steps of learning a second language. Most students learning a foreign language have agreed that the most important part of learning a foreign language was vocabulary. Knowing a lot of vocabulary items can enable language learners to learn and understand English better. So vocabulary as a very important component of language has a brilliant role in learning a foreign or second language.

Vocabulary development is an important aspect of language development. No matter what is the reason of foreign language learning, foreign languages have something to offer everyone. Foreign language learners generally see vocabulary learning as their first priority.

For many years vocabulary learning was limited to long list of vocabularies with their native language equivalents for students to memorize them.

It seems a commonly accepted truth that teachers mostly incline to teach others in the same way we were instructed. Based upon Zimmerman's (1997) survey, the teachers would think that most second language learners have traditionally been taught by methods that paid insufficient attention to vocabulary and thus the statement that most teachers will also continue to neglect vocabulary appears reasonable (Coady, 1997).

Therefore, an urgent need was felt by the researcher to deal with those techniques of teaching and learning vocabulary which had been neglected in working with Iranian EFL students.

Hoping that familiarity with this technique would help teachers to make use of different techniques for teaching vocabulary.

Moreover, being influenced by grammar as the ultimate goal of language learning and as a result vocabulary would be an overlooked component classroom situation.

Consequently, here the problem is to find a good technique to be incorporated into the student's language curriculum.

In order for a classroom instruction to be successful it is important to keep in mind that learning does not occur in vacuum, (Baker, Simmons and Kameenuni). Therefore just listing words for a student to memorize may not be interesting.

The great problem is the deficiency in vocabulary learning which may lead to the problem in writing, reading comprehension and listening. As students read challenging texts, especially those in the content areas, they encounter many complex words. As a result, students with limited vocabularies may not be able to access the meaning of the text (Anderson & Free body, 1981). So, here the teacher can help them overcome this problem by creating some new tasks for learning vocabularies.

There are different strategies to help students learn and recall new words. One of them is writing assignment. Writing is an important means of learning. Writing anything to be learned helps students practice the material and store it in a long- term memory (Chastain, 1988).

One principle of effective vocabulary learning is to help learners involve in writing. According to Rivers (1981) the activity of writing helps to consolidate the learning to render it

available for use in other areas. Writing gives the students practice in manipulating structural variants and in selecting and combining lexical elements. Chastain (1988) said that writing is a basic communication skill, a unique asset in the process of learning a second language.

Some researchers have suggested that the use of paragraph writing for inferring meaning can be beneficial to L2 learners' vocabulary building (change, Wagner, muse, chow and Shu, 2005; Morin, 2003; Schiff and Califf 2007). Thus, the purpose of this study is to explore the effect of Writing Paragraph on Iranian EFL learners' vocabulary knowledge.

Writing Paragraph is defined operationally as "the awareness of and access to the meaning and structure of morphemes in relation to word in a well-organized structure: (change et al. 2005, p.417).

Writing Paragraph involves two steps. First learners need to be able to think about what they want to write. Second, they need to find words in their mental lexicon.

As a result, the main problem regarding vocabulary is lack of confidence and competence. Therefore, the teachers' duty is to help students to develop greater confidence and competence by giving students topics to write.

Testing vocabulary regularly can help learners to be more exposed to vocabulary. One way to test is asking students to write a paragraph about newly taught vocabularies. Written products are often the results of thinking, drafting and revising procedures that require specialized skills, skills that not every speaker develops naturally (Brown, 2001). According to Chastain (1998) we should seek to develop classroom activities in which students can simultaneously communicate while learning language forms. Since vocabulary learning is central to language acquisition, it is necessary to search ways to teach it well and to stick it in the learners' mind and paragraph writing seems to consolidate this vital element learning in the mind of learners.

### **Significance of the Study**

Researchers emphasize the importance of vocabulary and point out that knowing a word well involves the combination of several different types of knowledge. Stahl (1999) suggests that knowing a word means not only knowing its literal definition but also knowing its relationship to other words, its connotations in different contexts and its power of transformation into various other forms.

An understanding of word structure can be a powerful tool for students faced with the difficult task of acquiring academic vocabulary. But after going through different stages of education and language learning, learners cannot remember vocabulary appropriately especially in a country like Iran in which vocabulary is sometimes ignored.

Therefore, this study tries to consider some new techniques namely writing paragraph tasks to improve methods of teaching vocabulary in a real situation. It is hoped that this study theoretically can add to the body of knowledge in Iranian EFL learners in a way that it investigates the effect of Writing Paragraph task on Iranian EFL learner's vocabulary knowledge.

Moreover, this study can have pedagogical advantages in a sense that it helps teachers to expand their students' vocabulary for the purpose of comprehension and understanding the text. If so, a large number of unfamiliar words that students encounter in different text could be understandable if students knew the more common root word and could break the complex words down (Nagy & Anderson, 1984). Because text contain many of these complex but decipherable words, students, abilities to

attack and dissect them are essential to their understanding of these texts.

In addition, Writing Paragraph can be useful to encourage students to examine some interesting strategies. They can employ the new words in their own writings and as we know use is much more important than usage.

Another role which can be assigned to Writing Paragraph, is that according to some researchers, using writing to manipulate words can be seen as a cognitive gave strategy to be learned, not simply a set of rules to be memorized. This cognitive strategy will help students to become independent while trying to learn vocabulary by themselves.

It is worth mentioning that within the discipline of linguistics, Writing Paragraph is one of the productive skills that a learner is expected to achieve in order to ensure his communicative competence. Writing is a visual representation of speech. In writing and speaking the language learner is engaged in communicating his ideas and feelings.

In the case of speaking a kind of give and take situation between listener and Speaker exists. But in the case of writing the message communicated has a higher degree of finiteness and this skill requires real proficiency if one can be able to communicate effectively.

Consequently, this study helps the teachers to overcome some of the barriers hindering vocabulary learning and they can examine the effect of Writing Paragraph tasks on Iranian EFL learners' vocabulary knowledge.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to show whether the teaching of Writing Paragraph task is an appropriate way of improving vocabulary. This is significant because the learners should be able to construct meaningful sentences and paragraphs through using suitable words, which makes their writing more effective and comprehensible.

### **Research Question of the Study**

Based on the problem and the related parts explained above, the current study tries to answer the following question:

RQ: Does Writing Paragraph task have any effect on Iranian intermediate EFL learners' vocabulary knowledge?

### **Hypothesis of the Study**

In order to answer the above mentioned research question, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H0: Using Writing Paragraph has no effect on Iranian EFL learners' vocabulary knowledge.

### **Review of Literature**

#### **General Consideration**

In foreign language teaching vocabulary had been a neglected area for a long time. Moras points out that vocabulary teaching above elementary level was mostly restricted on presenting new items as they appeared in reading or listening texts. This indirect teaching of vocabulary supposed that vocabulary can be increased when other language skills are practiced (2001). Also course books provided little guidance but word lists.

In recent years, vocabulary teaching has become part of the syllabus, and has been taught on a well-planned and regular basis. Moras declares that some experts, such as Lewis argue that vocabulary should be at the center of language teaching (2001). As a result, new course books now include word study sections.

Without a large vocabulary it is difficult to hold a proper conversation. Consequently, learners have to make a conscious effort to acquire the target language not only in the classroom but outside it as well. In effective language teaching students are exposed to the target language in multiple ways, and teachers'

aim is to encourage their students to be autonomous in their language learning.

### **Vocabulary and Its Importance**

English is the world's most important language. Today, it is the mother tongue of several hundred million people. Its great role in science and technology as well as in international commerce and culture has made English the most frequently taught second language in the world.

The size of the English vocabulary can be an advantage for its own since the speakers with a good command of vocabulary can say things differently, however the enormous size of English vocabulary can be a great problem to the second language learners because they have to learn so many words while they don't know exactly how and why.

The great question is why vocabularies are important. They are important because the overwhelming majority of meaning is carried lexically; and, therefore, vocabulary is something which must be taken into consideration both in second and foreign language teaching.

Learning a language cannot be reduced, of course, to only learning vocabulary, but it is also true that no matter how well the student learns grammar, "no matter how successfully the sounds of L2 are mastered, without words to express a wide range of meanings, communication L2 just cannot happen in any meaningful way". (McCarthy 1990: VIII), and idea defended by many applied linguists, e.g. Allen (1983:1), Wallace (1988:9), Corder (Rossner & Bolitho 1990:113), Taylor (1990:1) Willins (1990:1-14) etc. Nevertheless, in spite of the importance of this element, vocabulary is often the least systematized and the most neglected of all the aspects of learning second language. This neglect of attention is not just the matter of grammatical syllabuses but of more recent communicative approaches. Even the learners who have graduated from so many language Institutes cannot remember so many vocabularies, therefore, the need to teacher language in general and teach vocabulary effectively in particular is the challenge before all the teachers to think and evaluate their teaching strategies especially in the vocabulary domains.

Students need to be made aware of the importance of vocabulary because it is observed that, in general, there is a tendency to concentrate on grammar, paying little attention to vocabulary.

Having different opportunities will help improve learners, overall language ability by improving their vocabulary. In other words, "the goal is for students to become word-savvy, to develop an understanding of how words work within the context of reading and writing, and to become excited about words as they learn to manipulate them in playful ways" (Brand, 2004, 4).

Teachers should facilitate vocabulary learning by teaching learners useful words and by teaching strategies to help learners figure out meanings on their own (Nation, 2003). Learners need to acquire vocabulary learning strategies in order to discover the meaning of new words. The strategies should be useful within the classroom as well as when learners are in a situation where they encounter new and unfamiliar words on their own. The strategies should also help learners to use words that they hear and see. Consequently, vocabulary should be integrated into teaching the four skills – listening, speaking, reading and writing.

It seems almost impossible to overstate the power of words because they play a fundamental role in literacy development and academic success (National Reading panel, 2000). Furthermore, a learner's socio-economic status is a critical correlate of vocabulary knowledge (Biemiller, 2005; Hart &

Risley, 1995). This is not hard to understand. The stronger oral vocabulary associated with learners, the greater success they will have in reading (Biemiller & Slonim, 2001). Successful readers are exposed to more text. Because they read more, which in turn expands those students' written word vocabulary, thus encouraging still more reading success. All the while, students who begin the process of learning to read with an impoverished vocabulary fall further and further behind their advantaged peers, not only in reading, but in the content areas that depend more and more on independent reading skills (Beck, Mckeown, & kucan, 2002).

Knowing vocabulary is important, but to use vocabulary well needs fluent users. Developing fluency involves learning to make the best use of what is already known (Schmitt, 2002).

According to Schmitt (2002) there are two general approaches to fluency development. The first relies primarily on repetition and could be called 'the well-beaten path approach' to fluency. This involves gaining repeated practice on the same material so that it can be performed fluently.

The second approach to fluency according to Schmitt, relies on making many connections and associations with a known item. Rather than following one well-beaten path, the learner can choose from many paths. This could be called 'the richness approach' to fluency. This involves using the known item in a wide variety of contexts and situations. This includes speed-reading practice, easy extensive reading, continuous writing and retelling activities. The aim and result of this approach is to develop a well-ordered system of vocabulary. Fluency then can occur because learner is in control of the system of the language and can use a variety of paths to the wanted item.

### **Writing strategies to learn and teach vocabulary**

Schmitt (2000) sees the need to help learners acquire the strategies necessary to learn words on their own. For Nation (1990; 2001), the most important way to learn vocabulary is learners using strategies independently of a teacher. In his recent publication, strategy training is suggested to be part of a vocabulary development program. The main benefit gained from all learning strategies, including strategies for vocabulary learning, is the fact that they enable learners to take more control of their own learning so that students can take more responsibility for their studies (Nation, 2001; Scharle & Szabo, 2000).

Chastain (1988) believes that writing is an important means of learning. Writing anything to be learned helps students practice the material and store it in a long term memory. The appropriateness of the writing assignments as employed in this study, is also recommended by (Swain & Lapkin, 1995 who maintain that presenting both types of writing (sentence & composition) pushes the students to use the language in original and meaningful contexts (i.e., this is normally referred to as 'pushed output') as mentioned by Swain and Lapkin (1995). Pushed output, in addition to improving learner's grammar, has been found to improve vocabulary learning and retention (Swain, 1995). From the above discussion, we can infer that there are three factors attributing to the effectiveness of writing in improving vocabulary learning (Coomber, Ramstad & Sheets, 1986). The first factor is the use of the words in meaningful contexts. The second is the students' utilization of their higher level cognitive functions. The third factor has to do with the nature of the writing process in being slow which allows students to have more time to elaborate on the lexical items. So, the learners using this assignment to improve vocabulary learning are more successful in learning new words.

**Table 4.1. Descriptive analysis of the data of the Control group of the study**  
Descriptive Statistics

	N Statistic	Range Statistic	Minimum Statistic	Maximum Statistic	Mean Statistic	Std. Error Statistic	Std. Deviation Statistic	Variance Statistic
Pre co	15	11.00	7.00	18.00	13.0000	.76842	2.97610	8.857
postco	15	9.00	9.00	18.00	15.0000	.64881	2.51282	6.314
Valid	15							

**Table 4.2. Descriptive analysis of the data of the Experimental group of the study**  
Descriptive Statistics

	N Statistic	Range Statistic	Minimum Statistic	Maximum Statistic	Mean Statistic	Std. Error Statistic	Std. Deviation Statistic	Variance Statistic
Pre Ex	15	10.00	7.00	17.00	11.9333	.78962	3.05817	9.352
Post Ex	15	7.00	13.00	20.00	15.8000	.62640	2.42605	5.886
Valid	N	15						

**Table 4.3. The t-test result of the study**  
t- Test for equality of means

vocabulary assumed	variances	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
		3.004	28	.006	2.40000	.79881

**Table 4.4. Covariance Analysis of the Control Group of the Study**

Dependent Variable: post -test co

Source	Type II Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	69.750(a)	1	69.750	48.619	.000
Intercept	20.777	1	20.777	14.483	.002
Pre-test co	69.750	1	69.750	48.619	.000
Error	18.650	13	1.435		
Total	3554.000	15			
Corrected Total	88.400	14			

a R Squared = .789 (Adjusted R Squared = .773)

**Table 4.5. Covariance Analysis of the experimental group of the study**

Tests of between-subjects effects

Dependent Variable: post-test EX

Source	Type II Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	62.968(a)	1	62.968	42.126	.000
Intercept	49.050	1	49.050	32.815	.000
Pre-test EX	62.968	1	62.968	42.126	.000
Error	19.432	13	1.495		
Total	3827.000	15			
Corrected Total	82.400	14			

A R Squared = .764 (Adjusted R Squared = .746)

Writing in context, with attention to vocabulary use, is a tool for general second language improvement (Muncie, 2002). Maftoon (2006) states that teachers write key words on the board so that students have visual, as well as auditory, input. Since many students do not understand cursive writing, teachers need to print clearly and legibly. When students see written form of a word, they will learn it better, especially when they use these new words repeatedly in contexts, with the purpose of communication. There is a positive and direct relationship between written homework assignment and vocabulary learning among Iranian EFL beginners (Panah Dehghani, 2007).

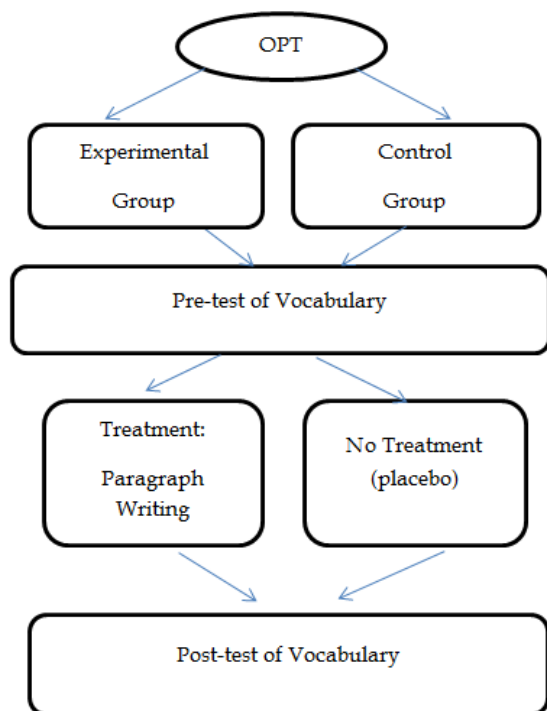
Another research was done by Keshavarz and Estaji (2006) on the Iranian students. The main purpose of this study was to discover the possible impact of composition writing strategy on the learning of newly taught words. They found out that composition writing had a great effect on learning second language vocabulary. The results suggest a wider application of composition writing strategies to promote meaningful learning.

At the end, in an answer to why writing is effective in improving vocabulary learning, Coomber et al. attributed this effectiveness to three factors (Coomber, Ramstad & Sheets, 1986). The first factor is the use of the words in meaningful contexts. The second is the students' utilization of their higher level cognitive functions. The third factor has to do with the nature of the writing process in being slow which allows students to have more time to elaborate on the lexical items.

So it can be concluded that writing in general generates more elaboration than merely matching words to context and such elaboration can be expected to result in better retention, as this research was also designed to discover and detect more about the effect of a writing assignment, which is paragraph writing on vocabulary learning of intermediate EFL students.

## Methodology

### Design of the Study



**Figure 3.1. The Diagram of the Design of the Study**

The study investigates the effectiveness of Writing Paragraph task on teaching vocabulary.

The study takes the form of an experiment in which two rounds of two different treatments were administered to two

groups of students in two classes of English. The effects of the treatments were compared using a quasi – experimental design.

The study adopted a quasi – experimental design, since it's not possible to generalize the results because the sampling is not so much broad for example for this study if the sample had been chosen from all over the country, from so many universities, then it might be possible to generalize its results but because of so many limitations it is done just in Tonekabone Azad university and consequently, the results would not be generalizable, because of small sampling. Therefore the design of the study is quasi – experimental. The design of the current study has been illustrated diagrammatically in figure (3.1).

Figure (3.1) demonstrates the general schematic representation of the current study. This diagram shows four stages:

1. Subject selection via administering an Oxford placement test (OPT).
2. Exposing the participants to the pre – test of vocabulary to know the potential knowledge of participants regarding vocabulary before taking the treatment.
3. Adopting Writing Paragraph task as a treatment for the experimental group of the study (EG) and using existing methods of teaching vocabulary for the control group (CG).
4. Administering the post – test of vocabulary which is parallel with the pretest but contains different items to both groups of the study to see their improvements.

The treatment took 10 sessions to answer the research questions. Finally the post – test was run to investigate the possible effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the treatment.

### Participants

The researcher was granted permission to complete this study during regular class time in Tonekabon University. The participants of this study were 30 Iranian EFL learners who had been selected via an OPT test. They studied English as their own major in two classes in Islamic Azad University of Tonekabon. Of course the population was more but they had become homogenous through an OPT test. They were intermediate students, their age ranges between 19 - 25. Their mother tongue was Persian.

Then students randomly were assigned to the experimental and control groups. The Experimental group (EG) received Writing Paragraph task as their own treatment to improve their vocabulary knowledge and the control group received the existing methods for the same purpose.

### Materials

The Materials used in this study were of four sorts: Oxford placement test, the vocabulary pre – test, two vocabulary post – tests and the material for the treatment of the study.

### Oxford Placement Test (OPT)

The first material was Oxford placement test (OPT) which was administered as a standardized measure to ascertain the homogeneity of the subjects regarding language proficiency.

Oxford placement test had been used after consultation with the teachers and was designed to assess students' knowledge of the key language as well as their receptive and productive skills. An OPT test enables teachers to evaluate their students' level of proficiency. The great reason behind using this was its reliability. Because it's a reliable test and it has been tested for several times. But if the researcher had used some teacher – made tests she would have to standardize it, however, an OPT test is a standardized test (appendix 1) and it was in the form of multiple – choice questions and a reading. Altogether, there was 60 questions in the OPT test with 1 point for each of them. An OPT test has a criteria itself to classify the levels of the students. Those who received a score beyond 30 could be considered as

Intermediate levels which are of our purpose. A result 30 students were selected and they were randomly assigned into two almost homogenous groups.

#### **The Vocabulary Pre – test**

The second material used in this research was the vocabulary pre – test (appendix B). In order to show that the participants in both groups, namely- experimental group and control group had not acquired the to-be -learned vocabulary, a vocabulary pretest was administered. For the purpose of achieving the reliability and validity, the pre – test was chosen from TOEFL book which is quite reliable. As validity concerned, it was attempted to choose the items which were in the domain of the participant's vocabulary knowledge. There were 20 items in the vocabulary pretest and each one had one point as a score. The pre – test was administered both in the experimental and the control group.

#### **The Vocabulary Post – test**

After 10 sessions which were the instructional stage, a vocabulary test (post – test) (appendix C), was given to the participants to evaluate the relative effect of the two different methods (the Writing Paragraph task and the existing method). Since the study here aimed at indicating the degree of progress from the pre – test to the post – test, the same but parallel test was administered as the vocabulary test in both experimental and control group. The number of items in the post – test was the same as the pre – test, but the order was different and it was parallel too. In fact the participants were asked to take the vocabulary recall post – test one week later to evaluate the relative retention impact of Writing Paragraph task.

#### **The Material for the Treatment of the Study**

The Material for the treatment of the study was a book named, "Headway Series". The book was introduced by the supervisor of the researcher. She took it and used it in the experimental group. It took 10 sessions to teach 60 selected words to the students.

#### **Procedures**

As mentioned earlier, an Oxford placement test (OPT) was administered in order to identify the homogeneity of the participants' English proficiency. 30 students were selected according to the OPT criteria itself. According to the OPT criteria, those who received beyond 30 as their own score could be considered as an intermediate level.

Then, they were randomly assigned either to the experimental group (EG) or to the control group (CG). Next the researcher administered the vocabulary pretest which was derived from TOEFL book for the sake of reliability. The aim of the pretest was to know the potential vocabulary knowledge which students have at the beginning of the study. Time allotted to conduct a pre –test was 30 minutes and there were 20 items in the pretest.

After the administration of the vocabulary pretest, the researcher introduced the program to both experimental and control group. Specially, she explained experimental group that they were going to write paragraphs applying the treated vocabularies.

Moreover, it was explained to both of them that, the scores they received had nothing to do with their University scores for their own course. Then she explained the logic of the Writing Paragraph to help them overcome the barrier of forgetting the words.

Then, the researcher introduced the book named "Headway Series". Next she explained to the students that each session 6 new vocabularies would be taught.

In the experimental group, (N=15), the students were taught 6 new vocabulary items each session and then they were asked to write a paragraph (at least 80 words in 20 minutes) using the newly learnt vocabulary items. This continued for 10 sessions.

In the control group, (N=15), the students were taught 6 new vocabulary items each session and in the next session they were asked to tell the meanings of the previously learnt vocabulary items orally. After completing the 10 sessions of instruction in 2 groups, a post-test which was the same as the pre-test were administered to the groups to check the rate of vocabulary learnt by the learners and to see which group did better. For examining the effect of treatment a t-test were applied. For showing their improvement from pre-test to post-test in both groups, two one way ANCOVAs were calculated.

All the above mentioned procedures were followed in the classroom and not at home or out of the classroom, because the researcher wanted to make sure that the students do the assignments themselves, without any help from their parents or a dictionary.

#### **Scoring**

The OPT used in this study was scored on the basis of standard criteria introduced by the test itself. The total score of OPT for this study was 60 which was 1 point for each item. The criterion for scoring the pre- test and post – test of the study was the maximum of 20.

#### **Data Analysis**

The data obtained from hypothesis testing of the study would be analyzed via calculating a t–test between the post – test of vocabulary scores of the experimental and the control groups of the study and two ANCOVAs (Analysis of covariance) between the pre – test and post – test of the experimental and control group of the study to see any progress happened from pre – test to the post – test or in fact during the treatment period.

#### **Data Analysis and Findings**

The result of the study will be presented into two main parts: The data analysis and findings will be given in two different sections in the first part. The descriptive analysis of the data with different tables and the inferential analysis of the obtained data which will consist of calculating the t-test and one way ANCOVA (Analysis of Covariance) based on specific tables are in the first section. The second part of this chapter will talk about the resulting status of the hypothesis of the study, that is, it is rejection or support. What follows will present the findings from analyzing the whole data of the current study. For doing data analysis easily and reducing some errors in finding correct result of the study the SPSS software will be used.

#### **Descriptive Analysis of the Data**

This section presented the descriptive analysis of the obtained data of this research. So, the researcher used the SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science) software. Table (4.1) showed the descriptive analysis for the pre-test and post-test of the control group of this study.

According to table (4.1), the total number of participants (N) was 15 in the pre- test and post- test of the control group. The minimum score or the smallest score for pre-test was 7.00 but the minimum score for post-test was 9.00 but the maximum score or the largest score for the pre- test and posttest of the control group was 18.00.

The mean score for the pre- test and post- test of the control group has been shown as 13.0000 and 15.2000 respectively. The Standard Deviation has been calculated as 2.97610 for the pre-test and 2.51282 for the post test, that is the average deviation of

all scores from the mean score of the pre- test and post- test was 2.97610, and 2.51282 respectively. The variance for the pre test scores was 8.857 and for the post test scores 6.314. The valid N has been shown as 15 which referred to the number of non-missing values of the control group, that is, all the participants in the control group participated in the research. The descriptive analysis of the pre- test and the post test of the experimental group has been shown in table (4.2):

According to table (4.2), the total number of participants (N) has been 15 in the pre- test and post -test of the Experimental group. The minimum score or the smallest score for the pre- test was 7.00 but this value was 13.00 for the post test. Also, the maximum score for post- test was 20.00 while this value for pre- test was 17.00. For the standard deviation obtained for the experimental group, there sounds to be more variability among the pre- test of vocabulary scores than the scores in the post test of the vocabulary. This may be present that the participants' post test scores being more homogenous after presenting the treatment of the study. There were 15 participants and there has been no missing value which means that all participants participated in the experiment of this study.

#### **Inferential Analysis of the Data**

This section focused on the inferential analysis was conducted through using SPSS ( Statistical Package for Social Sciences ) software from which the independent Sample-t-test and also one way ANCOVA were calculated and indicated in tables (4.3) , (4.4) ,(4.5) respectively.

According to the table (4.3) indicates that the t-test results of the study between the post test scores of the both experimental and control groups of the study. The observed t value was calculated to be 3.004. The degree of freedom (df) was 28. The level of significance (sig.2-tailed) was calculated as to be .006 which has been used in calculating the data for the rejection or support of the hypothesis of the study. The mean difference was shown as 2.40000, that is, the difference between the mean scores of the post-tests of the control group and the experimental group of this study was calculated as 2.40000.

The next inferential analysis of data in this study was indicated to be the degree of covariance between the pre- test and the post test of vocabulary knowledge in both the experimental and control groups of the study:

According to table (4.4 & 4.5), the covariance between the two sets of pre- test and post test scores in the experimental group is 42.126 and 48.619 in the control group of the study. This means that the scores of experimental group is near 1, so the experimental group has undergone a progress compared to the control group whose score is lower than the experimental group. Thus, it can be concluded that the experimental group worked better than the control group because of being treated with traditional method of teaching.

#### **Results**

The results of testing the hypothesis of the study have been presented and explained in detail the rejection or support of the hypothesis. Before the hypothesis of the study was rejected or supported, it was repeated below:

H0: Paragraph writing as a writing assignment has no effect on vocabulary learning of intermediate EFL students.

First of all, according to the descriptive analysis of the given data and based on the table (4.1), (4.2), the mean scores of the pre- test and post- test of the control group was 13.0000 and 15.2000 and for the experimental group was 11.9333 and 15.8000 respectively. So, these two tables showed that there was no significant change in the mean scores of the Control group, but this change was very significant in the mean scores of the

experimental group and it is an evidence for rejection of the hypothesis.

In addition to, the results of the T-Test, table (4.3), showed that the observed t value was calculated by the SPSS was 3.004 (t observed = 3.004) while the critical t value determined on the basis of considering (df) and the 2-tailed significance level of 0.05 ( $p=0.05$ ) (Appendix f) was 2.048 .so, the observed t value was higher than the critical t value and high enough to reject the null hypothesis of the study. Also, it was presented in the table (4.3), the level of significance for two-tailed value calculated by the SPSS to be .006. When this value was less than 0.05 (based on the SPSS regulations) it confirmed the rejection of the hypothesis. It could be concluded that there was a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the posttests of the control group and experimental group. There is no chance for calculating the difference between the means of the post tests of the study, so it shows that Paragraph writing as a writing assignment affected vocabulary learning of intermediate EFL students. According to the table (4.4 & 4.5), it was shown that the rejection of the hypothesis of the study by indicating the experimental group participants' progress from pre-test to the post test of the study. The covariance value between the pre- test and post test scores in the experimental was higher than of the control group. This meant that Writing Paragraph has affected the Iranian EFL learners' vocabulary knowledge. Also, the covariance value between the pre- test to the post test scores in the control group was lower than that of experimental group, and this meant that post test scores of Iranian EFL learners' vocabulary knowledge were close to the pre test scores in the control group.

In other words the effectiveness of F ratio was statistically significance ( $F=42.126$ ). Since this value is greater than 1, the null hypothesis was rejected. Another reason is the level of significance ( $= .000$ ) that is less than 0.5 . Because of these two reasons it could be concluded that there was a statistically significant difference between the pre -test and the post test scores of the experimental group. So our null hypothesis was rejected.

#### **Discussion**

At first it was hypothesized that writing paragraph has no effect on Iranian EFL learners' vocabulary knowledge but the current study represented that the Writing Paragraph task could have a positive impact on vocabulary and comprehension skills and as a result the Null hypothesis was rejected. This result received support from the data analysis represented in chapter 4. Results indicated that vocabulary skills significantly improved following this intervention.

So the systemic teaching of vocabulary, in this case morphemic analysis, directly increases student comprehension.

#### **Suggestions for Further Research**

Due to the fact that learners have always difficulty in learning, remembering and retrieving vocabulary, it is always of great importance to have more research in this critical area to discover how teachers can teach vocabulary more effectively which can be influential in the process of language acquisition. What follows are some suggestions that further studies could investigate:

First, further investigation into the application of paragraph writing could look at the effects of a longer period of intervention. A six month investigation or more could be tested with a pre and post standardized test to see if the statistical significance would improve even more and whether comprehension growth would be improved or not.

Second, this study can be replicated with the learners of different proficiency levels. That is, the researchers can carry out the same study at the elementary, pre – intermediate, and advanced levels to compare their performance to see whether learners perform differently regarding their proficiency level. And they can test the effect of learners' change of proficiency level on the effectiveness of this technique.

Third, this study was carried out on a small sample in Tonekabon university but other researches can be done with a larger sample such as a population from two or more universities to see the effect of larger samples on the results and to make the results more generalizable and probably to change the research from quasi – experimental to the experimental one.

Moreover, this study aimed to investigate the effect of Writing Paragraph task on learning vocabulary, other studies can be replicated by investigating the effect of Writing Paragraph task on other language skills such as reading, listening, and speaking. Even for teaching vocabulary similar Writing Paragraph tasks can be investigated for their effect on other areas learning such as verbs or adjectives, etc.

### Conclusion

Since having a good knowledge of vocabulary has a great effect on the improvement of all aspects of language such as reading, listening, speaking, and writing so we should attention to choosing and performing appropriate vocabulary teaching techniques in language classes.

This study was an investigation of effects of the use of writing paragraph task to improve students' English vocabulary learning. The findings of the study support the idea that the use of paragraph writing improves vocabulary learning. The results make clear one to conclude that the technique tested in this study that is Writing Paragraph task was really effective in improving vocabulary learning of Iranian students.

To have a more detailed conclusion the research question will be answered:

Does Writing Paragraph task have any effect on Iranian intermediate EFL learners' vocabulary knowledge?

Based on the t – test done between posttests of control and experimental groups, the t value was less than the critical value in our table. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected and it can be concluded that Writing Paragraph task has affected on vocabulary learning of Iranian students.

Moreover, the results of the present study had been explained in terms of suggesting a practical model to be employed in classroom situations, it is hoped that the teachers at all levels and across all disciplines can use this technique and other strategies in their classrooms as part of teacher – as – researchers or action research projects that investigate the teaching and learning of vocabulary across the curriculums. Such findings would help narrow the gap between theories and practice, support the notion of teachers as learners and inquirers, and provide real life examples from real teachers in real classrooms.

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