

Teaching Academic Vocabulary Through Reconstruction Editing Task: Does Group Size Matter?

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IJEAP- 1905-1382

Abstract

The use of collaborative classroom interactional tasks is on the rise recently since they incorporate the negotiation of meaning and thus they may be regarded as one of the most efficient ways to ease a learner's focus on form. This study investigated the immediate and long-term effects of reconstruction editing task on the learning of 20 academic vocabulary items through using five reconstruction editing tasks. Of interest was whether the number of students in the interaction groups made any considerable difference in the gains of vocabulary knowledge in the groups under study. Based on convenience sampling, some 30 teenage students of two intermediate level classes studying Top Notch course at a language institute in Isfahan volunteered to participate in the study. Having taken a teacher-made pretest, group A with 14 students did the reconstruction editing task in pairs, but the 16 students of group B did the task in groups of four. Then, they took an immediate and a delayed posttest. Comparing the performance of each group before and after the treatment through paired samples t-test, it was revealed that both methods led to a big increase in the knowledge of vocabulary items, but no significant difference was found between the effects of these two methods as demonstrated by the immediate posttest. However, the group which did the tasks in groups outperformed the pair group in the delayed posttest which was administered one month after the immediate posttest. Thus, output tasks are advised to be utilized in reading-oriented courses such as English for Specific Purposes (ESP) to involve the learners more in the learning process and create a more learner-centered atmosphere.

Keywords: Output Task; Editing Task; Vocabulary Learning; Reconstruction Task, Group Size

1. Introduction

Researchers have recently recognized and underscored the use of pedagogic tasks which encourage not only the interaction and communication among the students, but also make the students attend to the form of the language (e.g. Long, 2006; Pica, 2007; Williams, 2005). The original idea of using pushed output in language teaching grew out of immersion and content-based programs since it was evidenced that the sole exposure to the input-based communication was not sufficient for developing the accuracy and fluency simultaneously. In fact, Swain (1998) argued that although the learners received a lot of meaning-based input for seven to ten years, they could not acquire certain aspects of the grammar, and they developed fluency at the expense of accuracy. Swain (1998) asserted that the learners in such contexts could not develop their grammar and accuracy because they did not have enough opportunities to produce language and more importantly they focused mostly on meaning rather than on form.

One of the best methods that can provide both the negotiation of meaning and focus on form and opportunities for feedback is doing pedagogical tasks that require students to work on language and produce language collaboratively (Swain, 2005; Van den Branden, 2006). Swain (2005) argues that

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pushed output can play three main roles in the learning process: to notice the forms, to test the hypotheses, and to help us in a metalinguistic analysis. The first function occurs in the production of output. In doing so, they recognize that there are certain gaps in their knowledge since they cannot say what they intend to say. Secondly, when learners are communicating in the second language, they try different forms to say the same thing, and indeed try out their new ideas and hypotheses to see if they are comprehensible or not. Thus, they might seek help from peers and other interlocutors to fill the gap in their knowledge which leads to learning. Finally, when people produce language, they become more self-conscious and consciously think about and reflect on what they say. This is referred to as the metalinguistic function of the pushed output.

The idea of pushed output was originally characterized within an information processing perspective which focused on the mechanism of noticing and processing the language forms by individual learners, but Swain has recently looked at it from a sociocultural perspective. He asserted that classroom tasks must force learners to have group-work and collaborative production because these tasks offer opportunities for scaffolding and peer feedback. Vygotsky (1978) believed that isolated learning cannot help individuals reach cognitive development. Instead, learning should be considered a social enterprise. The notion of Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which refers to “the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (p. 86), is the most important position in Vygotsky’s writings (Vygotsky, 1978). The notion of ZPD is based on collaborative work because it is argued that while collaborating within their ZPD, language learners use their present knowledge to understand what they have not mastered independently before. The sociocultural framework strongly supports using instructional activities which force students to do tasks and produce language in groups rather than alone.

2. Purpose of the Study

Collaboration and doing pair work apparently increase learners’ interaction and help them notice the target forms, but what conditions are necessary for collaborative tasks to work best? Storch (2005, 2007) believed that studies in this regard are still very limited, and further research must be conducted in this area in order to complete our understanding. Thus, to increase our understanding of the effect of editing task on vocabulary acquisition and pedagogical conditions which further this impact, a quasi-experimental study which followed pretest-treatment-posttest procedure was conducted to address the following research questions.

Research Question One: Does using reconstruction editing task in pairs affect the learning of vocabulary items by Iranian EFL learners significantly?

Research Question Two: Does using reconstruction editing task in groups affect the learning of vocabulary items by Iranian EFL learners significantly?

Research Question Three: Is there any significant difference between the effects of performing output tasks in pairs or groups on the learning of vocabulary items as measured by the immediate posttest?

Research Question Four: Is there any significant difference between the effects of performing output tasks in pairs or groups on the retention of vocabulary items as measured by the delayed posttest?

3. Literature Review

Recently, research in second language acquisition (SLA) has encouraged the use of instructional tasks that increase learners’ interaction and their noticing second language forms (Long, 2006; Pica, 2007). One of the best ways to offer such opportunities is doing instructional activities where learners have to negotiate meaning, and simultaneously pay enough attention to feedback and language form (Pica,

Kang, & Sauro, 2006; Van den Branden, 2006). Besides, previous researchers (Swain, 1998; Swain & Lapkin, 2000; Watanabe & Swain, 2007) have indicated group discussions and interactions among learners aid second language acquisition because they help learners in their dealing with linguistic problems and in their constructing language or knowledge on it together. Learners can expand their mental abilities through collaborative negotiations since learners clearly pay attention to language forms while trying to express their intended message.

Storch (1999) measured the effect of learners' dialogue about their options in grammar tests on the correctness of their answers in doing a cloze passage, a reconstruction task, and a short essay. Eight students did the three assigned tasks individually and in pairs. The findings indicated that grammatical accuracy of the text improved in general but the effect differed for various grammar rules. For example, doing the cloze task collaboratively led to better decisions in verb tense/aspect choice and derivational morphology, but dialogue seemed to decrease their scores on the article test. Furthermore, when students did the tasks collaboratively, there were fewer errors and more correct sentences than while working alone.

Garcia and Asenci'ón (2001) also investigated the effect of interaction on the listening comprehension ability and the learning of new grammar rules between an group having interaction (n=18) and a non-interaction group (n=21). The learners completed a pretest, one dictogloss activity, and a listening test over a 3-week period. No significant difference was found between participants' production of the target grammar forms in the text reconstruction task, but the interaction group scored significantly higher on the listening comprehension task than the non-interaction group. The findings indicated that the learners in the interaction group provided scaffolding for each other and negotiated about language use.

Swain and Lapkin (2001) compared the effects of two collaborative output tasks on the degree of form-focusedness. The first group did a dictogloss in which students constructed a text that they had heard, and the second group completed a jigsaw task, in which pairs of students created a written story based on a series of pictures. Although no significant difference was found between the effects of two types of tasks on the overall degree of form-focusedness, the dictogloss task resulted in more accurate reproduction of the target forms. Swain and Lapkin (2002) argued that cooperative activities, along with the act of language production help language learning process because when learners produce the target language through collaboration, the language is used both to convey meaning and to develop meaning, which results in internalizing language forms.

Storch (2007) compared the effects of pair and individual work while doing an editing task and analyzed the nature of pair interaction to study the benefits of pair work. Four intact ESL tertiary classes acted as the participants of the research. Students in class A completed the task in pairs and in class B individually. In classes C and D students were free to choose the task in pairs or individually. All the pair talks in class A were audio recorded. Analysis of the edited texts showed that accuracy of tasks completed individually and those completed in pairs was not statistically significant. Findings also showed that most pairs engaged actively in the discussions and tried to reach correct resolutions. Although pair work on a grammar-focused task did not lead to greater task accuracy, it created opportunities for the learners to use the second language for a range of functions.

Reindeers' (2009) study investigated the effects of three types of production activities (a dictation, an individual reconstruction and a collaborative reconstruction activity) on the correct production and acquisition of the negative adverbs in English to find out if there was any relationship between uptake and acquisition. All the tasks were similar in producing the target structure but differed in (1) being completed individually or collaboratively; (2) the amount of text produced; and (3) their degree of complexity and cognitive demand. Although all the activities resulted in uptake, the

collaborative reconstruction, and the dictation activities led to greater uptake than the individual reconstruction activity. The researcher argued that a production activity might lead to increased uptake, but does not bring about increased acquisition.

Nassaji and Tian (2010) conducted an investigation to study the effect of collaborative and individual output tasks on the learning of English phrasal verbs. The participants came from two predetermined low-intermediate adult classrooms. Their learning was measured by how efficiently learners did the tasks and also through a vocabulary examination taken before and after the experiment. It was revealed that doing the tasks in groups resulted in a higher accuracy of tasks than doing them alone. However, doing the tasks collaboratively did not bring about any bigger gains of vocabulary knowledge than doing the tasks individually. However, the editing tasks was much more effective than the cloze tasks regarding the promotion of negotiation and learning.

Ghari and Moeenzadeh (2011) conducted a comparative study on the effects of reconstruction task and picture-cued writing tasks on the noticing and learning of past modals. The data came from the performance of 94 Iranian intermediate EFL learners taking English conversation classes in one of the language institutes in Isfahan. They took recognition and production tests of vocabulary as pretest and posttest with one month interval to remove the test effect. The reconstruction task group included 30 learners, 34 students did the picture-cued writing task as treatment, and 30 students did not receive any output. The researchers concluded that learners in both picture-cued writing task and reconstruction task learned better than the control group in noticing the target structures. Furthermore, picture-cued writing task group also outperformed the reconstruction task in promoting noticing of the target structure. Finally, regarding the acquisition of the target structure, although students in both output groups outperformed the control group, no significant difference was reported among the two output groups.

Ganji and Ketabi's (2015) study compared the effects of reconstruction cloze task and reconstruction editing task on the learning of English lexical collocations. They aimed to see whether collaborative tasks lead to more knowledge of the target collocations than performing the same exercises individually, and whether the task type would make a difference. The students of two intact intermediate classes participated in the study and completed four editing tasks or four cloze tasks either individually or collaboratively. They were also asked to take a Vocabulary Knowledge Scale (VKS) as pretest and posttest. It was revealed that performing the tasks in pairs produced a greater gain of collocation knowledge than doing them alone. The results, also, showed that cloze tasks were not as efficient as editing tasks in the learning of lexical collocations.

Although the studies mentioned above have studied the use of producing output including collaborative or individual output, a large number of them have addressed the learning of language structures. For example, past modals by Ghari and Moeenzadeh (2011), negative adverbs by Reinders (2009), production of new grammar forms by Garcia and Asenci'ón (2001), comparative adjectives by Dehghan and Mohammadi Amiri (2017), learning articles by Abadikhah and Harsini (2014), and grammatical accuracy by Storch (1999). Little research exists with regard to the effect of output in the promotion of other areas of language such as second language vocabulary acquisition (Ganji & Ketabi, 2015; Nassaji & Tian, 2014), collocations (Minaei & Rezaee, 2014), and phrasal verbs (Nassaji & Tian, 2010). Moreover, most of the studies (Ganji & Ketabi, 2015; Reinders, 2009) on collaborative output have indicated that doing the tasks collaboratively leads to better learning. Further, editing task has been shown to be more effective than other output tasks (Ganji & Ketabi, 2015; Nassaji & Tian, 2010). Thus, despite the strong pedagogical and theoretical arguments for the use of small group and pair work, there has been relatively little empirical research (Dobao, 2014) comparing small group and pair work in doing editing task.

4. Method

4.1. Participants

This study was conducted during a 2-month adult EFL program in the English classes of a private language institute located in Isfahan, Iran. Each semester consisted of 24 sessions, each one lasting for 90 minutes. The class was held three times a week on even days, and the treatment took place in the last 30 minutes of every session, thus lasting for two weeks. Two intermediate classes volunteered to participate in the study. The two classes were taught by the same teacher, who taught the same book in both classes. They were studying the book “Top Notch 1B”. There were 14 students in one class (Class A), and 16 students in the other class (Class B). Their ages ranged from 18 to 28. They were all Iranian and native speakers of Persian. They had attended English conversation classes for at least 6 months and had read the books Top Notch Fundamental A and B, and Top Notch 1A. There were 12 girls (five girls in class A and seven girls in class B) and 18 boys (nine boys in each class), divided unequally between the two classes.

4.2. Instrumentation

The first instrument utilized in this study was a vocabulary test, functioning both as pretests and posttest. Two days before the treatment in each class, the learners were pretested on their knowledge of the vocabulary items, and after the treatment their knowledge was posttested two times; one time two days later (Immediate Posttest) and another time one month later (Delayed Posttest). The researcher used a VKS for the pretest and posttest, which was developed by Paribakht and Wesche in 1996. This is not a usual test of vocabulary, but, as the word scale suggest, it is like a questionnaire. The VKS is a five-point scale that determines the lexical knowledge of the students on a continuum from no knowledge to producing the target word accurately in a semantically-and-grammatically-correct sentence. The pretest had 30 vocabulary items, since the researcher aimed to choose the least known vocabulary items for the treatment session (20 items). These twenty items were pretested, taught in the treatment sessions, and finally posttested two times later. This scale was chosen because it had been employed in the past studies for the same purpose (Folse, 2006; Kim, 2008) and it was shown to give an accurate measure of improvement in learning vocabulary. In this scale, score 1 means the student has not seen the vocabulary. Score 2 indicates he has seen the word before, but cannot provide the meaning, or if he provides a meaning or translation, it is wrong. Score 3 means the student has given a correct synonym or translation. Score 4 means using the word in a complete sentence but semantically or syntactically inaccurate. And a score of 5 is given when the sentence provided is both semantically and syntactically accurate.

VKS enjoys high reliability and the validity indexes, which is evidenced in a number of studies by Wesche and Paribakht (1996) and Joe (1995, 1998). In order to calculate its reliability, Wesche and Paribakht used this scale in a study with several groups of students, and a strong relationship was revealed (correlations of .92 to .97) between the students’ self-reported ratings on the elicitation scale and their real performances on the tests. This suggested that the participants reported their vocabulary knowledge of the vocabulary items quite accurately. As regards its validity, Read (2000) argued that the VKS scale is highly valid for studies conducted in the area of receptive-productive dimension of vocabulary knowledge. Since the current study aimed to assess gains of vocabulary knowledge in both of these dimensions, it therefore took advantage of this scale.

4.3. Data Collection and Analysis Procedure

The study consisted of a pretest, a five-session long treatment, an immediate posttest, and a delayed posttest of vocabulary items. At the beginning of the study, all the students in both classes took a pretest

of all the 20 vocabulary items through a VKS which is discussed in detail in the next section. The vocabulary items were taken from the Academic Vocabulary List by Jim Burke. There were 30 vocabulary items in the pretest since the researcher aimed to choose 20 vocabulary items that were unknown to the students. Thus, after conducting the pretest, the 20 least known items were chosen for the treatment and posttest, then the scores of the students for these 20 items were recorded as pretest scores. Since there were 20 vocabulary items in the pretest and all the responses were measured against a five-level VKS, the scores ranged from 20 to 100. The least score was 20 because if the student pointed out that she/he had not seen the vocabulary before, their score for each item was one.

After that, all the learners were first introduced to the target vocabulary items through an input-based lesson, in which they were not allowed or asked to produce any output, but just to match the lexical collocations with their Persian translations after the teacher read aloud the text including the vocabulary items under investigation to them. This input-based lesson was the same for all of the learners. Previous researchers believed that students should become familiar with the word and can recognize the language forms receptively before being required to produce it (Swain & Lapkin, 2007).

Then, the treatment which lasted five sessions started. One type of task was used in the treatment of the study, Reconstruction Editing Task (RET). In this task, the story which contained the vocabulary items was read for the students three times, and the students were asked to listen attentively and take notes on the content. When the reading of the text was finished, the students received the text of the story which contained erroneous vocabulary items, and they were asked to find the errors and correct them. Each task contained 6 errors, four of which were the vocabulary items under study and two irrelevant words. All of the students did the same kind of task; that is, the reconstruction editing tasks in both classes A and B. However, since the study aimed to investigate the influence of different groups sizes (two versus four) on the learning of vocabulary items, students in class A only did the reconstruction editing task in pairs, but students in class B did the task in groups of four.

Since there was one independent variable in the study with two different levels, independent samples and paired samples t-test are employed to see if the results of the test were significantly different or not. The descriptive statistics of the pretest and posttest are also presented.

5. Results

5.1. Checking the homogeneity

As has been discussed, all the students took a VKS test as the pretest of the study to show their knowledge of the vocabulary items before the treatment for later comparison with the posttests, and more importantly, to see if the vocabulary items were new to the students. There were 14 students in group A, the minimum score on the pretest was 20, and the highest mark was 38. In other words, one of the students had not seen any of the vocabulary items before. However, the minimum score in group B was 21, and the highest mark was 42. Although there was a slight difference between the means of the two groups, group B scoring a little higher, the groups' means did not differ very much (Group A, 28.71 and Group B, 30.87). In order to see if there was any significant difference in the performance of the two groups, and to check their homogeneity at the outset of the study, an independent samples t-test was employed. Table 1 displays the results of the t-test run on the scores of the pretest.

Table 1: Independent-samples t-test Results for the Vocabulary Pretest

	Levene's test		t-test		Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
	F	Sig.	t	Df					
Equal variances assumed	1.003	.325	-.905	28	.373	-2.16071	2.38840	-7.05312	2.73169

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare the scores of students in vocabulary pretest in both groups before the treatment. The t-test results indicated that there was no significant difference in the scores of group A ($M=28.71$, $SD=5.90$) and group B ($M=30.87$, $SD=7.02$); $t(28)=-0.905$, $p=0.373$. Thus, the results showed that the two groups did not differ significantly regarding their knowledge of the vocabulary items under investigation, and the vocabulary items were almost new to the students. Thus, the treatment started, and the two groups received the output tasks, doing them in groups or pairs.

5.2. Research Question One

In order to see if doing the reconstruction editing task in pairs used in group A had any effect on the learning of vocabulary items as measured by the immediate posttest, a comparison had to be made between the pretest and posttest scores of this group. But before that, it is better to analyze the performances of the students in the immediate posttest. The mean score of students in Group A changed from 28.71 to 47.78 from pretest to posttest. Thus, it seems that doing the reconstruction editing tasks in pairs has been beneficial for the immediate posttest. However, it was not clear whether this improvement from pretest to posttest was statistically significant or not. Thus, a pair-sample t-test was run on the scores of Group A before and after the treatment, the results of which are displayed in Table 2. Since this t-test compared the performances of the same students before and after the treatment, paired samples t-test was used. The results of the t-test suggested that there was a significant difference between the performances of students of group A in pretest ($M=28.71$, $SD=5.90$) and immediate posttest ($M=47.78$, $SD=10.425$); $t(13)=-6.845$, $p=0.000$. Thus, the performance of the students in Group A differed significantly from the pretest to the immediate posttest. Thus, doing the editing tasks in pairs significantly improved the students' knowledge of the vocabulary items.

Table 2: Results of Paired-Samples t-test for Pretest and Immediate Posttest (Group A)

	Mean	SD	SEM	Lower	Upper	DF	Sig
Group A	-19.0714	10.42530	2.78628	-25.09082	-13.05204	13	.000

5.3. Research Question Two

The second research question addressed the effect of doing the editing tasks in groups of four on the knowledge of vocabulary items as measured by the immediate posttest. The students' mean in this group improved from 30.87 in the pretest to 54 in the posttest. However, this should not seem like a miracle since some of the vocabulary items were new to the students in the pretest. Their lowest score was 45, and the highest score was 76. Therefore, group B which did the task in groups of four apparently improved more and obtained a better result, but it was not clear whether this difference was statistically significant or not. In order to compare the performance of students in Group B in pretest and immediate posttest, again a paired-samples t-test was run. Table 3 summarizes the results of the t-test.

Table 3: Results of Paired-Samples t-test for Pretest and Immediate Posttest (Group B)

	Mean	SD	SEM	Lower	Upper	DF	Sig
Group B	-23.1250	14.18861	3.54715	-30.68558	-15.56442	15	.000

The results of the t-test suggested that there was a significant difference between the performances of the students in group B in the pretest (M=30.87) and immediate posttest (M=54); $t(15)=-6.519$, $p=0.000$. Thus, the results indicated that doing the editing tasks in groups of four greatly boosted the students' knowledge of the vocabulary items, at least in the short-run.

5.4. Research Question Three

Research question 3 was about the possible difference between the effects of the two types of treatment used in the study. The researcher was of interest to know if doing the activities in different group sizes made any difference in the learning of the vocabulary items by the students in the immediate posttest. Table 4 presents the descriptive statistics of both groups in the immediate posttest. As the statistics shows, group B had a better performance than group A in the immediate posttest, their average mean score was 6.21 points higher than group B's average. However, descriptive statistics cannot predict whether there was any significant difference between the two methods of treatment or not.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics of Groups A and B On the Immediate Posttest

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Group A	14	35	59	47.78	6.85173
Group B	16	45	76	54	8.35764

Thus, an independent-sample t-test was run to investigate the differences between these two methods in the immediate posttest. The results of this analysis are shown in the table below. It can be seen that no significant difference was found between the performances of the students in group A (M=47.78) and group B (M=54); $t(28)=-1.325$, $p=0.196$. In other words, doing the tasks in groups of four resulted in greater learning on the part of students in the second group, but this difference was not statistically significant in the immediate posttest.

Table 5: Results of t-test for the Immediate Vocabulary Posttest

	Levene's Test				t-test				
	F	Sig.	t	DF	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	0.252	0.620	-1.325	28	.196	-6.214	4.690	-15.823	3.394

5.5. Research Question Four

The fourth research question was about the possible difference between the effects of the two methods of treatment on the learning of vocabulary items as measured by the delayed posttest of vocabulary. In other words, it aimed to investigate whether doing the tasks in pairs or groups made any difference in the learning of the vocabulary items or not. As the results show, the group which did the editing tasks in groups of four persons had a much better performance than the first group. Evidently, students in both groups had forgotten the meaning of some vocabulary items after one month, leading to a poorer performance in the delayed posttest than the immediate posttest. This is reflected in their mean scores and maximum scores.

Table 6: Descriptive Statistics of Groups A and B on the Delayed Posttest

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
Group A	14	36	43	37.29
Group B	16	47	68	51.50

However, descriptive statistics was not enough evidence for deciding if the difference in performance was significant or not. The results of the independent sample t-test which was run on the data of delayed posttest are summarized in Table 7 below.

Table 7: Results of t-test for the Delayed Vocabulary Posttest

	Levene's Test		t-test						
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	.296	.591	-2.94	28	.006	-14.214	4.832	-24.113	-4.314

As the results of the t-test indicate, unlike the immediate posttest which showed no significant difference between the two methods of the treatment, a significant difference was found between these two methods of teaching the vocabulary items. The results showed that there was a significant difference between the effect of doing the tasks in pairs in group A ($M=37.29$) and group B ($M=51.50$); $t(28)=-2.94$, $p=0.006$. It seemed different group arrangements could not bring about any significant difference in the learning in the short term, but it really made a difference in the long run, and students in the second group which did the tasks in groups outperformed the other group.

6. Discussion

This study investigated the effect of using one type of output task on the learning of 20 vocabulary items taken from 5 reading passages. The vocabulary items were taught at the last thirty minutes of each session, each session working on four items. The output task used in the treatment of this study was called Reconstruction Editing Task. In Reconstruction Editing Task, the students are presented with a listening passage. The listening passage is read for them three times and they are asked to listen carefully and take notes regarding the content. Then, they are given the text of the story with some mistakes in it. They have to find the mistakes and replace them with the correct words. In Group A, the students did the output task in pairs, but in the second group, the output task was done in groups with four students in each. The effect of these two methods was investigated in two vocabulary tests: one immediate posttest administered 2 days after the treatment, and one delayed posttest administered one month after the immediate posttest.

The first finding of the study was that both methods of doing the reconstruction editing task led to a significant increase in the learning of vocabulary items. This finding contrasts with the findings of the study conducted by (Nassaji & Tian, 2010). Nassaji and Tian found out that although editing and reconstruction tasks help students do the tasks better in the treatment; they do not lead to any increase in the learning of phrasal verbs. For one thing, phrasal verbs are more difficult to learn than simple single vocabulary items. Phrasal verbs are a part of English lexicon that most second language learners have problems with (Moon, 1997; Kao, 2001). Thus, guessing the meaning of phrasal verbs according to the context and working out the meaning might have proved to be a demanding task for students compared with single words. Another reason might be that the students in this study got familiar with the vocabulary items in the mini-input lesson by matching them with their Persian equivalents, but in

the study by Nassaji and Tian (2010), they were presented with their English synonyms. This technique might have helped the Iranian students retain the meaning of the vocabulary items better, since this is one of the most widely used techniques among Iranian EFL learners for vocabulary learning. Furthermore, when the students can remember the meaning of the words in their mother tongue, it is very likely that they can make sentences with or provide a synonym for them. Finally, the students in this study, as suggested by Nassaji and Tian, were trained by the teacher to work in teams and were shown how to guess the meaning of the vocabulary items according to the context, and were warned not to accept the suggestion offered by their friends without questioning and discussing it. However, this finding regarding the effects of editing task in the interactive mode is in line with the findings of past researches showing that involvement in collaborative tasks can lead to a better performance of tasks and help learners produce the target forms more accurately (Lapkin, Swain, & Smith, 2002; Reinders, 2009).

The second finding of the study was that there was no significant difference between the two methods of the treatment as shown by the immediate vocabulary posttest. The reason for finding no difference between these two methods might be that since the immediate posttest was administered very soon after the treatment, it is very likely that students could still remember the meaning of vocabulary items presented to them in the task. This is in line with the findings of (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Kulikova, 2015). They believe that rote learning of the vocabulary items is a very common strategy among Asian students. They assert that even rote repetition can be very effective if the learners are accustomed to using it. Furthermore, O'Malley, Chamot, Stewner-Manzares, Kupper, and Russo (1985) and Kulikova (2015) concluded that oral and written repetition of the new vocabulary items are the most frequent vocabulary learning strategies among EFL students. In other words, the effect of interaction and group discussion might be more pronounced and beneficial when there is some time interval between the treatment and the posttest. Students will probably forget the meaning of vocabulary items learned through repetition after two or three weeks.

Yet another finding of the study was that the group which did the output task in groups outperformed the other group which did the tasks in pairs in the delayed posttest. This was in line with the findings of Nassaji and Tian (2010) who found that editing task was an effective method for teaching phrasal verbs and led to more increase than reconstruction cloze task. There are different reasons for such superiority. The students in the groups talked about and gave feedback to each other about the meaning and use of the vocabulary items more than the students in pairs. This is due to the fact that there were more students in the group, so there will be different ideas regarding the correct answer and persuading all the students takes more time. However, in pair discussions, it was observed that although they were given 15 minutes to complete the tasks, most of them completed the task sooner. The negotiations occurring in the collaborative discussions might have directed the learners' attention to the words more and as a result must have brought about a deeper understanding and more permanent learning of the target items. Another reason might be that the one month period between the treatment and the delayed posttest might have led to the students' forgetting of some items which were answered by chance in the immediate posttest.

7. Conclusion and Implications

Researchers in the field of second language acquisition have recently encouraged the use of pedagogic tasks which facilitate the interaction and communication among the students and attending to the form of the language. The present study investigated the effect of using one kind of output task, reconstruction editing task, on the learning of 20 vocabulary items. The researcher also compared the effect of two conditions: pair versus group performance on the learning of vocabulary items in the immediate and delayed posttests. The results of the study revealed that both doing the editing task in pairs and groups of students did have a positive effect on the performance of the students in the

immediate posttest. It was also found that the two groups doing the task in pair and group conditions did not have a significant difference in the immediate posttest of vocabulary items. However, the group which did the output task in groups of four outperformed the other group which did the tasks in pairs in the delayed posttest. Thus, it seems that doing the editing tasks in groups of four leads to a greater learning of the vocabulary items in the long term. The final finding of the study was that they had a positive attitude towards the output tasks used in the study.

The results gained from the present study are useful for SLA researchers, materials developers, and language teachers. They can employ appropriate measures and methods to improve the performance of the students in the tests, help them learn vocabulary better and retain it longer. As for SLA researchers, they can clearly benefit from the findings of the present study since it has unclouded some mysteries and ambiguities regarding the effectiveness of output task in language learning. The study showed that editing tasks are very effective in vocabulary learning, and doing them in groups yields better results in vocabulary retention. Courses designers and materials developers especially in university ESP courses where the focus is on the reading ability can make use of such tasks. Since most of the tasks in these books are recognition-based and require the students to refer to specific parts of the text and copy the answer, this exercise can make them analyze the text deeper and learn it better. English language teachers can also employ such techniques in their classes to create a change in the learning conditions where the atmosphere is mostly teacher-centered and lecture-based. Editing tasks can create a relaxed atmosphere in the class, involve the students more in the learning process and free them from the monotonous reading and translating the texts.

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