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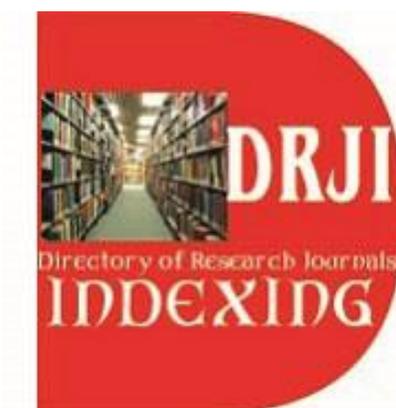
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# IRANIAN EFL LEARNERS' LANGUAGE LEARNING STYLE PREFERENCES AND EFL TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF SUCH PREFERENCES

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## ABSTRACT

THE AIM OF THE PRESENT STUDY WAS TO INVESTIGATE THE EXTENT TO WHICH, TEACHERS ARE AWARE OF THEIR STUDENTS' LEARNING STYLE PREFERENCES. THE PARTICIPANTS IN THIS STUDY WERE 176 EFL LEARNERS (MALE AND FEMALE) AND 30 MALE AND FEMALE TEACHERS TEACHING ENGLISH AT THREE OF THE MOST WELL-KNOWN LANGUAGE INSTITUTES IN SHIRAZ. THE INSTRUMENT USED IN THIS STUDY WAS A QUESTIONNAIRE IN TWO VERSIONS (FOR TEACHERS AND LEARNERS SEPARATELY) DEVELOPED BY BRINDLEY (1984) AND MODIFIED BY THE RESEARCHER. IN ORDER TO FIND OUT THE EXTENT TO WHICH TEACHERS ARE AWARE OF THEIR LEARNERS' LEARNING STYLE PREFERENCES, MULTIPLE INDEPENDENT SAMPLE T-TESTS WERE RUN. THE FINDINGS REVEALED THAT TEACHERS WERE WELL AWARE OF SUCH INTERESTS AND PREFERENCES, ONLY IN SOME CASES A FEW DISCREPANCIES WERE FOUND (COPYING FROM THE BOARD AS A LEARNING TECHNIQUE, AVOIDING VERBATIM TRANSLATION, BEING CORRECTED IMMEDIATELY, PREFERRED MEDIA OF LEARNING, GAMES AND ROLE PLAYS AS CLASS ACTIVITIES, AND SATISFACTION FROM GRADED WORKS).

**KEYWORDS:** LEARNERS' PREFERENCES, TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS, LEARNING STYLE

## 1. Introduction

Learning styles are described in different terms as: leaning preferences, sensory orientations, and intelligence styles. But what exactly learning styles or preferences are, needs to be discussed. The concept of learning style or preference has been described by many researchers in different ways. Reid (1998) defines learning styles as internally based characteristics often not perceived or consciously used by learners for the intake and comprehension of new information. Keef (1989) describes learning styles as the cognitive, affective, and physiological factors that serve as relatively stable indicators of how learners perceive, interact with, and respond to the learning environment. Included in this comprehensive definition are "cognitive styles," which are intrinsic information-processing patterns that represent a person's typical mode of perceiving, thinking, remembering, and problem-solving. Celce-Murcia (2001) defines learning styles as the general approaches-- for example, global or analytic, auditory or visual-- that students use in acquiring a new language or in learning any other subject. These styles are the overall patterns that give general direction to language behavior. The gist of all-above mentioned definitions is that

learning styles are the individual's characteristic and personal ways of processing information, feeling, and behaving in learning context and that they differ from one language learner to another.

While learners' preferences in learning are definitely of great importance, these are the teachers who have to put the theories of optimum learning into practice. So far, not many researchers have considered teachers' perceptions of learners' learning style preferences as the core of their studies.

Despite a large number of studies that have been carried out regarding learners' preferences, a few of them have emphasized teachers' styles and preferences in teaching as an indispensable part of such studies. Moreover, most teachers and learners are not aware of such differences in learning and teaching style, and those who are, rarely take them into account, practically.

## 2. Literature Review

It has been a long time since the scholars; teachers and applied linguists have taken learners' needs and preferences into consideration while setting the lesson plans and teaching. The more the teachers are aware of their students preferences in learning, the more effective are the methods applied by them, and the greater achievement and satisfaction is gained as a result, Thus, it is not surprising that along with the latest teaching methods focusing on learners' needs, more and more studies are concerned with learners, their needs and preferences as time goes by.

Learning styles have been classified in various ways by different educators and researchers through the years, of which several have been the basis of studies in this domain. The most general categorization seems to be offered by Reid (1995) who categorized learning styles in terms of cognitive; sensory, and personality learning styles. Brown (2000) considered tolerance of ambiguity as a style as well.

Another classification of learning styles was devised by Reid (1998). These six learning styles adopted from Reid's Perceptual Learning Style Preference Questionnaire are Visual, Auditory, Kinesthetic, Tactile, Group learning, and Individual learning.

Another thorough and frequently-cited model of learning style in different studies of this type is the one devised by Kolb in 1984. For the first time he devised this model based on his observations of the students' distress in classes due to mismatches between their learning styles and disciplinary majors (Kolb, 1981, cited in Montgomery & Groat, 1998). He considered learning styles on a continuum ranging from Concrete experience, Reflective observation, and Abstract conceptualization to Active experimentation.

In the 1940s, Briggs Myers developed the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), an instrument that measures, among other things, the degree to which an individual prefers sensing or intuition. This well-known model of identifying learners' learning styles devised by Briggs Myers and Cooks Briggs (McCaulley, *et al.*, 1983; Schroeder, 1993, cited in Montgomery and Groat, 1998) has been widely used in studies in this domain. It contains four dimensions classified as follows: Orientation to life, Perception, Decision making, and Attitude to the outside world.

Another well-known categorization is offered by Felder and Silverman (Felder, 1993; Felder and Silverman, 1988) who mention five aspects of learning styles of which two are a replication of Myers-Briggs and Kolb's model. Their model investigates learners' preferences for learning in terms of four dimensions: active v. reflective, sensing v. intuitive, visual v. verbal and sequential v. global.

One of the most noticeable studies in this domain was conducted by Reid in 1987. She examined 1388 students' perceptual learning style using Perceptual Learning Style Preference Questionnaire (PLSPQ). As a result, it was found that kinesthetic and tactile learning styles are strongly preferred by ESL learners in comparison to audio and visual styles. Like the results of similar studies, group learning was not appealing to most learners compared to individual learning.

According to the results of her study, graduate students were more interested in visual and tactile learning styles than undergraduates, though kinesthetic and tactile learning styles were preferred by both graduates and undergraduates learners.

Wintergerst, DeCapua, and Marilyn (2003) also examined the learning style preferences of three different populations (Russian EFL students, Russian ESL students, and Asian ESL students). It was uncovered through the findings that group works were preferred to individual works by all three groups, particularly by Russian EFL and Asian ESL students. Once more the role of cultural differences was emphasized in gaining the final results.

Stapa (2003) carried out a study among ESP learners at the National University of Malaysia. Her subjects were 53 students, who were doing a course called English for Hospitality Purposes offered by the Faculty of Language Studies, and three teachers, teaching these students. Adopting a questionnaire developed by Brindley (1984), the study aimed to investigate the styles preferred by these ESP learners and find out whether the teachers are aware of their students' learning preferences. The findings showed that students' preferences do indeed correlate with those of teachers in many instances.

Considering all of the above-mentioned works in this field and the increasing need for more comprehensive and various studies with different study contexts and variables, the present study was conducted to take a step toward confronting this topical issue in current world of teaching.

### 3. Objectives of the Study

Learners' preferences in learning have always been among topical issues in language teaching; taking such preferences and their variety among individual learners into consideration, the main objective of the present study is to investigate the extent to which the teachers are aware of their students' learning style preferences.

### 4. Research Question

Based on the objectives, this study seeks to answer the following question.

1. To what extent are teachers aware of their students' learning style preferences?

### 5. Methodology

#### 5.1. Participants

176 Iranian EFL learners (66 male and 110 female) and 30 (15 male and 15 female) Iranian EFL teachers from three most well-known language institutes in Shiraz (Iran Language Institute, Bahar and Navid language institutes) constituted the sample. The participants were all native speakers of Persian. The learner participants ranged from upper-intermediate to advanced learners in terms of proficiency level. The sampling strategy for selecting the participants was convenience sampling; since the researcher gathered the required data in the language institutes she was teaching and thus had access to.

#### 5.2 Instruments

The instrument used in this study was a 13-item questionnaire developed by Brindley (1984) and modified by the researcher. It asks about students' and teachers' name, sex, age, and learners' preferences in learning English and teachers' perceptions in this regard. This questionnaire is used to determine the learners' learning style preferences and teachers' perceptions of such preferences. The questionnaire has two versions: Version 1 (see Appendix A), is designed for students and Version 2 (see Appendix B), for teachers.

In Version 1, the students are supposed to state how they prefer to learn the language, for example, if they are satisfied with their achievement in English, whether they benefit from working in groups, pairs, or individually, and how they allocate and utilize time for inside and/or outside classroom (if they do), in addition to their preferred means of learning (e.g. listening, reading, note-making, copying from board, etc.); moreover their preferred ways of being corrected and getting informed about their improvement in language learning are evaluated through some other items in this questionnaire. In Version 2, the teachers are asked to express their opinions as to how they feel their students prefer to learn the language through similar items. In the current

version modified by the researcher, the original yes/no responses are converted to Likert scale responses as: 1= never, 2=hardly ever, 3=sometimes, 4= usually, 5= always.

To investigate the reliability of the questionnaires, the researcher conducted a pilot study. Then, the researcher ran two Cronbach's Alpha tests independently for the teachers' and learners' modified versions of the questionnaires. The results showed that the questionnaire demonstrated internal reliability, achieving an alpha coefficient of .860 for the items measuring students' learning preferences and .846 for those measuring teachers' perceptions of these preferences.

**6. Data Analysis**

In order to determine the extent of language teachers' awareness of EFL learners' learning style preferences, multiple *t*-tests were run for each item of the questionnaire separately. For analyzing the data, SPSS 16 was used.

**7. Results**

One of the main objectives of the current study is to examine the degree of agreement between teachers' and learners' responses to find out the extent to which the teachers are aware of the learners' preferences in learning and encourage them to apply the techniques by which optimal conditions for learning could be created. To do so, after evaluating teachers' and learners' responses regarding the preferred ways of learning separately, several independent *t*-tests were run. Tables 1 and 2 show the results of the descriptive statistics and the independent sample *t*-test of part A.

*Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Teachers' and Learners' Opinions about the Items of Part A*

	job	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Achievement satisfaction	learner	176	3.6250	.84600	.06377
	teacher	30	3.7333	.78492	.14331
learning individually	learner	176	2.77	1.350	.102
	teacher	30	2.93	1.285	.235
in pairs	learner	176	3.3352	1.15442	.08702
	teacher	30	3.7667	.93526	.17075
in small groups	learner	176	3.5227	1.11075	.08373
	teacher	30	3.6000	1.00344	.18320
in one large group	learner	176	3.1761	1.33853	.10090
	teacher	30	3.0333	1.15917	.21163

*Table 2. Independent Samples Test to Compare Teachers' and Learners' Opinions about Items of Part A*

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference

								Lower	Upper	
Achievement satisfaction	Equal variances assumed	.560	.455	-.655	204	.513	-.10833	.16544	-.43453	.21786
learning individually	Equal variances assumed	.570	.451	-.606	204	.545	-.161	.265	-.683	.362
in pairs	Equal variances assumed	3.682	.056	-1.940	204	.054	-.43144	.22239	-.86991	.00703
in small groups	Equal variances assumed	1.161	.283	-.357	204	.722	-.07727	.21651	-.50416	.34961
in one large group	Equal variances assumed	1.469	.227	.550	204	.583	.14280	.25965	-.36913	.65474

According to Table 2, the teachers' perceptions and the learners' preferences regarding the preferred ways of learning are not significantly different. Item B deals with the learners' preferences for learning in or outside the classroom. Tables 3 and 4 show the results.

**Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Teachers' and Learners' Opinions about the Items of Part B**

	job	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
learning in the classroom	learner	176	3.4261	1.13902	.08586
	teacher	30	3.1667	1.11675	.20389
learning in/outside classroom	the learner	176	3.8011	1.01430	.07646
	teacher	30	3.6333	.99943	.18247

Table 4. Independent Samples Test to Compare Teachers' and Learners' Opinions about Items of Part B

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
								Lower	Upper	
learning in the classroom	.457	.500	1.156	204	.249	.25947	.22436	-.18290	.70184	
			Equal variances not assumed	1.173	39.988	.248	.25947	.22123	-.18766	.70659
learning in/outside the classroom	.070	.792	.839	204	.402	.16780	.19993	-.22639	.56200	
			Equal variances not assumed	.848	39.873	.401	.16780	.19784	-.23209	.56769

The results of the *t*-test presented in Table 4, do not reveal great differences among teachers' and learners' responses in either cases. However in this part, based on the mean scores in Table 4, learners'

preferences for learning in/outside the classroom are a bit greater than teachers' expectations with the learners' means of 3.4 and 3.8 compared to those of the teachers as 3.1 and 3.6.

Item C of the questionnaire evaluates learners' preferences for learning techniques as learning by a) listening b) reading c) copying from the board d) listening and taking notes e) reading and making notes f) repeating what you hear and g) making summaries. Tables 5 and 6 show the pertaining results.

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics of Teachers' and Learners' Opinions about the Items of Part C

	job	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
learning by listening	learner	176	3.4943	1.20947	.09117
	teacher	30	3.2000	1.06350	.19417
learning by reading	learner	176	3.7500	1.03372	.07792
	teacher	30	3.6333	1.15917	.21163
copying from the board	learner	176	2.8011	1.17118	.08828
	teacher	30	3.3000	1.02217	.18662
listening and taking notes	learner	176	3.6136	1.18014	.08896
	teacher	30	3.5333	1.13664	.20752
reading and making notes	learner	176	3.4602	1.10511	.08330
	teacher	30	3.6333	.96431	.17606
repeating	learner	176	3.3750	1.24039	.09350
	teacher	30	3.1667	1.20583	.22015
making summaries	learner	176	3.3125	1.31326	.09899
	teacher	30	3.2000	1.03057	.18815

Table 6. Independent Samples Test to Compare Teachers' and Learners' Opinions about Items of Part C

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
learning by listening variances	1.863	.174	1.252	204	.212	.29432	.23502	-.16905	.75769

	assumed Equal variances not assumed			1.372	42.851	.177	.29432	.21451	-.13832	.72695
learning by reading	Equal variances assumed	1.468	.227	.561	204	.575	.11667	.20789	-.29321	.52655
	Equal variances not assumed			.517	37.282	.608	.11667	.22552	-.34017	.57350
copying from the board	Equal variances assumed	.257	.613	-2.194	204	.029	-.49886	.22738	-.94718	-.05054
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.416	43.074	.020	-.49886	.20645	-.91519	-.08254
listening and taking notes	Equal variances assumed	.451	.503	.346	204	.729	.08030	.23190	-.37693	.53754
	Equal variances			.356	40.411	.724	.08030	.22578	-.37588	.53648

	es not ass um ed									
reading and making notes	Equal vari anc es ass um ed	.871	.352	-.807	204	.421	-.17311	.21455	-.59613	.24991
	Equal vari anc es not ass um ed			-.889	43.080	.379	-.17311	.19477	-.56588	.21966
repeating	Equal vari anc es ass um ed	.899	.344	.854	204	.394	.20833	.24405	-.27284	.68951
	Equal vari anc es not ass um ed			.871	40.188	.389	.20833	.23918	-.27501	.69167
making sum marie s	Equal vari anc es ass um ed	5.611	.019	.446	204	.656	.11250	.25221	-.38478	.60978
	Equal vari anc es not ass um ed			.529	46.683	.599	.11250	.21261	-.31529	.54029

Table 6 indicates that the only difference observed among teachers' and learners' responses was in copying from the board (sig. =.02,  $p < .05$ ). According to Table 6, it seems that learners (mean =2.8) are less willing to learn through copying from the board than what the teachers (mean =3.3) expect.

Part D deals with different vocabulary learning strategies. The findings of the descriptive statistics and independent sample t-test are presented in Tables 7 and 8 below.

Table 7. Descriptive Statistics of Teachers' and Learners' Opinions about the Items of Part D

job	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Vocabulary learning using learner words in sentence.	176	3.9205	.99394	.07492
teacher	30	3.6667	1.12444	.20529
relationship between known learner and new	176	3.8636	1.00492	.07575
teacher	30	3.5333	1.04166	.19018
Saying & writing words several learner times	176	3.2443	1.22939	.09267
teacher	30	3.4000	1.19193	.21762
avoiding verbatim translation learner	176	3.0000	1.18563	.08937
teacher	30	2.5000	.93772	.17120
guessing unknown learner	176	3.1136	1.29113	.09732
teacher	30	2.8667	.86037	.15708
reading without looking up learner words	176	2.8466	1.22091	.09203
teacher	30	2.9000	1.09387	.19971

Table 8. Independent Samples Test to Compare Teachers' and Learners' Opinions about Items of Part C

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Vocabulary learning using words in sentence. Equal variances assumed	.903	.343	1.268	204	.206	.25379	.20019	-.14092	.64850
Equal variances not assumed			1.161	37.130	.253	.25379	.21854	-.18896	.69654

	varian- ces not ass- um- ed									
relationship betwe- en know- n and new	Equal var- ian- ces ass- um- ed	.052	.821	1.655	204	.099	.33030	.19954	-.06313	.72373
	Equal var- ian- ces not ass- um- ed			1.614	38.769	.115	.33030	.20471	-.08384	.74445
Saying writin- g word s sever- al times	&Equal var- ian- ces ass- um- ed	.024	.878	-.644	204	.520	-.15568	.24179	-.63242	.32105
	Equal var- ian- ces not ass- um- ed			-.658	40.252	.514	-.15568	.23652	-.63362	.32226
avoiding verba- tim transl- ation	Equal var- ian- ces ass- um- ed	.978	.324	2.194	204	.029	.50000	.22787	.05072	.94928
	Equal var- ian- ces not ass- um-			2.589	46.387	.013	.50000	.19313	.11135	.88865

guessing unknown own	Equal var ian ces ass um ed	10.283	.002	1.009	204	.314	.24697	.24474	-.23558	.72952
	Equal var ian ces not ass um ed			1.337	54.214	.187	.24697	.18479	-.12347	.61741
reading without looking up words	Equal var ian ces ass um ed	1.162	.282	-.225	204	.822	-.05341	.23775	-.52217	.41536
	Equal var ian ces not ass um ed			-.243	42.308	.809	-.05341	.21990	-.49708	.39026

According to Table 8, there is a significant difference among teachers' and learners' responses in avoiding verbatim translation (sig. =.02,  $p < .05$ ). Table 7 indicating higher mean score of the learners' responses to this item (mean=3) revealed their greater preferences for such strategy than teachers' expectations (mean =2.5). It seems that teachers do not think their students are willing to avoid verbatim translation; that may result from learners' great tendency towards finding an equivalent for every single target language word in their mother tongue which can easily be observed among EFL learners especially in Iran with non- native English teachers who share learners' native language.

Part E deals with error correction techniques. The researcher ran the independent sample t-test to compare the teachers' expectations and learners' preferences. The results are tabulated in Tables 9 and 10 below.

**Table 9. Descriptive Statistics of Teachers' and Learners' Opinions about the Items of Part E**

	job	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
immediate error correction	learner	176	3.3693	1.28507	.09687
	teacher	30	2.5000	1.13715	.20761
later, at the end, in front of everyone	learner	176	3.2955	.99896	.07530
	teacher	30	3.1000	.88474	.16153

later, in private	learner	176	3.0170	1.39581	.10521
	teacher	30	3.4667	1.27937	.23358
peer correction	learner	176	2.9432	1.32111	.09958
	teacher	30	3.1000	.95953	.17518
self-correction	learner	176	3.7386	1.10577	.08335
	teacher	30	2.8000	1.24291	.22692

Table 10. Independent Samples Test to Compare Teachers' and Learners' Opinions about Items of Part E

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
								Lower	Upper	
immediate error correction	.440	.508	3.479	204	.001	.86932	.24988	.37663	1.36201	
										Equal variances assumed
later, at the end, in front of everyone	1.573	.211	1.006	204	.316	.19545	.19427	-.18758	.57849	
										Equal variances assumed
later, in private	.102	.750	-1.650	204	.101	-.44962	.27255	-.98700	.08776	
										Equal variances not assumed
peer correction	5.652	.018	-.622	204	.534	-.15682	.25203	-.65374	.34010	
										Equal variances not assumed

	assumed									
self-	Equal variances assumed	.580	.447	4.219	204	.000	.93864	.22247	.50001	1.37726
correcti-	Equal variances not assumed			3.883	37.241	.000	.93864	.24175	.44892	1.42836

Considering error correction techniques in part E of the questionnaire, Table 10 reveals that there is a significant difference between teachers' perceptions and learners' preferences in the following items: immediate error correction (sig. =.00,  $p < .05$ ) and self-correction (sig. =.00,  $p < .05$ ). According to the results presented in Table 9, learners' preference for immediate error correction (mean = 3.3) compared to that of the teachers (mean=2.5), exceeded teachers' perceptions. Table 10 also shows that there is a significant difference between teachers' perceptions and learners' preferences regarding self-correction (sig. =.00,  $p < .05$ ). The greater desire for self-correction was expressed through learners' responses (mean = 3.7) compared to that of the teachers (mean= 2.8). In part F, preferred media of learning as: a) TV/Video/Films b) radio c) CDs/DVDs d) written material e) the whiteboard and f) pictures/posters are evaluated. Tables 11 and 12 illustrate the results of the descriptive statistics and the independent sample *t*-test.

Table 11. Descriptive Statistics of Teachers' and Learners' Opinions about the Items of Part F

	job	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
learning from TV/video/film	learner	176	4.3125	.93140	.07021
	teacher	30	4.2000	.92476	.16884
radio	learner	176	2.7841	1.24165	.09359
	teacher	30	2.3000	1.11880	.20426
CD/DVD	learner	176	3.8920	1.13376	.08546
	teacher	30	3.9333	1.04826	.19139
written material	learner	176	3.5057	1.11610	.08413
	teacher	30	4.0000	.83045	.15162
whiteboard	learner	176	3.3523	1.17147	.08830
	teacher	30	3.7333	1.11211	.20304
picture/poster	learner	176	3.6193	1.26377	.09526
	teacher	30	3.7333	1.08066	.19730

Table 12. Independent Samples Test to Compare Teachers' and Learners' Opinions about Items of Part F

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variance	t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence

						Diff ere nce	Diff ere nce	Interval of the Differe nce		
								Lower	Upper	
learning from TV/video/ film	Equal va ria nc es as su m ed	.033	.856	.612	204	.541	.11250	.18379	-.24986	.47486
	Equal va ria nc es no t as su m ed			.615	39.699	.542	.11250	.18285	-.25714	.48214
radio	Equal va ria nc es as su m ed	.106	.745	2.001	204	.047	.48409	.24195	.00704	.96114
	Equal va ria nc es no t as su m ed			2.155	42.147	.037	.48409	.22469	.03070	.93748
CD/DVD	Equal va ria nc	.983	.323	-.186	204	.852	-.04129	.22162	-.47825	.39567

Equal assumed variances not assumed			-.197	41.445	.845	-.04129	.20960	-.46444	.38187
written material Equal variances assumed	11.137	.001	-2.317	204	.021	-.49432	.21335	-.91496	-.07367
Equal variances not assumed			-2.851	48.839	.006	-.49432	.17340	-.84280	-.14584
whiteboard Equal variances assumed	.299	.585	-1.659	204	.099	-.38106	.22976	-.83407	.07195
Equal variances not			-1.721	40.766	.093	-.38106	.22141	-.82829	.06617

	t									
	as									
	su									
	m									
	ed									
picture/poster	Equal									
	va									
	ria									
	nc									
	es	2.489	.116	-.466	204	.642	-.11402	.24481	-.59669	.36866
	as									
	su									
	m									
	ed									
	Equal									
	va									
	ria									
	nc									
	es									
	no			-.520	43.703	.605	-.11402	.21909	-.55565	.32762
	t									
	as									
	su									
	m									
	ed									

In part F of this questionnaire; among these cases only radio (sig. =.04,  $p < .05$ ) and written material (sig. =.00,  $p < .05$ ) revealed significant differences. According to Table 12, teachers' perception of more popularity of written material among learners (mean=4) was higher than learners' actual willingness to this medium of learning (mean =3.5). Table 11 shows that although radio was more popular than what teachers expected ( the mean of 2.7 for learners' responses compared to that of the teachers as 2.3 ) , it was considered as the least popular medium of learning by learners compared to other media of learning in this item .

In part G of the questionnaire, learners were supposed to rate some class activities based on the performing frequency in their classrooms as: 1) role play 2) language games 3) songs 4) talking with and listening to other students 5) memorizing dialogues 6) getting information from guest speakers 7) getting information from planned visits 8) writing diary 9) learning about culture. Teachers also determined the frequency of applying these learning techniques in their classroom. The results are tabulated in Tables 13 and 14 as follows.

Table 13. Descriptive Statistics of Teachers' and Learners' Opinions about the Items of Part G

	job	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
role play	learner	176	3.1818	1.36525	.10291
	teacher	30	4.0667	1.14269	.20863
games	learner	176	2.8409	1.42938	.10774
	teacher	30	3.4333	1.33089	.24299
songs	learner	176	2.8523	1.56782	.11818
	teacher	30	2.9667	1.42595	.26034
talking with & listening to others	learner	176	3.8295	1.05529	.07955
	teacher	30	4.1333	1.07425	.19613

memorizing dialogs	learner	176	3.4830	1.36056	.10256
	teacher	30	3.6667	1.37297	.25067
getting info from guest speakers	learner	176	3.1023	1.37354	.10353
	teacher	30	2.7667	1.52414	.27827
getting info from planned visits	learner	176	2.9886	1.36900	.10319
	teacher	30	2.6667	1.34762	.24604
writing a learning diary	learner	176	2.7727	1.31129	.09884
	teacher	30	2.9000	1.32222	.24140
learning about culture	learner	176	3.5682	1.16418	.08775
	teacher	30	3.7000	1.17884	.21523

Table 14. Independent Samples Test to Compare Teachers' and Learners' Opinions about Items of Part G

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
role play	Equal variances assumed	3.739	.055	-3.353	204	.001	-.88485	.26386	-1.40510	-.36460
	Equal variances not assumed			-3.804	44.394	.000	-.88485	.23263	-1.35356	-.41614
games	Equal variances assumed	.590	.443	-2.118	204	.035	-.59242	.27965	-1.14380	-.04105
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.229	41.260	.031	-.59242	.26580	-1.12912	-.05573
songs	Equal	4.605	.033	-.374	204	.709	-.11439	.30585	-.71743	.48864

	Equal	variances assumed									
		variances not assumed			-1.400	41.888	.691	-.11439	.28591	-.69143	.46264
talking with & listening to others	Equal	variances assumed	.015	.902	-1.454	204	.148	-.30379	.20898	-.71583	.10825
		variances not assumed			-1.435	39.149	.159	-.30379	.21165	-.73183	.12426
memorizing dialogues	Equal	variances assumed	.282	.596	-.683	204	.496	-.18371	.26909	-.71427	.34685
		variances not assumed			-.678	39.338	.502	-.18371	.27084	-.73138	.36396
getting info from guest speakers	Equal	variances assumed	1.390	.240	1.217	204	.225	.33561	.27573	-.20804	.87925
		variances not assumed			1.130	37.466	.266	.33561	.29690	-.26573	.93694
getting info from planned visits	Equal	variances assumed	.001	.974	1.193	204	.234	.32197	.26981	-.21001	.85395
		variances			1.207	39.895	.235	.32197	.26681	-.21731	.86125

	not assumed									
writing learning diary	Equal variances assumed	.003	.954	-.491	204	.624	-.12727	.25932	-.63856	.38401
	Equal variances not assumed			-.488	39.355	.628	-.12727	.26086	-.65475	.40021
learning about culture	Equal variances assumed	.038	.846	-.572	204	.568	-.13182	.23037	-.58602	.32239
	Equal variances not assumed			-.567	39.264	.574	-.13182	.23243	-.60185	.33821

According to Table 14, Learners' responses are in agreement with those of the teachers in almost all cases except applying role plays (sig. =.00,  $p < .05$ ) and language games in classes (sig. =.03,  $p < .05$ ). Concerning the results of the descriptive statistics, language games are the least common activity in classrooms in learners' opinions (mean =2.8). However, teachers believe in applying language games more than what the students imagine (mean= 3.4). Role play was also the area of discrepancies among the teachers and the students (sig. =.00,  $p < .05$ ). Teachers believe in higher frequency of role play and interaction among the students in their classes (mean =4.01) compared to the students' opinions in this regard (mean =3.1).

The results of the descriptive statistics and the independent sample t-test for the items of part H which ask about the way learners prefer to learn about their progress in language learning are depicted in Tables 15 and 16.

Table 15. Descriptive Statistics of Teachers' and Learners' Opinions about the Items of Part H

	job	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
find improving by tasks	learners	176	3.3466	1.04706	.07892
	teacher	30	3.6000	.81368	.14856
real-life language use	learner	176	4.1534	.89716	.06763
	teacher	30	4.1667	.87428	.15962

Table 16. Independent Samples Test to Compare Teachers' and Learners' Opinions about Items of Part H

	Levene's Test for t-test for Equality of Means
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		Equality of Variances		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.						Lower	Upper
		find	Equal variances assumed						1.952	.164
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.506	47.060	.139	-.25341	.16822	-.59181	.08500
real-life	Equal variances assumed	.163	.687	-.075	204	.940	-.01326	.17657	-.36140	.33489
	Equal variances not assumed			-.076	40.131	.939	-.01326	.17336	-.36359	.33707

According to Table 14, teachers' and learners' opinions toward the items of part H of the questionnaire are highly close together and few differences are considered as dispensable. Part I deals with the way through which they get a sense of satisfaction from learning. The results are presented in Tables 17 and 18.

Table 17. Descriptive Statistics of Teachers' and Learners' Opinions about the Items of Part I

	job	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
satisfaction from graded works	learner	176	3.5284	1.03056	.07768
	teacher	30	4.0333	.88992	.16248
being told you made progress	learner	176	3.7159	.93746	.07066
	teacher	30	3.8333	1.13664	.20752
feeling confident in previous hard situations	learner	176	3.9830	.93488	.07047
	teacher	30	3.9667	1.03335	.18866

Table 18. Independent Samples Test to Compare Teachers' and Learners' Opinions about Items of Part I

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
								Lower	Upper	
satisfaction from graded works	6.609	.011	-2.527	204	.012	-.50492	.19984	-.89895	-.11090	
			-2.804	43.398	.008	-.50492	.18009	-.86802	-.14183	
being told you made progress	1.689	.195	-1.183	204	.130	-.11742	.19126	-.79452	-.04033	
			-1.904	36.035	.165	-.11742	.21922	-.86201	.02716	
feeling confident	.034	.855	.087	204	.931	.01629	.18755	-.35349	.38607	



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# THE EFFECT OF FLASH CARD-BASED INSTRUCTION ON VOCABULARY LEARNING BY EFL LEARNERS

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## ABSTRACT

THE PRESENT STUDY SOUGHT TO INVESTIGATE THE EFFECT OF FLASH CARD-BASED INSTRUCTION ON VOCABULARY LEARNING AMONG INTERMEDIATE EFL LEARNERS WITH A CONSIDERATION OF THE ROLE GENDER. THE STUDY WAS A QUANTITATIVE ONE. THE PARTICIPANTS WERE 60 IRANIAN MALE AND FEMALE EFL LEARNERS GROUP WHO WERE SCREENED BY THE OXFORD PLACEMENT TEST (2011) AS HOMOGENEOUS GROUP IN TERMS OF PROFICIENCY LEVEL. HAVING RECEIVED A 10-HOUR TREATMENT USING FLASH CARD-BASED AND CONVENTIONAL INSTRUCTION OF VOCABULARY RESPECTIVELY, BOTH GROUPS RECEIVED A POST TEST OF READING COMPREHENSION TO ASSESS THEIR READING COMPREHENSION KNOWLEDGE. T-TEST-BASED ANALYSIS OF THE DATA SUGGESTED SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE TWO METHODS OF TEACHING IN FAVOUR OF THE FLASHCARD-BASED INSTRUCTION OF VOCABULARY. HOWEVER, THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MALE AND FEMALE PARTICIPANTS IN VOCABULARY LEARNING WAS NOT FOUND TO BE SIGNIFICANT. THE MAJOR IMPLICATION OF THE STUDY IS THAT FLASHCARD-BASED INSTRUCTION AS AN IMPORTANT METHOD OF VOCABULARY LEARNING SHOULD RECEIVE FURTHER ATTENTION IN LANGUAGE TEACHING PROGRAMS.

**KEYWORDS:** FLASHCARD-BASED INSTRUCTION; VOCABULARY LEARNING; INTERMEDIATE LEVEL.

## Introduction

Successful second language learning has been a great concern of applied linguists. It is believed that words are the heart of any language which makes the process of learning easier. Aitchison (1989) found words as a tool of thought, and one will often find that he is thinking inappropriately because he is using the wrong tool. According to Rivers (1983), the acquisition of an adequate vocabulary is essential for successful second language use because, without an extensive vocabulary, one will be unable to use the structures, and functions we may have learned for comprehensible communication. Laufer (1997) has the same opinion about vocabularies and believes that no comprehension accrues, unless there is an understanding of text's words. Therefore vocabularies as the indispensable components of language have always received a great attention.

Vocabulary learning and teaching has been considered as one of the most important mechanisms of any educational program since early on. Thornbury (2004) stated that much of development of new approaches to language teaching is 'word-centered'. It also should be noted that teaching

vocabulary is supposed to not only consists of teaching specific words but also aims at providing learners with strategies necessary to speed up their vocabulary knowledge (Hulstjin, 1993, cited in Morin & Goebel, 2001). Teachers have been using many techniques to help the learners to develop their knowledge of vocabularies in quality and quantity. Words can be learnt verbally and visually; since verbally refers to the old-fashion way of learning vocabulary like reading and memorizing, most attention has been drawn on visual techniques like pictures, flashcard-based instruction, photographs, word pictures, and wordlists.

Reviewing recent teaching methodologies, could confirm that except Reading Method which emphasizes on reading and vocabulary control. Other teaching methodology did not address vocabulary in any principled way. According to Brown (2001) Grammar-Translation focused on grammar teaching and translation as language practice, the Direct Method dealt with oral skills, the Audio-Lingual tried to build good language habits through drills, and Communicative Language Teaching emphasized on fluency over accuracy.

During the first part of the twentieth century, several scholars were working on ways to lighten students' vocabulary learning load. Particularly as applied to reading, they developed principles of presenting common vocabulary first, and limiting the number of new words in any text. Later on, many books and word lists have been presented to help the learners to organize their vocabulary knowledge. Since then, many studies have been conducted to present some strategies for vocabulary learning, and flashcard-based instruction as one of the popular strategies was in most of these studies.

According to Walters and Bozkurt (2009), vocabulary notebooks are frequently advocated as a way for students to take control of their vocabulary learning. The study attempted to lend empirical support to these claims, by investigating the effect of vocabulary notebooks on EFL students' vocabulary acquisition. These findings lead the authors to conclude that vocabulary notebooks can be an effective learning tool in EFL classrooms, but positive impacts on learner autonomy may not be seen in the absence of appropriate motivation for language learning. Başoğlu and Akdemir (2010) conducted a study on the comparison of undergraduate students' English vocabulary learning using mobile phones and flash card-based instruction. Results indicated that using mobile phones as a vocabulary learning tool is more effective than one of the traditional vocabulary learning tools. Erbey, Mclaughlin, Derby and Everson (2011) studied the effects of using flashcard-based instruction with reading racetrack to teach letter sounds, sight words, and math facts to elementary students with learning disabilities. The purpose of this study was to measure the effects of reading racetrack and flashcard-based instruction when teaching phonics, sight words, and addition facts. The results show that some students had more success with it than others. Baleghizadeh and Ashoori (2011) presented a study to observe students' responses to teaching vocabulary using flash card-based instruction and word lists. But they have got a different result; they found no significant difference in the efficacy of either of the two techniques. Komachali and Khodareza (2012) also conducted a study to investigate the effect of using vocabulary flash card on Iranian pre-university students' vocabulary knowledge. The results showed the students in the experimental group outperformed the students in the control group in their vocabulary knowledge. Hence, it was concluded that the contribution of vocabulary flash card in teaching vocabulary to students led to a higher level of vocabulary improvement. Khodashenas, Farahani and Alishahi (2014) attempted to investigate the effect of using flash card-based instruction in comparison to educational cartoons on vocabulary learning of the intermediate English as a Foreign Language learners. After administrating a vocabulary pretest all 44 participants of the study were randomly selected to form the experimental and comparison groups of the study. In the experimental group the participants were taught through the using of Magic English cartoons, while the participants of the comparison group were taught through the use of flash card-based instruction. After the instruction a post test was administered to both groups. The result of the study indicated that there was a statistically significant

difference between the groups. Therefore, it was concluded that the use of Magic English series could improve the students' vocabulary knowledge.

A flashcard is a set of card-based instruction bearing information, as words or numbers, on either or both sides, used in classroom drills or in private study. One writes a question on a card and an answer overleaf. Flashcard-based instruction can bear vocabulary, historical dates, formulas or any subject matter that can be learned via a question-and-answer format. Flashcard-based instruction is widely used as a learning drill to aid memorization by way of spaced repetition. According to Brown (2000), one main advantage of flash card-based instruction is that, they can be taken almost anywhere and studied whenever one wants.

Students often find vocabulary as the main obstacle in acquiring a second language. They also believe that poor vocabulary knowledge blocks their reading and listening comprehension which cause problems in communication. Most foreign language teachers can confirm that most learners have no special way for learning vocabulary, they usually write the new words in a notebook and the definition next to it. They do not know how they can learn words in an easy way. The present study is an attempt in the direction of tackling the problems of vocabulary learning and offering a technique (using flash card-based instruction) in learning vocabulary.

As it was discussed earlier, lack of needed vocabulary is found to be the main cause of learner's inability in communication activities. According to Celce-Murcia (1991), one effective way to help learners in communication is to increase their vocabulary knowledge. Also, Chastain (1988) stated that, vocabulary usually plays a greater role in communication than the other components of language. And many other scholars like Laufer (1997), believe that lexical problem, hinder successful comprehension. Hence, because of this important attribution in the process of vocabulary learning and enhancement, the present paper aims at investigating the effect of flash card-based instruction on vocabulary learning in English as a foreign language context.

In order to address this objective, two research questions followed in the form of their respective null hypotheses were posed as follows:

1. *Does flash card-based instruction have any significant effect on learning vocabulary on Iranian intermediate learners?*
2. *Is there any significant difference between male and female EFL learners regarding the effect of flashcard-based instruction on vocabulary learning?*

#### Method

The participants were 60 Iranian male and female EFL learners group who were screened by the Oxford Placement Test (2011) as homogeneous group in terms of proficiency level. Having received a 10-hour treatment using flash card-based and conventional instruction of vocabulary respectively, both groups received a post test of reading comprehension to assess their reading comprehension knowledge. *504 Absolutely Essential Words* book and flashcard (Bromberg, Liebb and Traiger, 2005) were used to teach the participants some new vocabularies.

Those words were first presented to learners in three sample sentences; next, the new words appeared in a brief passage; the last part of each lesson was a set of exercises that gave learners practice using the new words. One of the most important features of the book was that each of the new words was repeated over and over again throughout the book so that learners would have a greater chance to become familiar with it. The book had also a comprehensive flashcard-based instruction which contained all vocabularies in the same order, but there was no exercise.

And a researcher-made test on first 6 units of *504 absolutely essential words* was to find out the effect of teaching. In order to have an accurate result on vocabulary, a careful selection of different tests existed in the book was made. The test consisted of 50 questions that should have been answered in 35 minutes. All items in the test were either multiple choice questions or filling the blanks items, and there were no essay type question.

In order to check the reliability of the instruments, a pilot study was carried out with 16 EFL learners similar to the participants of the study to ensure the reliability of the tests through KR 20

technique. The resulting value was found to be .83 which is indicative of high reliability of the instrument.

After selecting the final participants they were randomly placed in two different classes. The participants were taught the first six unit of the book in two different ways. In Class A which was the controlled group *the book* were used and in Class B which was the treatment class the *flashcard-based instruction* of the same book were utilized. In both classes six units were taught in six sessions (one in each session). At the end the research-made test of the book were taken. In order to eliminate any possible difference in two classes, the two classes took the test together.

**Data Analysis and Results**

**Investigation of the first Research Question**

In order to address the first question, before any special analysis, mean, mode and standard deviations of two sets of scores were calculated for further actions. This descriptive data is outlined in tables 1 and 2.

Table 1  
Descriptive statistics of the scores

Class	Mean	Mode	Standard Deviation
Class A	34.73	50	6.74
Class B	44.4	50	4.83

Table 2  
Group Statistics

	Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Vocabulary Test	Class B	30	44.4000	4.83949	.88357
	Class A	30	34.7333	6.76672	1.23543

As Figure 1 presents, participants in Class B had a better performance than participants in class A.

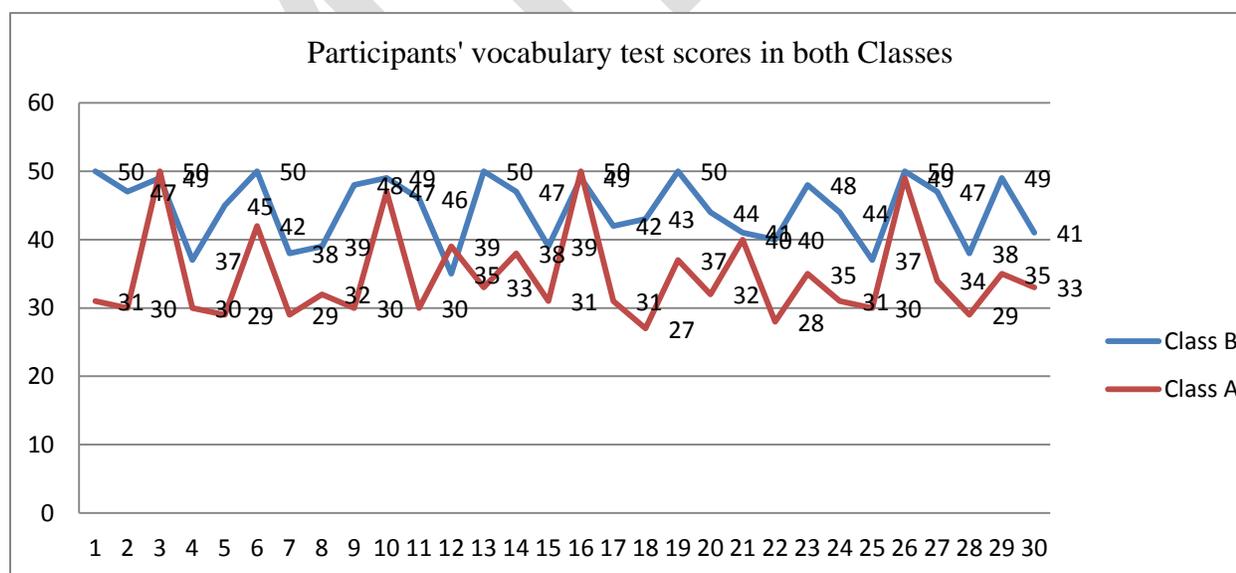


Figure 1. Distribution of participants' vocabulary test scores in both Classes

**Inferential Statistics: Independent T-Test**

In order to see the differences between the two classes of the study, the mean scores of the participants were calculated and an independent samples t-test was administered. (Table 3)

Table 3  
Independent Samples Test

		t-test for Equality of Means						
		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
							Lower	Upper
Vocabulary Test	Equal variances assumed	6.364	58	.000	9.66667	1.51887	6.62631	12.70702
	Equal variances not assumed	6.364	52.515	.000	9.66667	1.51887	6.61954	12.71380

In Class A which was the controlled class and the book 504 absolutely essential words was taught in a usual way, the mean was reported to be **34.73**. In the second class which the participants were taught by 504 absolutely essential words flashcard-based instruction, the scores had the mean score of **44.40**. As it can be seen, the difference between the means of two classes is about 10. The T-Test reported the difference of the two means to be **Significant**; the T-value is 6.364. The P-Value is < 0.00001. The result is significant at  $p < 0.01$ .

**Investigation of the Second Research Question**

In order to address the second question, the performance of the participants in Class B and Class B was measured considering the gender factor, which shows no great difference between male and female participants (as illustrated in Table 4 and Figure 2).

Table 4  
Group Statistics

	Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Vocabulary Test	Male	11	45.2727	4.94148	1.48991
	Female	19	43.8947	4.84074	1.11054

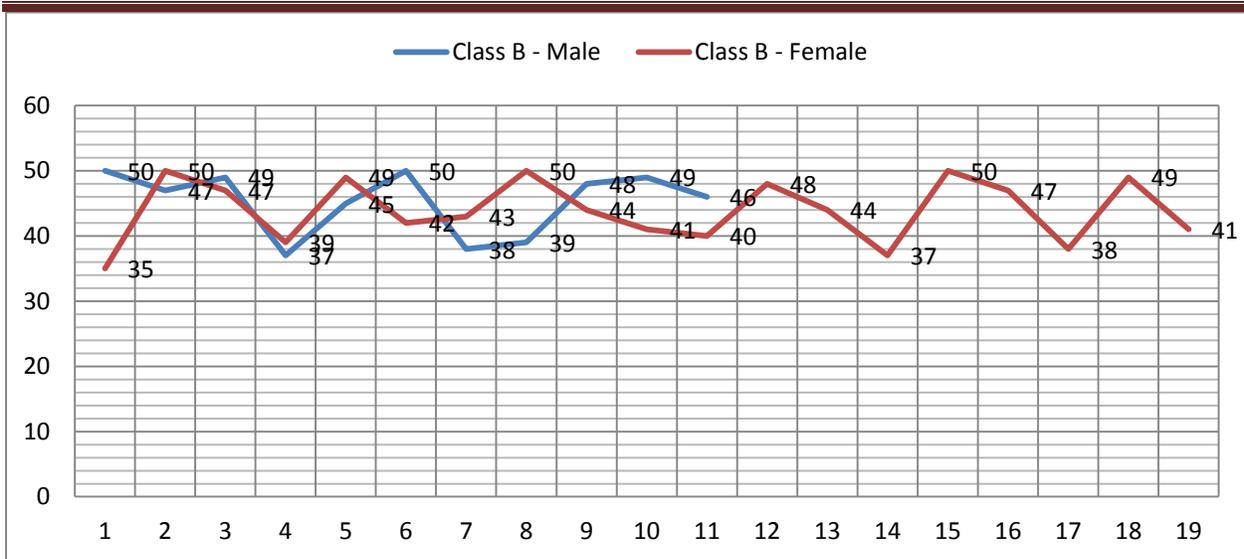


Figure 2. Distribution of vocabulary test scores in Class B among different Gender

**Inferential Statistics: Independent T-Test**

For the sake of the second research question of the study regarding gender, the difference between the mean of male performance in Class B and female performance in Class B was also calculated. As it was reported the mean of male participants was **45.27**, and female participants was **43.89**. As it can be guessed the difference was reported **not** to be **Significant**. The T-value is 0.746. The P-Value is 0.462. The result is *not* significant at  $p < 0.05$  (Table 5).

Table 5

**Independent Samples Test**

		t-test for Equality of Means						
		t	df	Sig.	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
							Lower	Upper
Vocabulary Test	Equal variances assumed	.746	28	.462	1.37799	1.84772	-2.40689	5.16287
	Equal variances not assumed	.742	20.656	.467	1.37799	1.85826	-2.49040	5.24638

**Discussion and Conclusion**

The findings of the study confirmed the positive effect of using flashcard-based instruction on vocabulary learning among intermediate learners. This finding is in contrast with Khodashenas, Farahani, and Alishahi (2014) who did not find any special difference between using flashcard-based instruction and the conventional way teaching vocabulary. But the finding is in line with Altiner (2011) which also found the positive effect of using flashcard-based instruction on

vocabulary learning. The result had also the same result like Kornell (2009) and Komachali and Khodareza (2012). Another study that was in line with this finding was Lin-Fang's (2013) which found using flashcard-based instruction as one of the most important factors of affecting vocabulary learning. The last study which had the same result was Sinaei and Asadi (2014), in that study the positive effect of using flashcard-based instruction on vocabulary learning among elementary and intermediate learners of English has been proved.

The other finding of the study, worth of mentioning, is that both males and females in the class which flashcard-based instruction was used, perform better than males and female in the controlled class, and also in the experimental class, no significant difference between males and females participants of the study has been reported. The finding was in line with Kornell (2009) which found no significant difference across gender regarding the effect of using flashcard-based instruction on vocabulary learning. This was also the case in Başoğlu and Akdemir (2010) study.

The finding confirmed a significant effect of using flashcards on vocabulary learning on intermediate EFL learners. So the null hypothesis that "Using flash cards has no effect on learning vocabulary by Iranian intermediate learners" is rejected. The findings also reported no significant difference between male and female learners regarding the effect of using flashcards on vocabulary learning.

Since the effect of using flashcard-based instruction on vocabulary learning has been reported to be positive and significant, in any language program, flashcard-based instruction should be focused on more than ever. Based on this conclusion, it is suggested in order to have a more comprehensive teaching of vocabulary, present vocabularies in flashcard-based instruction which can cause a better learning of words which later leads to a faster learning of the language. The study predicts better learning when students are assigned some activities using flashcard-based instruction.

As the effect of using flashcard-based instruction on vocabulary learning was significantly positive, the first and foremost study which comes to one's mind is a study on other materials like word list. The effect of flashcard-based instruction on other areas of language learning like writing is also an interesting topic. The same study on other level of proficiency like advanced is also suggested. The other topic which is worth of mentioning is the effect of age in the same study or conducting the same study across different of participants. Finally, looking back on the abovementioned suggestions and the findings of the present study, it seems evident that the effect of using flashcard-based instruction on vocabulary learning is not negligible. Therefore, the current study suggests more studies on this issue with different levels of proficiency, different age groups, and wider context. It is hoped that the future research shed light on the role of this important variable in language learning and provide us with deeper insights into how vocabulary learning can be dealt with in language classes.

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# EFFECT OF CONSCIOUSNESS - RAISING TASKS ON IRANIAN EFL LEARNERS' AUTONOMY

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## ABSTRACT

USING TASKS FOR LEARNING SECOND OR FOREIGN LANGUAGE HAS BEEN A RECENTLY DEBATED SUBJECT. IT IS SUPPOSED THAT IT TRIGGERS MOTIVES OF THE LEARNERS IN SUBCONSCIOUS LEARNING PROCESSES. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING AUTONOMOUS LEARNERS HAS BECOME ONE OF THE MORE PROMINENT THEMES. RESEARCHES SHOW THAT LEARNER AUTONOMY CAN CORRELATE WITH SUCCESSFUL LEARNING. THE GOAL OF THIS STUDY WAS TO INVESTIGATE WHETHER USING CONSCIOUS RASING (CR) TASKS AS A KIND OF TASK-BASED INSTRUCTION HAVE ANY EFFECT ON IRANIAN EFL LEARNERS' AUTONOMY. THE AVAILABLE PARTICIPANTS CONSISTED OF 49 SECOND- YEAR STUDENTS OUT OF 60 STUDENTS OF TWO CLASSES AT MIAD HIGH SCHOOL, ISFAHAN, IRAN SELECTED BASED ON THEIR SCORES ON OXFORD PLACEMENT TEST AND IDENTIFIED AS PRE-INTERMEDIATE LEVEL, THEN PLACED RANDOMLY IN TWO EXPERIMENTAL AND CONTROL GROUPS. FOR MEASURING SUBJECTS' LEVEL OF AUTONOMY, THE STANDARD AUTONOMY QUESTIONNAIRE WAS ADMINISTRATED AS PRE AND POST TEST FOR BOTH CONTROL AND EXPERIMENTAL GROUP. WHILE THE EXPERIMENTAL GROUP RECEIVED 7 SESSIONS OF CR TASKS, THE CONTROL GROUP RECEIVED NO SPECIAL TRAINING. AFTER THE EXPERIMENT, THE SAME AUTONOMY QUESTIONNAIRE WAS ADMINISTRATED AS POSTTEST FOR BOTH GROUPS. THEN THE DATA OF THE STUDY WAS ANALYZED BY T-TEST, USING SPSS SOFTWARE. THE RESULT SHOWED A SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE BETWEEN EXPERIMENTAL GROUP AND CONTROL GROUP BY USING (CR) TASKS. IT CAN BE CONCLUDED THAT USING CR TASKS CAN BE AN EFFECTIVE WAY FOR DEVELOPING LEARNERS' AUTONOMY. THE FINDING OF THIS STUDY COULD BE HELPFUL FOR EFL TEACHERS IN PROVIDING TOOLS FOR THE STUDENTS TO GIVE THEM OPPORTUNITIES TO BECOME AUTONOMOUS IN LEARNING, AND FOR THE STUDENTS IN MOTIVATING THEM TO LEARN ENGLISH LANGUAGE MORE EFFICIENTLY, AND FOR SYLLABUSES DESIGNERS TO INCLUDE CR TASKS IN EFL MATERIALS.

**KEYWORDS:** SUBCONSCIOUS LEARNING PROCESSES, LEARNER AUTONOMY, TASK-BASED INSTRUCTION, CONSCIOUSNESS-RAISING TASK

## 1. Introduction

In the field of 21<sup>st</sup> century education, curriculum designers are increasingly focusing on quality of learning and learner development in foreign language instruction. The movement towards learner-

centered approach in which students acquire foreign language proficiency more quickly and effectively (Kajira, 2006) has led to emphasis on the value of learners' autonomy in promoting their development.

The autonomy represents the capacity for learners to recognize their responsibility for learning and take an active role in all aspects of learning process. One of the major aims of English language curriculum has been to foster learner autonomy by placing learner at the center of quick instructional process. Considering the importance of the role of the learner in the learning processes, language curriculum designers have endeavor to develop autonomous and independent learners who can take control and the responsibility of their own learning. The learner autonomy promotion is not merely telling the students to become autonomous learners but, in fact the focal points of learning, teaching and assessment strategies should be changed from passive to active approach in order to facilitate the student development of necessary skills for their successful adoration of autonomous learner (Railton & Watson, 2005).

Various teaching techniques have been introduced to improve autonomy of learner in language learning. Some of techniques are related to task-based instruction (TBI). TBI is a different way to teach language. It can help the students by placing them in a situation in the real world, a situation where real communication occur for doing a special ask. In fact, they make students to use their skills at their current level to help developing language through its use. Task-based instruction or task-based language teaching (TBLT) is based on the assumption that learners learn a language through communication, as in first language acquisition and naturalistic L2 acquisition (Ellis, 2005). It can be considered as a branch of communicative language teaching.

There are a number of tasks like structure-based production tasks, comprehension tasks and consciousness-raising tasks that researchers have set for learner curriculum. Consciousness-raising tasks are activities that can help learners build their conscious knowledge of understanding of how the language works grammatically. Thus, the desired outcome of a CR task is awareness of how some linguistic features works. CR approach helps the learner to draw attention respectably to formal and semantic features of linguistic forms with the goal of implicit knowledge for the learner that includes inductive learning and makes no promises about when and where students will masters the content (Ellis, 2003). In other words, this approach provides learners with successful acquisition and enables them to use the language. There are teachers who believe that consciousness-raising tasks (CRT) enable learners to develop explicit knowledge of grammar. Consciousness-raising (CR) does not involve in repeated production. In fact, CR tasks have several purposes; like

1. To direct learners' attention to grammar features they might not notice on their own,
2. To help learners make form-meaning connections,
3. To help learners acquire conscious knowledge which can be used to understand input and monitor their own output,
4. To make learner, more autonomous by developing their analytical ability.

Several studies have explored the role of learning autonomy in language learning process, also the effect of some variables like extensive reading on autonomy, but this study wants to investigate the effect of a kind of task like CR tasks on learning autonomy of Iranian EFL learners.

### Review of Literature

According to Benson (2001), Autonomy is defined as the capacity to take charge of, or responsibility for one's own learning. If we want to define autonomy in language learning in more detail, we will need to say more about what taking charge or taking responsibility means in the context of language learning, so autonomy is defined better as the capacity to take control of one's own learning, because the construct of control is more open to empirical investigation than the constructs of charge or responsibility.

Based on Little (1990) it is difficult to define autonomy shortly and easily. So he is discusses about the misconceptions of autonomy. The following issues are those Little (1990; p.7) has stated on what autonomy is not:

1. Autonomy is not a synonym for self-instruction; in other words, autonomy is not limited to learning without a teacher.
2. In the classroom context, autonomy does not entail on abdication of responsibility on the part of the teacher; it is not a matter of letting the learners get on with things as best they can.
3. Autonomy is not something that teachers do to learners; that is, it is not another teaching method.
4. Autonomy is not a single, easily described behavior.
5. Autonomy is not a steady state achieved by learners.

One of the most frequently cited definitions of autonomy is found in Holec’s (1981:3) report to the council of Europe, where autonomy is described as ‘the ability to take charge of one’s own learning’. Benson argues that Holec elaborated on this basic definition as follows: To take charge of one’s own learning is to have, to hold, the responsibility for all the decisions concerning all aspects of this learning i.e.

- determining the objectives;
- defining the contents and progressions;
- selecting methods and techniques to be used;
- monitoring the procedure of acquisition properly speaking (rhythm, time, place, etc);
- evaluating what has been acquired.

According to Benson (2001), in this definition, taking charge of one’s own learning is described in terms of the capacity to make decisions at successive stages of the learning process. Autonomous learners are able to direct the course of their own learning by making all the significant decisions concerning its management and organization. These definitions emphasize the transfer of responsibility for learning from the teacher to the learner. With such responsibility the learner gains a greater degree of active involvement and better learning.

In contrast to Holec (1985), Little (1991) argued that ‘autonomy isn’t exclusively a matter of how learning is organized’, essentially autonomy is a capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision-making, and independent action, it presuppose but also entails, that the learner will develop a particular kind of psychological relation to the process and content of his learning. The capacity for autonomy will be displayed both in the way the learner learn and in the way he transfer what has been learned to wider contexts. Little’s definition was complementary to Holec’s, but added a vital psychological dimension. Holec’s and Little’s definitions covered two key dimensions of autonomy, but underplayed a third dimension related with control over the content of learning. Control over learning content has a situational aspect. There is also, a social aspect to control over learning content, which involve the learner’s ability to negotiate over goals, content with others. However it can be argued that on adequate description of autonomy in language learning should at least recognize the importance of three dimensions at which learner control may be exercised: learning management, cognitive processes, learning content.

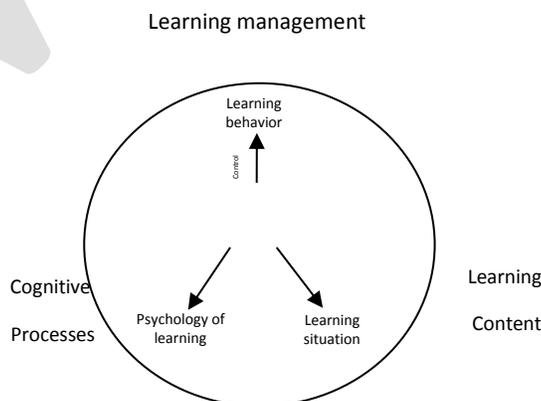


Figure 1: Defining Autonomy: The Capacity to Take Control over Learning

The Control over learning management can be described in terms of behaviors involved in the planning, organization and evaluation of learning. Learning management is a matter of observable behavior, but the problem with descriptions of these behaviors is that they tend to describe what descriptions of these behaviors is that they tend to describe what autonomous learners need to be able to do but not the mental capacities that underlie these abilities.

Whereas control over learning managements refers to desirable behaviors, and cognitive competences underlying these behaviors, control over learning content (cognitive processing) is purely cognitive in the sense that it's not concerned with direct control of behavior, but with control over the cognitive processes through which learning management and content are controlled. This psychology dimension of autonomy can be concerned with attention, reflection and method cognitive knowledge (O'Malley & Chamot's, 1990: 138).

Control over of learning content is an aspect of control in terms of autonomy in language learning/ which concerned with what and why of language learning. This aspect is necessary, because if learners self-mange methodological aspects of learning, but don't learn what they want to learn, their learning may not be self-directed. Also in institutional contexts, there is socially a political dimension to control of learning content.

A comprehensive review of scholarly articles on learner autonomy in language learning was conducted. Some of them are related to ways of promoting autonomy (Benson, 2001; Crabee, 1993; Little, 1995; Nation & Macalister, 2010); relationship between motivation and autonomy (Benson, 2001; Dickinson, 1995; Garcia & Pintirch, 1996; Little wood, 1996; wn, 2008); and a large number of studies focused on positive effects of portfolios in fostering autonomy in second language learning (Glabe & Kaplan, 1996; Khodadady & Khodabakhshzadeh, 2012; Muller Verweyen, 1999 ; Weigle, 2002; Yildirim, 2008); also, there are studies in Turkey related to autonomy, for example,

In her study, Yumuk (2002) aimed to design and evaluate a program to promote a change in students' attitudes from a traditional, recitation - based view of learning to a more autonomous view of learning. As part of the program, the students were encouraged to use internet for selection, analysis, evaluation and application of relevant information so that they could improve the accuracy of their translations. The researcher stated that the use of searching and application of internet-based information helped students to think and reflect critically on their learning. The evaluation of the program was conducted with pre and post-course questionnaires, post-course interviews and information recorded weekly in a diary by the teacher as a researcher. The results revealed that the program promoted a change in the view of learning towards more autonomy. The researcher concluded that the majority of the students reported that the translation process required more responsibility from them, and they also viewed learning more meaningfully or in another study Kennedy (2002) conducted a case study with 23 students at the institute of Business Administration. The study aimed to see what extent learner autonomy can be encouraged among a group of Turkish students: Firstly, the researcher carried out some practical activities to foster independence among students. These activities involved diary writing, use of monolingual dictionary, use of grammar reference books with answer keys, joke telling, writing summaries and conducting research. After seven months, the researcher asked 23 students to write a detailed evaluation of the course. Students' main criticism focused on more grammar practice although some expressed their enthusiasm in writing diaries. The researcher has concluded that it is not surprising that learner autonomy has much importance to the students. He adds that promoting learner autonomy in the EFL classroom in Turkey is not an easy struggle and it would be a mistake to expect to move too soon from Turkish learners who have traditional experiences prior to entering English language classrooms.

Along with the global increasing interest toward the nation of autonomy in domain of EFL teaching and learning, a variety of studies have also been done by Iranian researches in this area. Among the most recent ones, the result of the study conducted by Nematipour (2012) indicated that visual and auditory learning styles were related to the learner autonomy level of her sample. However

there were no significant differences among males and females regarding language learning style and autonomy level. Sheykhy Bagheri (2011) showed that Iranian EFL learners' autonomy was significantly related to critical thinking ability. In one study was revealed that the age did not have affected student's readiness for autonomy; however marital status and professional status influenced participants' learner autonomy. Heidari (2010) investigated the degree of relationship between EFL learner autonomy and reading comprehension of academic and general reading modules of IELTS. The analyses indicated that learner autonomy did not have a significant relationship with the participants' performance on the two models. Also, in another research, Haghi (2012) examined the relationship between Iranian EFL learner's perceived self-efficacy and autonomy. The results revealed that there is a significant relationship between two variables.

The review of literature indicates that autonomous learning is indispensable for effective language learning which will enable language learners to develop more responsibilities for their own learning. Therefore, most of the relevant research studies highlight the importance of promoting learner autonomy in language classrooms.

There are a number of definitions of task that drawn from both the research and pedagogy literatures. These definitions address some dimensions like: 1- the scope of a task, 2- the perspective from which a task is viewed, 3- the authenticity of a task, 4- the linguistic skills required to perform a task, 5- the psychological processes involved in task performance, and 6- the outcome of a task (Ellis, 2003). The following provides some of these definitions.

A task is a structured plan for the provision of opportunities for the refinement of knowledge and capabilities entailed in a new language and its use during communication (Breen, 1989).

A task was defined as a piece of work or an activity, usually with a specified objective, undertaken as part of an educational course, at work, or used to elicit data for research (Crookes, 1986).

Based on Ellis (2003), task is a work plan that requires learners to process language pragmatically in order to achieve an attention that an evaluated based on the correctness of the content has been conveyed. For that, it requires learners to give primary attention to meaning and to make use of their own linguistic resources. A task is intended to result in language use that bears a resemblance, direct or indirect, to the way language is used in the real world. A task can be productive, receptive, oral or written skills. Also Ellis (2003) in terms of features of a task point out that critical feature of a task can be identified:

1. A task is work plan. It means, task constitutes a plan for learner activity, and tasks form of teaching materials or of ad hoc plans for activities that ones in the course of teaching.
2. A task involves a primary focus on meaning. It seeks to develop L2 proficiency through communicating. So, it requires a primary, focus on meaning.
3. A task involves real-world processes of language use.
4. A task can involve any of four language skills.
5. A task engages cognitive processes. It requires learners to employ cognitive processes such as selecting, classifying, ordering, reasoning and evaluating information in order to carry out a task.
6. A task has a clearly defined communicative outcome.

(The work plan causes the non - linguistic outcome of the task, which serves as the goal of the activity for the learners.)

### General Types of Tasks

There are two general types of tasks, unfocused tasks and focused tasks. Unfocused tasks predispose learners to choose from a range of forms but they are not designed with the use of specific form in mind. These tasks may require specific modes of discourse like narrative or description and that this may result in learners using specific linguistic features, but they were not designed with the intention of eliciting these linguistic features. In contrast, focused task, plan to induce learners to process, receptively or productively. Some particular linguistic features, for example, a grammatical structure and this processing must happen as a result of performing activities that satisfy the key criteria of a task, it means that language is used pragmatically to achieve some non - linguistic outcome. Therefore, focused tasks have two aims: 1- to stimulate communicative

language use, 2- to target the use of a particular, predetermined target feature. Teachers and researchers mostly use this type of task. They want to know if learners can perform some specific feature they are investigating in a communicative context. Also, teachers want to provide learners with the opportunity to practice a specific feature under real operating conditions. So, in focused tasks, tasks can be employed to elicit use of specific linguistic features, either by design or by the use of methodological procedures that focus attention in the implementation of a task.

### *Kinds of Focused Task*

- 1) Comprehension tasks,
- 2) Structure - based production tasks,
- 3) consciousness- raising tasks.

### *Consciousness - raising Tasks*

Ellis (2003) suggests that the third type of tasks is consciousness - raising task, it is different from the other kinds of tasks;

- 1) Whereas structure- based production tasks , enriched input tasks, and interpretation task are intended to cater to implicit learning, CR tasks are planned to cater to explicit learning , that is , they are intending to develop awareness at the level of 'understanding' rather than awareness at the level of 'noticing' (see, Schmidt, 1994).
- 2) Whereas the other tasks were built around the content of a general nature, such as stories, pictures of objects, opinion, CR tasks make language itself the content.

CR tasks are in a way that learners are required to talk meaningfully about a language point their own linguistic resources. Based on Brooke (1996), CR tasks, considered for discovery learning through problem solving and in accordance to the general principle that what learners can find out for them is better remembered than what they simply told.

One of the main goals of CR tasks is to help learners notice something about the language that they might not notice on their own. They are asked to reflect on it, usually by talking to peers. CR tasks can help build their conscious knowledge and understanding (their LA) of how the language works. CR task is a method used in task-based approach. Ellis (2002, p.166) describes that the purpose of CR is "not to enable learners to perform a structure correctly but simply to help him/her to know about it". Ellis (2003,p.160) defined CR tasks as " a pedagogic activity where the learners are provided with L2 data in some forms and required to perform some operation on or with it, the purpose of which is to arrive at an explicit understanding of some linguistic property or properties of the target language. He added that CR focuses on developing correct understanding than correct production of target form. CR tasks can be less controlled and more open ended. They have in common one thing that they cause learners to involve in noticing a target structure or function in a text (written, spoken) and drawing some kind of conclusions. An example of CR tasks is 'discovery activities' where the learners are asked to formulate a grammar rule based on some language examples.

So for many studies e.g., Fotos and Ellis (1991); Mohamed, 2001; Shak and Gardner (2008) have attempted to examine the effects of CR tasks on the development of grammatical knowledge. For example one study was conducted in Japan by Fotos and Ellis (1991, as cited in Peterson, 1997) in which they compared the effectiveness of consciousness-raising task with traditional teacher-fronted grammar lessons on learning dative alternation. Results reveal that both treatments had significant effects on improving the teachers' score on the immediate comprehension posttest. However, learners in the traditional instruction group were more successful in maintaining the significant effect of their instruction on delayed posttest. In contrast, findings of Mohamed's (2001) study were not in favor of traditional instruction when applied to high intermediate ESL learners from the same language background in comparison to low intermediate learners, suggesting that learners' proficiency level can affect the effectiveness of CR tasks. Hence, Fotos and Ellis (1991) discovered that CR tasks increase learners' understanding of dative alternative (propositional indirect object structure). Also in another study from Takimoto (2012) that compared the effect of CR tasks with input enhancement (IE) approach on the development of speech act of apology by Japanese

university students. The results showed that learners in the CR tasks group outperformed those in the IE group and control group on but intermediate and delayed posttests. As mentioned, the main purpose of this study is to investigate the effectiveness of CR task as a kind of task-based instruction on learners' autonomy.

According to scope of study, these questions can be drawn:

1. Do CR tasks have any effect on learning autonomy of Iranian EFL learners?
2. Do CR tasks make a significant difference between items of control and experimental groups?
3. To what extent do CR tasks affect learners' autonomy?

## Methodology

### Participants

The participants of this study were 49 out of 60 female students at Miad senior high school in Isfahan, Iran. They are all native speakers of Persian, with their age between 16 and 17. The students were selected based on Oxford Placement Test (OPT) out of two intact classes. Also, since this research was conducted at school, the allocation for students to groups through randomization was not possible or practical. Thus, the researcher had to use of quasi-experimental method for sampling. Then the students of one class were assigned as control and the students of another class selected as experimental group. After analyzing the results of OPT, most students obtained mean scores between 21-30 for grammar and vocabulary and 5-7 for reading comprehension that this score has been determined as pre intermediate level. Then the students that were not homogenous with the majority of students (their proficiency level is higher or lower than the majority) were omitted from the study. The remained students were 49 pre-intermediates students.

### Instrumentation

The instruments were, Oxford Placement Test (Edwards, 2007), the autonomy questionnaire (Zhang & Li, 2004).

### Oxford Placement Test (OPT)

In order to manifest the participants' homogeneity in terms of language proficiency level, a version of Oxford Placement Test called solution placement test (Edwards, 2007) was used in this study. The validity of the test is self-evident. The test developer (Edwards, 2007) has noted that this placement test has been designed to assess the general knowledge of language as the receptive and productive skills and gave insights into what level learners are.

### Autonomy Questionnaire

The second data collection tool, the autonomy questionnaire, which was an autonomy perception scale for measuring learner autonomy, was used as pre and posttest. This autonomy questionnaire designed by Zhang and Li (2004) which has twenty one items in two parts: the first part was known as likert-scale and the second part was known as multiple-choices. This questionnaire has been proved to have high content validity and high reliability that was administrated individually for 40 minutes.

The first part includes eleven likert-scale items that aims to obtain the degree of autonomy aspects that the students had. The student had to mark one of the options: never, rarely, sometimes, often, always, and in the second part that include ten questions, the students that had to chose one of the options to measure students' control over learning.

### Procedure

The present study was conducted to investigate the effectiveness of CR tasks on learners' autonomy. To do so, it was done with second-year female students at Miad high school in Esfahan. Then, in order to homogenizing the students, the researcher was employed a version of OPT that called solution Placement Test. Based on results of OPT 49 pre intermediate students were selected. The researcher for doing this research used of quasi-experimental method and selected intact classes.

After that, the participants of two classes were assigned as control and experimental group. Having selected the control and experimental group, the researcher administrated an autonomy questionnaire by Zhang & Li (2004) on two groups to measure the autonomy of students. The autonomy questionnaire that included 21 items in two parts was considered as a pretest, after that, students of experimental group were exposed to an instructional program for seven sessions, in the way that they received some CR tasks as treatment. Then, the same autonomy questionnaire applied again as posttest in order to investigate the effectiveness of CR tasks on learners' autonomy.

### Data Analysis

In this stage, for data analysis, the raw data was collected and submitted to Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS 20) to do statically analysis. At first, descriptive statistics such as mean, mode, median, and standard deviation are needed for placement test to show the general information of obtained scores. Then, inferential statistics are used to compare experimental and control groups' placement test scores.

In order to find out whether there was a significant difference between participants of control and experimental group by using CR tasks on their autonomy, a paired sample T-test and an independent T-test was applied. This questionnaire as mentioned in previous sections has two parts of items. Part one was included eleven Likert-scale items and part two was included ten multiple-choice items.

### Results of the Placement Test

**Table 1**

*Descriptive Statistics for the Placement Test*

	grammar and vocabulary		reading	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
elementary	4	6.67	4	6.67
Pre-intermediate	49	81.67	46	76.67
intermediate	7	11.67	10	16.67
Total	60	100.00	60	100.00

As shown in above table most students obtained scores in pre-intermediate level (frequency of grammar and vocabulary was 49 and in reading was 46). It means that their scores were between 21-30 in grammar and vocabulary and 5-7 in reading comprehension; that these scores have been determined for pre-intermediate level. Thus, these formed the basis for the selection of the targeted homogenous sample. Those who obtained a score between 5-7 in reading and 21-30 in grammar and vocabulary were included in this study while the rest were excluded.

### Referential analysis of research questions

#### Research Question 1

The first research question of this study aimed to explore whether application of CR tasks had any significant effect on autonomy of Iranian EFL learners.

**Table 2**

*Results of the Independent Sample T-test for Comparing Experimental and Control Groups on Learner Autonomy*

	pretest		posttest	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Control	59.76	8.65	60.95	6.84
Experimental	58.11	7.56	72.43	7.34
T-test result	T=0.57 Df=20 P=.576		T=-.11.3 Df=27 P=.000**	

\*\*Significance at 0.01 levels

According to independent T-test, it was not seen difference between control groups' pretest and experimental groups' pretest (i.e.,  $p > .05$ ,  $p = .576$ ), so the participants were homogeneous, but on posttest stage, mean scores of experimental were more than mean scores of control group and p value is less than the alpha level (i.e.,  $p < .05$ ,  $p = .000$ ). It could be reasonably argued that the difference between the two groups' mean scores on the learner autonomy posttest was statistically meaningful. This would mean that CR tasks have a significant effect on the learning autonomy of EFL learners. Thus, the first null hypothesis was rejected.

**Research Question 2**

The second research questions of present study investigated whether CR tasks make any significant difference between autonomy questionnaire's items of control and experimental groups.

**Table 3**

*Results of Mann-Whitney Test for Comparing Control and Experimental Group on Pre and Posttest for the Likert-scale Part of Autonomy Questionnaire]*

	Pretest				Posttest					
	Control		experimental		Control		experimental		U	p-
	Mea	SD	Mean	SD	Mea	SD	Mean	SD		
question1	3.33	.73	3.57	.96	3.57	.75	3.86	1.04	225.5	.142
question2	1.95	.97	1.96	.96	1.95	1.1	2.64	1.16	195.0	.038*
question3	2.52	.93	2.07	1.25	2.71	1.0	2.46	1.17	255.0	.415
question4	2.81	1.2	2.82	1.19	3.10	1.0	3.43	1.17	238.5	.242
question5	3.00	.84	2.57	1.37	3.29	1.1	3.18	1.39	284.5	.844

question6	1.76	.77	1.93	.90	267.5	.568	2.05	.59	3.29	1.18	119.5	.000*
question7	2.71	1.2	2.07	1.15	205.0	.062	2.14	1.4	3.29	1.24	153.0	.004*
question8	3.43	1.1	2.71	1.61	219.0	.121	2.71	1.4	3.75	1.24	175.0	.014*
question9	3.38	1.1	3.21	.96	253.5	.389	3.29	1.1	3.61	.99	246.0	.314
question10	3.76	1.0	3.75	1.11	288.0	.900	3.76	.89	3.86	1.01	274.5	.679
question11	3.57	1.2	3.11	.96	227.5	.164	3.48	.87	3.43	.92	286.0	.863

As shown in table 4.8, the mean scores of experimental group were slightly more than the mean scores of control group in pretest. Also the p value was more than the specified level of significance (i.e.,  $p > .05$ ). It means that there was not a statically significant difference between items of control and experimental group before the experiment. But on posttest, the mean scores of experimental group were meaningfully more than scores of control group and the p value was less than specified level of significant on most items (i.e.,  $p < .05$ ). It can be interpreted that CR tasks make significance difference between items of Likert-scale part on both groups.

**Table 4**

*Results of Mann-Whitney Test for Comparing Control and Experimental Group on Pre and Posttest for the Multiple-Choice Part of Autonomy Questionnaire*

	Pretest				Posttest							
	Control	experime n t a l	U	p-	Control	experime n t a l	U	p-				
	Me	SD	Me	SD	Me	S	Me	SD				
question 1 2	3.52	1.17	3.5	1.44	230.5	.183	3.9	1.	4.04	.96	242.00	.271
Questio n 1	2.33	1.02	2.7	.62	257.5	.442	2.6	1.	3.50	1.26	182.00	.018*

3												
Question 14	2.90	.89	3.2	.77	276.0	.704	2.8	1.	4.50	.88	74.500	.000
Question 15	2.29	.78	2.5	1.00	246.0	.295	2.5	.6	3.07	.77	193.50	.023*
Question 16	2.57	1.43	2.9	1.44	252.0	.372	3.0	1.	3.50	1.35	245.50	.308
Question 17	3.05	1.40	2.7	1.03	268.5	.592	3.3	1.	3.46	1.10	278.00	.739
Question 18	2.95	1.28	3.1	1.16	257.5	.448	2.6	1.	3.61	.79	132.50	.001
Question 19	1.86	.73	2.2	1.01	226.5	.150	2.1	1.	3.57	1.32	137.50	.001
Question 20	2.38	.74	2.4	.84	288.5	.895	2.6	.9	3.04	1.00	232.00	.181
Question 21	2.62	.97	2.7	1.08	291.0	.949	3.1	1.	3.36	1.16	264.50	.523

\*Significance at 0.05 level

\*\*Significance at 0.01 level

As shown in above table, the mean scores of experimental group were slightly more than the mean scores of control group in pretest. Also the p value was more than the specified level of significance (i.e.,  $p > .05$ ). It means that there was not a statically significant difference between items of control and experimental group before the experiment. But on posttest, the mean scores of experimental group were meaningfully more than scores of control group and the p value was less than specified level of significant on most items (i.e.,  $p < .05$ ). It can be interpreted that CR tasks make significance difference between items of likert-scale part on both groups.

**Research Question 3**

The third research questions aimed to find out what extends do CR tasks affect on learner autonomy. For the purpose of comparing the range of scores difference between pre and posttest on both group for the Likert-scale part and multiple-choice part of questionnaire, at first scores difference between pre and posttest was calculated and then each differences between two control and experimental group compared.

Also, for comparing the range of scores difference between pre and posttest in total, scores difference pre and post was calculated and then the result of this difference between control and experimental group by independent T-test was compared.

In general table 4.14 shows total results of mean difference between pre and posttest on two groups.

**Table 5**

*Total Results of T-test for Comparing Mean Difference between Pre and Posttest for Control and Experimental Groups*

	control		Experimental		T-test result
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Pretest-posttest gain	1.19	9.59	14.32	6.71	T=-.5.64 Df=47 P=.000*

\*\*Significance at 0.01 levels

The result of table 5 shows like:

Based on result of independent T-test, it was seen significant difference between two groups and this difference on experimental group was more meaningfully.

**Discussion**

The purpose of this study was to find out if CR tasks as a kind of task-based instruction can improve the autonomy of EFL learners.

The first research question in the present study considered whether administrating some grammar CR tasks have any effect on EFL learner's autonomy or not. The results of T-test showed that there was a significant difference between mean scores of control and experimental group. The participants of experimental group showed more autonomy than participants of control group. It means that the use of CR task has a significant effect on autonomy of EFL learners, thus, the first null hypothesis was rejected.

The finding of this study is consistent with findings of prior studies that have been done by Iranian researchers or researches from other countries in this area. For example, a result of the study conducted by Nematipour (2012) indicated that visual and auditory learning styles can affect the learners' autonomy level or in one study in Turkey related to autonomy, Yumuk (2002) aimed to design and evaluate a program to promote a change in students' attitudes from a traditional, recitation-based view of learning to a more autonomous view of learning. The results revealed that the program promoted a change in the view of learning towards more autonomy.

The second research question was to clear whether CR tasks make a significant difference between items of autonomy questionnaire between control and experimental group. According to comparison between mean scores of control and experimental group on posttest there was significance difference between items mean scores. Thus, application CR tasks make significance difference between pre and post items. Also in comparing mean scores between pre and posttest of experimental group it was significance difference but in comparison between pre and posttest of control group it was not significant difference between items' mean scores. Therefore, these results indicated that using CR tasks effect on items meaningfully.

At last, the third research question was to investigate the extent to which CR tasks affect autonomy. Based on result of data analysis, the mean difference between pre and posttest on control group was not significant but for the experimental group it was significant. The most difference between pre and post in experimental group related to items 14 and 6 that were 1.68 and 1.36 respectively. In comparing control and experimental on pre and posttest, items 14, 18 and 19 and item 6, 7, 8 had more meaningful differences. In general the average increase on experimental group between pre and posttest was meaningfully more than the average increase of control group. The finding of this study is in line with the findings of Kennedy (2002) who conducted a case study with 23 students at the institute of Business Administration. The study aimed to see what extent learner autonomy can be encouraged among a group of Turkish students.

### Conclusion and Implications

This study has attempted to foster autonomy of Iranian EFL learners. Thus, it went to examine the effect of CR tasks, as a kind of task-based instruction on autonomy. According to the result of this study, the autonomy level of learners in experimental group increased. So it can be concluded that using CR tasks is effective in developing learners' autonomy. The learners in experimental group had more autonomy than those in control group.

The finding of this study is useful for learners, in a sense that autonomy causes better learning and feeling of independence from teacher and more motivation in learning English. Also, the learners will be able to control and manage their learning and they are responsible for their own learning. It can also lead to increase learning of learners and encourage them to communicate with teacher and others. The findings of this study hopefully help EFL teachers promote learners' autonomy in class also out of class and in real world better and the teachers can think about using different strategies, equipment and factors that can develop learners' autonomy. The finding is crucial also for designers and specialist in to design programs, activities and materials that contribute to learn better and lead to more communication and interaction between learners and with teachers. They should allow their students to participate in classroom activities.

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