Classroom Vocabulary Learning: Investigating the Role of Task Types on Iranian High Schools Learners of English as a Foreign Language

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Abstract

The present study investigated the efficacy of task types on the vocabulary learning of Iranian learners of English as a foreign language (EFL) whose opportunities for communication outside classroom context are limited. Moreover, the effectiveness of using Task-based Instruction (TBI) was investigated in this study. Data were collected from three classes of lower-intermediate high school students who were selected on the basis of availability and were taught for eight weeks. Each class was taught through one of three different task types: information-gap, opinion-gap, and reasoning-gap. The results of an achievement vocabulary test administered to the students of the three groups at the end of the instruction and a qualitative think-aloud report protocol analysis showed that the reasoning group outperformed the other two groups. Implications of the study are proposed for teaching and learning English as a foreign language in Iran.

Key words: Task-Based Instruction, Information-gap tasks, Reasoning-gap tasks, Opinion-gap tasks.

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1.Introduction

With schemata as the main component of the communicative competence, presenting tasks can be a means of teaching and learning a foreign language (Hudson, 1993). It seems that tasks can provide good schemata for students. One overarching consideration is how teachers can teach their students to acquire the schemata through classroom teaching. Recently, tasks have been widely introduced among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) researchers and teachers

The idea of getting learners to acquire English through Task-Based Instruction (TBI) was developed in India by Prabhu in the 1980s. According to Jean and Hahn (2004), his approach was a reaction both against the traditional teaching of English as a Foreign Language used in India and against the type of communicative language teaching which was practiced there. Prabhu's (1987) project, in India, was mostly calling attention to the cognitive processes entailed by tasks and involving "some processes of thought" (p.9).

According to Nunan (1989), task-based instruction is an approach to designing teaching syllabuses which consists of a set of communicative tasks, and a way to involve learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing, or interacting in the target language. In Iran the idea of task-based syllabuses has not been widely discussed. Communicative activities, if at all, usually appear after learning linguistic rules with teacher-led instructions (See, for example, the English textbook of second grade of high school). Despite the many tasks designed for pedagogic purposes, it is only in recent years that language teaching researchers have shown interest in knowing what kinds of tasks can best facilitate learning a foreign language.

Prabhu (1987) initiated a large-scale application of task-based approach in schools in India, developing a syllabus and associating teaching materials around three major types of tasks classified according to the type of cognitive activity involved. Nunan (2006, pp. 214-6) defines them as follows:

Information-gap tasks: Tasks in which there is a mismatch between the information possessed by different learners in a pair or group-work task. In some cases, one student has all the information (a one-way task); in others, each student has his or her own information (a two-way

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task). One example is pair work in which each member of the pair has a part of the total information (for example an incomplete picture) and attempts to convey it verbally to the other.

Reasoning-gap tasks: Tasks requiring learners to derive new information from given information through such cognitive processes as inferencing, perceiving, deducing, and practical reasoning. One example is deciding what course of action is best (for example cheapest or quickest) for a given purpose and within given constraints. The activity necessarily involves comprehending and conveying information, as an information-gap activity, but the information to be conveyed is not identical with that initially comprehended. The two are bound together by some reasoning.

Opinion-gap tasks: Tasks involving identification and expression of personal attitudes, feelings, or opinions in a particular setting. One example is story completion; another is taking part in the discussion on a social issue.

Ellis (2003) believed that Prabhu's classification of tasks is appealing because it rests on an account of cognitive operations underlying the performance of different kinds of tasks. It is based on the premise that using language for reasoning fosters acquisition; this is certainly interesting but less empirically corroborated.

Larsen-Freeman (2003) described the classroom where Prabhu's (1987) project was held and concludes that in this classroom, meaningful activities involving communication, and the development of the ability to share information, deduce information, and express ideas were heavily focused on. Classroom activities were used as a preparation for learners to carry out practical real-life tasks by themselves. The focus during the activities was on meaning, and any focus on the language form was incidental. Other researchers regard a three-part task cycle, including task, planning, and language focus, for task-based instruction with a particular focus on form as well as on meaning (Skehan, 1996; Willis, 1996; Willis & Willis, 2001).

Some studies have been undertaken on different areas of language proficiency, following a task-based approach. As early as 1972, Savignon studied three classes of French as a Foreign Language who received communicative, cultural, and grammatical activities

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separately, but no significant difference was reported among the groups. Tucker (1974, as cited in Canale & Swain 1980) compared two groups of learners who scored differently (95% & 65%) on an English Language Proficiency test. Both groups were given the same communicative tasks, and findings again showed no meaningful difference. Long (1990a) compared language use in teacher-led whole class discussions and unsupervised pair work while learners were doing the same task, and he found no communication in the whole class discussion but in students' pair work. Other more recent studies have been conducted on the investigation of information-gap tasks (Fuente, 2006; Liai, 2006; Murphy, 2003). However, in the area of vocabulary learning, it is only in recent years that researchers have been interested in integrating a meaningful content into second-language instruction. Research has suggested that the learner should be exposed to and involved in language use in a form of comprehensible, yet meaningful input as much as possible (Nation, 1990). The question arises as to what constitutes comprehensible, meaningful input, and how one can gain access to it.

In the light of the growing recognition that the conventional methods of direct instruction is inadequate to satisfy the learners needs, it is necessary to develop a new approach to vocabulary learning which can reflect more authentic uses of language. Carter and Nunan (2001) state that a definition of learning a word depends not only on what we mean by a word but also on how a word is remembered, over what period of time, and in what circumstances it can be recalled, and whether learning a word means that it is always retained. In the area of vocabulary learning, not many observational and experimental studies have been conducted to suggest what specific tasks are the most effective for certain goals and particular type of learners. Thus, it is necessary to investigate the studies regarding how to enhance second language vocabulary instruction.

In recent years researchers have been interested in promoting vocabulary learning, and they have suggested effective approaches to learn and recall vocabulary effectively. Fuente (2006) conducted a research framed under a cognitive approach to task-based second language (L2) learning. The study used a pedagogical approach to

investigate the effects of three vocabulary lessons (one traditional and two task-based) on acquisition of basic meanings, forms, and morphological aspects of Spanish words. In particular, the results of the study showed that task-based lessons seemed to be more effective than the traditional one. So, the important role of pedagogical tasks in teaching L2 vocabulary can not be easily ignored.

The actual target learners of the present study are learners of English language in state schools in Iran. They have not acquired adequate chances to use English outside the classes. Thus, they do not usually experience language use in authentic contexts; this affects maintaining learners' motivation and recognition of their achievement. Therefore, EFL teachers seem to need to modify curricula, syllabuses, methods, etc., considering the contexts of their learners.

To be honest, the existing textbooks of High School seem to pay more attention to vocabulary than the past decades, but why accuracy (teaching rules of language usage) is still considered so important perhaps relates to learners' and teachers' attitude: To pass the exams, although the assessment of learners preferences by teachers may be misunderstood.

There are few, if any, empirical studies to date to show that reasoning-gap activities work better for vocabulary acquisition than information-gap or opinion-gap activities. It is unfortunate to see that no study has incorporated the efficacy of task types in vocabulary learning in high schools in Iran. Thus, it seems that a study like this might be an attempt through which the influence of task types can be examined on vocabulary acquisition; it also allows to see which type of tasks can work best in the context of high schools in Iran. Therefore, the study aimed to answer the following research questions:

1. To what extent do tasks- information-gap, opinion-gap, and reasoning gap- improve vocabulary acquisition of Iranian learners of English at the high school level?

2. Does task type make any difference with Iranian learners of English at the high school level?

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2.   Methods
2.1 Participants
The participants were sixty female students of three classrooms in grade two of a state high school in Ahvaz. These students had been studying English formally as a foreign language in junior high school and high school as a requirement of school curriculum for five years. They were selected on the basis of their availability to the researchers. Each group received instruction based on one of the aforementioned cognitive tasks. The teacher who taught the three groups was one of the researchers.

2.2 Instruments
The first instrument was a homogeneity test, including fifty fill-in-the-blank items on general English proficiency for students at elementary level, and it was extracted from Fowler and Coe (1976). It was administrated to the participants in order to account for homogeneity of their language proficiency. The average score of the three groups was 31.52 out of 50 with standard deviation of 6. Table 1 displays descriptive statistics on the results of learners' performance.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics on the Groups' Performance on the Homogeneity Test

	N	Mean	Sd. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Group A	24	30.6250	6.25413	1.27662	27.9841	33.2659	20.00	39.00
2	23	30.6087	6.09574	1.27105	27.9727	33.2447	21.00	42.00
3	24	33.2917	5.52842	1.12848	30.9572	35.6261	23.00	44.00
Total	71	31.5211	6.01631	.71400	30.0971	32.9452	20.00	44.00

Statistical analysis (ANOVA) run on the students' performance on the pre-test revealed no significant difference indicating that the groups were almost equal before the main phase of the study (Table 2).

Table 2: One Way Analysis of Variance on the Groups' Performance on the Homogeneity Test

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	113.657	2	56.828	1.597	.210
Within Groups	2420.062	68	35.589		
Total	2533.718	70			

The second instrument was the tasks that students received in the form of treatment. The topics were selected from *New Interchange 2* (Richards, 2003). This textbook is written for learners of English as a second or foreign language for international communication at lower intermediate level. It consists of sixteen lessons of which six topics were chosen. The rationale for the selection of the tasks was their relevance to the students' needs on general English, their suitability in vocabulary and structure to second grade high school students, and their feasibility to lend themselves to different types of tasks under study. Enjoyability of the tasks was taken among the criteria of task selection as well (See Appendix A for sample task cycle). The topics and functions of each lesson were as follows:

Topics   Function
- Jobs   Choosing a job
- Shopping   Purchasing a colored material
- Exercise   Enjoying a sport or activity
- Family   Talking about someone's family
- Appearance   Describing people's appearance
- Health problems   Visiting a doctor

The third instrument was a vocabulary test including 47 items, and it was designed by the researchers in accordance with *Elementary Vocabulary* (Thomas, 1990). This was designed in the form of fill-in-the-blank, and as such it was not biased towards any of the groups. The vocabulary items were based on the topics related to the tasks presented in the classrooms. It was considered

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as a final test in order to measure the extent the students were able to recall the vocabulary items in the treatment, and the degree that the tasks affected the learning of those vocabulary items (See Appendix B for the sample vocabulary test).

To ensure the internal consistency and reliability of this test, the test was piloted on fifteen third grade students of the same high school. Then the reliability coefficient of the pilot test was obtained through Guttman split- half method (r=.91).

The fourth instrument was a qualitative Think-Aloud protocol, on which participants were asked to say whatever they were looking at, thinking, and feeling while performing the tasks. The report was designed and administrated in order to elicit student's feedback on the tasks (See Appendix C for translation of sample reports of students' think aloud).

2.3 Procedures

Over an eight-week period, each group received instruction on the selected tasks as templates. The first session was spent on the explanation of the procedure and also participants were asked to attend and take a homogeneity test (Fowler & Coe, 1976). To make sure that the participants were homogeneous, their English scores on the previous semester were also considered as a criterion (See Appendix D). The average mean of each group was calculated, and they were almost at the same level, about 14 on the scale of 20.

Presentation of each task lasted about 45 minutes, once a week on Mondays. Overall, each group had 6 tasks for practice during 6 weeks. In the last week of the instruction, the 8th week, the participants took an achievement test (the vocabulary test described above) in order to measure the degree of success of the language learners in learning the vocabulary items presented through the tasks under study.

Presenting the tasks was the main activity in the three groups. The whole format of task implementation followed Ellis (2003). Each group received instruction and practiced the tasks according to the method of creating gap. That is, presentation of the pre-task and post-task as well as task content was kept constant in the three

groups, but the task-cycle varied according to the method of creating the gaps (See Appendix A for sample task cycle).

Through out this study, care was exercised to exclude any bias or preference in presenting the tasks and collecting the data. Following our task implementation, we obtained two different kinds of data: (i) results of the final vocabulary test after the treatment was over and (ii) statements of think-aloud report verbalized by the learners during the treatment. They were allowed to reveal their thoughts in English or Persian. This was done to examine participants' feedback and motivation in the course of performing the tasks (See Appendix C for sample reports articulated by the students).

3.Data analysis
3.1 Analysis of vocabulary test

Initially, each student's score on the vocabulary test was obtained, and then descriptive statistics--mean and standard deviation of each group--were calculated. Results indicated that the mean for the group that practiced language through the Reasoning–gap was much higher than the mean of the other groups. Table 3 displays the difference between the groups' performance on the vocabulary test.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics on the Groups' Performance on the Vocabulary Test

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Information	20	18.1500	4.49883	1.00597	16.0445	20.2555	11.00	27.00
2	20	25.8500	12.77858	2.85738	19.8694	31.8306	7.00	47.00
3	20	14.4500	4.79556	1.07232	12.2056	16.6944	7.00	29.00
Total	60	19.4833	9.45729	1.22093	17.0403	21.9264	7.00	47.00

The SD of the Reasoning–gap group also suggested greater diversity in learners' performance. However, in order to find out

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whether the existing difference was statistically significant, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was applied. Table 4 displays the results of the statistical operations.

Table 4: One Way Analysis of Variance on the Groups' Performance on the Vocabulary Test

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1352.933	2	676.467	9.826	.000
Within Groups	3924.050	57	68.843		
Total	5276.983	59			

Results of the test rejected our initial assumption and showed that the difference between the task types was meaningful at (P<.001) level of significance. Finally to determine where the difference exactly was, a Post hoc comparison, Scheffe test, was conducted on the results. Table 3 illustrates the results of administering Scheffe test.

Table 5: Scheffe and Tukey Tests for the Comparison of Mean Differences

	(I) Methods of Teaching	(J) Methods of Teaching	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Tukey HSD	Information	2	-7.70000*	2.62379	.013	-14.0139	-1.3861
		3	3.70000	2.62379	.342	-2.6139	10.0139
	2	Information	7.70000*	2.62379	.013	1.3861	14.0139
		3	11.40000*	2.62379	.000	5.0861	17.7139
	3	Information	-3.70000	2.62379	.342	-10.0139	2.6139
		2	-11.40000*	2.62379	.000	-17.7139	-5.0861
Scheffe	Information	2	-7.70000*	2.62379	.018	-14.2949	-1.1051
		3	3.70000	2.62379	.376	-2.8949	10.2949
	2	Information	7.70000*	2.62379	.018	1.1051	14.2949
		3	11.40000*	2.62379	.000	4.8051	17.9949
	3	Information	-3.70000	2.62379	.376	-10.2949	2.8949
		2	-11.40000*	2.62379	.000	-17.9949	-4.8051

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 5 shows the comparison of the group means, and the t_{obs} values. To compare each of the t_{obs} values for the three groups, we calculated the t critical value, and the result was 2.58 with df (59) which indicated that the difference lay in group two, the group that had practiced language through reasoning tasks. That is, the mean differences, the reasoning group compared to the information group and opinion group, exceeded the t critical value, but the difference between the latter groups was not statistically significant, that is the t_{obs} value was smaller than the t critical value.

3.2 Analysis of think-aloud reports

To capture information on task types that the achievement test could not reveal, the researchers obtained a Think-Aloud protocol on vocabulary learning during and after the instruction to show learners' attitudes during and after the instruction period. The reports were filled in Persian in order to make sure language learners could follow and comprehend the questions, and then they were translated into English.

Three areas were examined by the researchers to reveal how much each task type had satisfied the students' needs: classroom environment, motivation in classroom participation, and activities.

3.3 Classroom environment

Classroom atmosphere is a significant factor that affects student's learning, and mostly depends on the teacher behavior in class. In general, no significant differences were seen among the three groups, and feedback from the students was almost similar in groups. The most remarkable points mentioned by the students were lack of anxiety about getting grades or fear of making errors.

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Table 6: Classroom Environment			
Students' Verbal	Groups		
	Reasoning	**Information**	**Opinion**
I like my classroom environment.	+	+	x
I do not feel embarrassed when I answer wrongly.	+	x	x
I often get bored in class.	_	_	x
My concentration does not last in class	_	x	x
I feel nervous when the teacher asks me, and I cannot answer her.	_	x	x
I feel comfortable when I learn because the teacher is friendly.	+	+	+
I think studying in this class is much more enjoyable than studying in formal classes in high school.	+	+	+
+ : Indicates most of the students have positive opinion			
_ : Indicates most of the students have negative opinion			
X : Indicates most of the students have neutral opinion			

3.4 Motivation in class participation

The students' verbal reports collected by the researchers could indicate that learners in the reasoning group were much more motivated than the other learners. They seemed to pay more attention to instruction and were more active during the class whereas the other two groups, especially the opinion group, were often silent and tended not to speak in the class. Table 7 displays students' reports on their motivation.

Table 7: Motivation in Class Participation			
Students' Verbal	**Groups**		
	Reasoning	**Information**	**Opinion**
I feel it is a good chance to learn English and be able to use it in real life.	+	x	x
I think my class satisfies my needs of learning English.	+	x	_
I feel the topics and questions in class are too general to interest my favor.	_	x	+
I have no idea about the topics and questions which are provided in class.	_	x	+
I think what I learn from my class helps me to prepare for my future, such as passing exams, getting a good job, and so on.	+	+	x
+ Indicates most of the students have positive opinion			
- Indicates most of the students have negative opinion			
X Indicates most of the students have neutral opinion			

3.5 Activities

The activities that students in the three groups carried out were to some extent different, and so their opinions almost differed. As the results from students' feedback imply, students in the reasoning group had more positive opinions about teaching style, techniques to encourage them to increase their vocabulary, and focus on vocabulary learning whereas the opinion and information groups sometimes complained of the class environment and also of the activities. Note Table 8 that illustrates students' views on class activities.

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Students' Verbal	Groups		
	Reasoning	**Information**	**Opinion**
I like the teaching style; I enjoy the class with the others.	+	x	x
The teacher teaches in an interesting way.	+	x	_
What I like most is the teacher' techniques.	+	x	x
The class does not emphasize the content of the book, but it emphasizes encouraging students to learn more words and to use them.	+	x	x
It should focus more on grammar than vocabulary.	_	x	+
+ Indicates most of the students have positive opinion			
- Indicates most of the students have negative opinion			
X Indicates most of the students have neutral opinion			

Table 8: Activities in Class

4. Discussion

The quantitative and qualitative results of the study made clear that presenting vocabulary items by creating gaps through reasoning tasks leads to better performance compared to gaps through giving direct information or asking learners' opinion.

A number of reasons support the results of the present study. Vocabulary learning is closely interwoven to learning in contextual situations which might help better retention. This issue was investigated through the achievement vocabulary test a week after the instruction. The descriptive and inferential statistics showed higher scores for the reasoning group probably as a result of the differences in performing the tasks. As Prabhu (1987) reminds us, in reasoning-gap classes the most important activity is the process of deduction, inference, or practical reasoning. It is based on the premise that using language for reasoning fosters acquisition since reasoning gap tasks are more effective in promoting negotiation, and this may lead to the cognitive readiness of the students in the test. It is also possible that the nature

and form of reasoning gap tasks demand more negotiation. As argued by Prabhu (1987), negotiation is "moving up and down a given line of thought or logic", deduction, inference, and practical reasoning are inherently more involved in reasoning tasks and less in other tasks, and the more cognitively demanding tasks were more effective in facilitating acquisition than the less demanding tasks (p. 15). Reasoning tasks require or encourage participants to do additional processing as well as learning words. For example through instruction learners need to rely on deducing and inferencing to arrive at the result. When learners engage in this ideal condition, language learning happens and these cognitive activities lead to better retention. On the other hand, information gap tasks result in less negotiation of meaning and opinion gap tasks the least successful in promoting negotiation; therefore, as Prabhu and the teachers involved in the project found, reasoning-gap tasks suit the learner needs best (Ellis, 2003).

The result of the study follows Skehan's (1996) viewpoint illustrating that the cognitive activities, such as giving reason and deducing a point, direct learners' attention to the task, activate the schemata in their mind, and help them to perform better in the task completion and pass the test successfully. Thus activating schemata through reasoning gap tasks, as Hudson (1993) believes, might be the other reason for good performance of the students in the vocabulary test. Reasoning tasks require learners to give their reasoning explicitly and to develop and revise personal schemata on the basis of new knowledge provided through the tasks. This is a very active process that leads to examining one's own and others' schema and thinking up of possible reasons. On the other hand, information gap tasks and opinion gap tasks may have been less successful in activating students' schemata.

Such extra communicative activities, as Savignon (1972) calls them, lead to better performance in communicative tests. Since communicative activities encourage students to direct their attention to whole aspects of input, they result in high intake. It appears that more attention leads to increased learning. One way to investigate attention is by looking at intake- the intermediate stage between input and acquisition. Better performance of learners in the reasoning group

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might be a sign of high intake which means input was comprehensible enough to affect acquisition of vocabulary on the part of the learners. Comprehensible input aids in increasing understanding, and thus results in the learner receiving more and more meaningful input, necessary for learning to take place. Negotiation exchanges are said to result in denser than average interaction, with more repetitions, expansions, and other features, all of which increase frequency and saliency of aspects of the input.

Another reason to support the results is related to group work, the key of task- based instruction. Group work results in increasing learners' negotiation of meaning through interaction and also effective changing of input into intake. Long (1990a) showed that no communication was observed in the whole class discussion but in students' pair work. In the present study pair work also played a significant role in reasoning tasks compared to information-gap tasks which did not allow for further recall, and opinion tasks which allowed for student interaction with the teacher and resulted in the lowest scores among the three groups.

Reasoning may require immediate use of the words which learners use in their reasoning and deducing immediately after learning them as opposed to the more delayed use of vocabulary in opinion group treatment where no such need may arise to use words in giving their opinions and ideas. In this sense the reasoning task may be easier as it places a smaller cognitive load on participants' working memory and does so for a shorter length of time. Hence there may be more opportunity for attention to be directed at the target vocabulary. Research in information processing has estimated that task difficulty greatly affects the amount of attention available for learners to peruse and allocate primarily to meaning than to the form (Ellis, 2003; Nunan, 2005; Williams & Burden, 2002). The reasoning gap tasks may leave participants with a good deal of opportunity to focus on the target meaning.

Contrary to reasoning group treatment, the poor performance of the opinion group may be that such tasks require participants to pay less attention to meaning, or at least less so than for example the reasoning tasks. As argued by researchers, in order to remember the words

learners will have to make use of mnemonic cues derived from the task (Thornbury, 2002; Atkinson, 1975). This may deflect attention away from the target vocabulary in the input and negatively affect the results. Such tasks also, by directing learners to respond to a question and articulating their idea about one specific question, do not let learners concentrate on the task itself but encourage students to present their opinions on the topic perhaps before they have registered the words in their memory. Therefore, the task might be performed without the words being utilized adequately by the language learners. The treatment may also be quite demanding in that it is done individually. This combination of task demands and the individual aspect of task makes the task the least likely to result in participants' effective performance on the vocabulary test.

The information gap tasks resulted in relatively higher efficiency than the opinion tasks but much lower scores than the reasoning tasks. The reason for the relative success of this treatment, as Pica and Doughty (1985) suggest, may lie in its collaborative nature. Lantolf (2000) emphasizes the role of social context and collaborative engagement in second language learning. The collaborative nature of the information task and the support participants receive from each other in their efforts to complete the task while discussing the task would lead to effective performance though much less so than the reasoning tasks due to the whole class discussion that occurs in the information group and, according to Long (1990b), no real communication takes place in those situations.

The mediating nature of information-gap tasks may also be due to their nature, that they have common ground with reasoning and opinion tasks. Information processing is the shared nature of the three task types, as articulated also by Prabhu (1987). In line with Prabhu's view, it is possible that reasoning tasks involve high levels of information processing as well as additional processing- to elicit new information from the given information- and opinion tasks require low levels of information processing and eliciting little new information.

According to student's reports in Think-aloud protocol, the effect of personal factors complies with Krashen's (1987) views. The reports articulated by the learners showed that, as Krashen believes, motivated

and highly self-confident students in low anxiety situations perform better. Analyzing the reports collected from the students may support the results of the study in an interesting way.

Related to classroom environment, students in the reasoning group participated in class activities willingly whereas there were noticeable differences in the information group and particularly in the opinion group (See Table 4). Majority of the students in the opinion groups were unwilling to participate in the classroom discussions presumably due to the students attitudes. Throughout the class, in reasoning group, students were filled with expectations to know what their reasonings of their classmates are, and they were eager to express their reasons about tasks provided. This may be due to the nature of reasoning tasks that they are more engaging, and they challenge language learners' knowledge by activating it to look for possible reasons for an event, activity, or behavior and express them freely.

From students' verbal reports, it was revealed that students' attitudes towards making errors in performing tasks are different (See Table 5). While students in the reasoning group tend to regard errors as a natural process of language learning, students in the opinion and information groups appear to be stressed about being wrong especially in front of the teacher. Being wrong means losing face before classmates, which might stem from students inadequate self esteem, that they are not yet overcoming it. According to Williams and Burden (2002), learners, who feel insecure or who have low self-esteem, are unlikely to be able to give their full attention to learning in class. Reducing fear of being embarrassed by making errors through reasoning gap tasks, learners are encouraged to take risks willingly, and conversely what reduces their psychological pressures appears to be cooperation with their partners in the pair work practice. However, in the other types of tasks particularly opinion-gap tasks, learners could avoid taking such risks. This difference seems to affect other aspects of behavior: students' attention during class, attitudes to participating in class activities, perceptions of teachers' roles in class, and perceptions of classroom environment.

It might be difficult to conclude that one task type is better than another; however, considering the number of students who felt positive

about reasoning tasks, we might claim that a reasoning task might be welcomed by lower intermediate students of high school, and among the participated of the study, the group working on reasoning-gap seem more satisfied with the instruction. In situation of this type the most important point is the observable willingness of students tending to be actively engaged in the classroom discussions, practicing the process of vocabulary learning by talking and having interaction with other students as well as the teacher. With the above results, it would be fruitful to follow such directions in the future vocabulary teaching processes.

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Appendix A: Sample Task Cycle Used in the Study

Task-cycle: Having a job
- Learners are required to look at the pictures carefully. Match the information in columns A, B, and C.

on	for an airline	cooks food
a chef	in a department store	care for patients
a flight attendant	in a hospital	sells clothes
a nurse	in a restaurant	serves passengers
a carpenter	in an office	builds house
a receptionis	for a construction company	answers the phone

- In groups of four or five, or in pairs, each task group will receive their special instruction:
For group A: (Information-gap task)
- The learners are asked to find similarities or differences in the above jobs.
- They are asked to take turns describing each person's job.
- One participant points to one picture, and the other participants will complete information about it.
 For group B: (Reasoning gap task)
- The learners are asked to deduce which job(s) require more education.
- The learners are asked to deduce which job(s) require more attractive appearance.

- The learners are asked to deduce which job(s) earn more money.

For group C: (Opinion-gap task)

- The learners are asked to give their own ideas about:
- The job(s) that they are going to choose in future,
- The job(s) that they think are more necessary in Iran,
- Their parents' jobs.

Appendix B: Topics Selected for the Achievement Vocabulary Test after Instruction in the Present Study.

The Family

1- Look at the picture and then put the correct words in the sentences.

Son   aunt   niece   cousins   husband daughter   children

Wife   uncle   sister   nephew   parents brother

a) Bill is Vera's ….., so of course she's Bill's …..
b) Bill and Vera have two ….. , Ray and Kate .
c) Ray and Amy have a ….. , Jill, and a ….. , Joe.
d) Joe is Jill's ….., and Jill is Joe's …..
e) Di and Don's ….., are Kate and Bob .
f) Jill and Joe are Di and Don's …..
g) Bob is Jill and Joe's ….. Kate is their …..
h) Jill is the ….. of Kate and Bob. Joe is their …..

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1- Instructions as above.

Grandson   grandparents   granddaughter   son-in-law
Father-in-law   grandchildren   grandmother   sister-in-law
**Brother-in-law   grandfather   mother-in-law   daughter-in-law**

a) Bill and Vera have four ….. ,Joe, Jill, Di and Don .
b) Bill and Vera are the …..of Joe, Jill, Di and Don.
c) Don is Bill's …..Bill is Don's …..
d) Vera is Di's ….. Di is Vera's …..
e) Amy isn't the daughter of Bill and Vera. She's their …..
f) Bill is Amy's ….. and Vera is her …..
g) Kate isn't Amy's real sister. She's her …..
h) Bob is Ray's ….. and he's the ….. of Bill and Vera .

Sport
3- Match each of the following sports with the correct picture below.

skiing   cycling   basketball
boxing   horse-riding
shooting   volley-ball   badminton
tennis   baseball
hockey   table-tennis   cricket
fishing   golf
skating   motor-racing   running
swimming   rugby
football
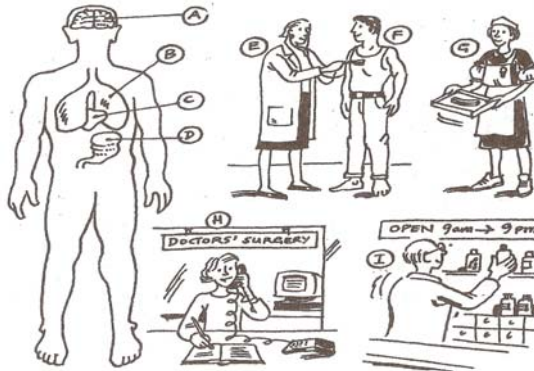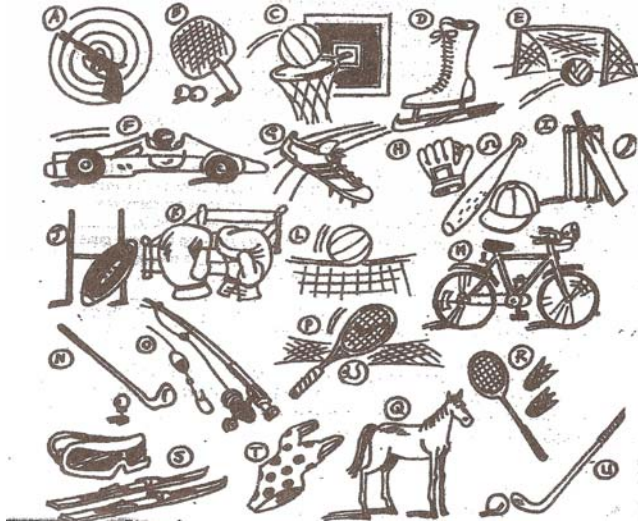
Illness and the Doctor

1 Match each of the following words with the correct item
in the picture.

**doctor   patient   nurse   receptionist   lungs
brain   stomach   heart   chemist**

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2- Put each of the following words or phrases in the correct space in the passage below.

look after   treat   ache   examine
suffer   keep   cure   operate

I am a family doctor. I have a nurse to help me and a receptionist to help the patients when they come to see me. When I see patients in my surgery, first I listen to their problems, then I (a) …... them. Then, if I can, I (b) ….. them for their illnesses. Some simply have sore throats, headaches or flu and I give them a prescription to take to the chemist. Others (c) ….. from serious diseases of the heart, lungs, stomach or even brain. I can't always (d) ….. them myself and sometimes I have to send them to hospital for treatment. If something is seriously wrong with them, the hospital will decide to (e) ….. on them. The trouble is people don't (f) ….. themselves properly. It really isn't so difficult to (g) ….. well. If your head begins to (h) ….. have a rest. If you always feel tired, get more exercise. Eat well. Have a good diet. And have a regular check-up with the doctor.

Appendix C: Think-Aloud Verbal Reports

Through learning English, I think I had many ideas because I could share various opinions with the classmates. I learned the importance of co-operation in learning through group work. What I like in this class is that everybody can share his opinions. What I don't like is that I can share only a few comments.

I am nervous and worried because sometimes I don't follow the instructions. I don't know what I have to face in class each day. I like the teaching style. Sometimes when I understand, I enjoy the class with the others. If I don't, I become sleepy. Learning English is very interesting but difficult.

Sometimes I cannot understand what you say but I don't think it's a bad point because when I cannot understand, I try to ask my friends.

I like this class. When I am sleepy, I don't understand. The teacher's talk and practices are too fast. I practice reading by myself. Now I can understand the teacher's talk a little better.

I don't feel good when I cannot answer the teacher's questions perfectly accurately. The teacher likes students to work in groups. The problem is that when I come up with some sentences to present to the teacher, but other friends think in another way. I lose the chance to know the accuracy of the sentences that I made. I prefer individual work, even through some students are afraid of working individually. But I think there are a lot of students who can do it. The teacher should give individual work more. We are in second year and mature enough to learn English Two.

I feel comfortable in learning the words. I am relaxed because my friends and I can help in thinking. I don't have to think alone. Sometimes when I cannot figure it out, I am nervous, but working in groups, we help in making sentences. I feel good because there is a harmony. The teacher gradually asks questions and gives explanations, so I understand more. I like working in groups not individually. If I work alone, sometimes I cannot answer, and so I don't know what to do. I feel I am lost.

I enjoy studying vocabulary more than formal classes. The way the teacher teaches is fun. There is no stress. The topics are interesting. The teacher never complains when students don't understand. She gives the students chances to think and speak very often in English, which makes the class less boring. I don't want to miss the class. The teacher's English is

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easy to understand. It is clear even though I don't know the meaning.

I enjoy studying vocabulary, but sometimes I don't understand some words. I don't feel uncomfortable in class. Because when I cannot answer, other friends can help me. What I like when I study in this class is to have activities and to be able to speak with classmates to understand (English) more. What I don't like is that sometimes I don't understand clearly what the teacher has told us to do. I do first, and then I find what I have done is wrong. The teacher doesn't give us enough time to understand (the instruction), and sometimes the explanations are too difficult.

I think this is the good chance for me to study English with this teacher; her explanation and presentation are good. I like the way she is teaching very much and her smile makes everybody feel relieved to talk English and her strategies are a good way to stimulate us to participate which is the main point to let us understand the lessons very well.

I feel good. The teacher asks students questions in easy-going ways. She allows students to participate in class. Her teaching is understandable. Sometimes I don't understand, but it is a small part. I feel embarrassed when speak wrongly at the moment, but I don't care about it. Even wise people make mistakes.

I enjoy studying in this class, but I am sometimes anxious because I don't understand the words. When I understand the words I enjoy, but when I don't, I feel bored. Generally, I like this class but the teacher seems to be strict sometimes, and I feel nervous when she asks me something.

I like the class. I feel comfortable with teacher and friends. The topics we learn are interesting. They are fun. I like to

know things the teacher provides because it is about daily events. I feel anxious sometimes if I cannot keep up with the teacher.

I don't like the class, because I don't understand when I listen to the class. The conversations are too fast. I cannot catch up with them. It is difficult. I don't know what the conversations are about. I cannot speak when I want to.

It's OK. Nothing to improve, but you (the teacher) should let the students rest before the next class, about 15 minutes will be better. Because sometimes we don't have break before your class.

In the class, I feel comfortable and I am not worried about speaking. Because it is time that I could practice and use English in real communication. I like to learn various kinds of words, which can be useful in real life. I feel that it is a good chance to practice speaking and use English. I think it is useful and I can use it in real life. The teacher teaches in an interesting way. The classmates pay attention to class, and try to practice speaking. I like to learn to make different dialogs.

I like friends and the teacher. The class atmosphere is relaxing. I don't like when I don't understand, which makes me not participate. This is my own problem.

English classes are most comfortable classes for me in all subjects. It is probably because I like English. When I learn more, I know more. When I can translate more, I feel delighted. So I don't feel bored or discouraged when I learn in class even if it is getting more difficult. In this class, I have chances to listen to English conversations in real life. I can listen to the teacher. I think the language that English people use in real life is different from the language in textbooks. So this class makes me understand more about English. The way

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that teacher teaches is fun. There are a lot of teaching techniques and I don't feel bored.

I think that in this class I feel good and relaxed because I can study the things I love but I want MORE ACTIVITIES. I think if we learn only from textbook, some time we cannot use what we learn in real life.

Appendix D:The Students' Scores in English in the Previous Semester
I feel embarrassed and I am afraid when I make mistakes in speaking. I don't understand much when I listen to the teacher. So I dare not to speak or participate in any activity with others. I feel that I am very stupid when I am in class. Others understand what the teacher says though I don't understand sometimes. That is why I dare not to participate.

I feel I am a bit worried when I listen to the teacher. I don't know what to say, and I don't participate much in class activities, because sometimes I don't understand the questions and many other things. But this class makes me familiar with English people. I don't feel embarrassed when I answer wrongly. I would like to be good in English and I want to be able to use it in real life.

I like when the teacher teaches English. It makes us learn more than just lessons. I feel comfortable when I learn because the teacher is friendly. The class does not put emphasis on the content in the book, but it emphasizes encouraging students to participate.

Sometime I really want to say more about the topic that the teacher introduces in class, but my knowledge is not enough. I see that our teacher tries so hard to simulate us to speak. That's what I like. Iranian students are always shy and nervous, so they don't talk in class; that's what I hate much.

Maybe the best way is not to change the teaching style but to change students' attitude.

I like this class because I can practice speaking, but I am always worried when teacher asks questions because I feel bad when my answer is wrong, but I think it's OK.

Sometimes I cannot catch up with the teacher. But it is fun to have pictures. They make us understand more. If I cannot catch up with the class, I am worried. People feel the same way when they don't understand. I feel nervous when the teacher asks me and I cannot answer her. I feel less confident instantly. I feel it because I haven't prepared the lesson very well.