

# Contrastive Study on Learning Vocabulary through Role-play and Memorization among EFL Female Learners

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## Abstract

The present study was carried out to examine contrastive study on learning vocabulary through role-play and memorization among Iranian upper-intermediate EFL female learners. Seventy five Iranian EFL female students learning English in Hegmataneh English institute in Tehran were selected as the sample from the whole upper-intermediate female learners in every English institute in Iran. A pre-test of vocabulary was administered at the beginning of instruction to get convinced that the new words were unfamiliar to participants. Then, the participants were divided into an experimental and control group. There were thirty seven learners in experimental group and thirty eight learners in control group. The students in the experimental group were given the treatment, that is, they learned vocabulary through role-play during twenty sessions. Whereas the participants in control group were given no treatment, that is, they learned vocabulary through memorization, as a traditional technique. At the end of the treatment, the same pre-test of vocabulary was given as a post-test to both groups, as experimental and a control group, in order to see which technique was more effective in learning vocabulary. By comparison of the mean scores of both groups, the results showed that there was a significant difference between role-play and memorization. Although both groups had promotions in learning vocabulary, experimental group was observed to make much more promotion in learning vocabulary through role-play than the control group.

**Key words: Role-Play, Memorization, EFL, Vocabulary.**

## 1. Introduction

English includes both skills and sub- skills. Its skills are as follows: reading, writing, speaking, and listening. And its sub-skills contain vocabulary, grammar, collocation, etc. Among these sub-skills, vocabulary is one of the significant parts of English, and its learning in an efficient way is very considerable. Swan and Walter(1984) wrote: “vocabulary acquisition is the largest and the most important task facing the language learner. Coursebooks began to include activities that specially targeted vocabulary.” How important is vocabulary? According to David Wilkins, (cited in Thornbury(2002)), “You can say very little with grammar, but you can say almost anything with words.”(P.13)

Besides these mentioned statements regarding the importance of vocabulary, “it is to point out that there have been a great number of different approaches to language learning, each with a different outlook on vocabulary”(Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Jesa,2008). “At times, language teaching and vocabulary teaching have been

interconnected to each other, and sometimes it has been neglected”(Schmitt,2000). “In practice, syntax and pronunciation of the words are the significant part of language learning, whereas, vocabulary has been ignored in most foreign language classes”(Femández, Prahlad, Rubtsova, & Sabitoy, 2009; Farghal & Obiedat, 1995). “Nowadays it is quite believed that vocabulary learning is one of the most substantial parts of both one’s native language acquisition and foreign language learning”(Morra & Camba, 2009).

Vocabulary learning and its retention in learners’ mind is very momentous. So, it should be taught in a way that learners will be capable of recalling them easily, Knowing how to use and when to use words.

Based on these mentioned particular cases, the researcher in this study intends to investigate a technique in order to learn vocabulary better. Apparently there are many operative vocabulary learning techniques such as concept-mapping, matching, role-play, semantic-mapping, dictionary use, learning vocabulary through the context, and many others. Among these, role-play, as a technique, has been chosen by the researcher.

Livingstone(1983) sees role-play “as a class activity which provides the students to practice the language aspects of role-behavior, the actual roles they may need outside the classroom.” Concerning the importance of role-play, Ladousse(2004), (cited in Huang(2008)), said these following tips:

1. It brings about developing interaction.
2. As a result of interaction, step by step, learners learn to speak fluently.
3. Role-play causes to augment learner’s incentive and words.
4. Through role-play, learners talk to each other, so, they are working cooperatively not individually.

it is suggested "through role play, L2 learners can experience many kinds of situations in which they will use the language and words; and as they develop a sense of mastery in them, they should be able to apply the language more easily to new situations."

## **1.2. Research Question and Research Hypothesis**

This study seeks to answer the following research question:

“Is there any significant difference between “role-play” and “memorization” techniques in learning vocabulary among Iranian upper-Intermediate EFL learners?”

On the basis of the above mentioned research question, the following null hypothesis is formulated:

“There is no significant difference between “role-play” and “memorization” techniques in learning vocabulary among Iranian upper-Intermediate EFL learners.”

## **2. Background of the Study**

Learning vocabulary has been known as a paramount factor in language learning. i.e., in order to know a language completely, learning its vocabulary, as one of its sub-skills, is very significant. Of course, only knowing vocabulary is not enough, its meaningful learning, its retention in mind for a long time, and its use in every relevant situational context is such a considerable factor that every one must pay attention to.

Since vocabulary has a fundamental significance in every language especially English, as an international language, a large number of researches have been conducted regarding this sub-skill. Here, the researcher in this study has pointed out some of them.

Recently a study has been examined by Özgül(2012) on the topic of teaching vocabulary through collocations in EFL classes: the case of Turkey. The researcher chose a primary school in Konya. Turkish students from two classes participated in this study. Two groups, as experimental and control, were selected. In control group, students learned the new vocabulary through classical methods like synonyms, antonyms, definitions, and translation on the basis of mother tongue. On the other hand, in experimental group, teacher taught the new words through collocation technique. The statistical analysis has shown that teaching new vocabulary through collocation technique results in a better retention and recalling that presenting the new words via classical methods.

The impact of two instructional techniques on EFL learners' vocabulary knowledge: flash cards versus word lists, is another study, which has been done by Baleghizadeh & Ashoori(2011). The purpose of this project was to investigate learners' responses to teaching vocabulary through using flash cards and word lists. This study was carried out at the Khatam Junior High School in Iran. The researcher taken into account two classes of 18 students at the elementary level of English language proficiency. In order to examine the results of teaching vocabulary through flash cards and word lists, the researchers gave the essential instructions to learners for ten minutes in two sessions. After two days, a post-test was given to each group in fifteen minutes, then, their mean scores were computed through t-test. The outcomes revealed no significant difference in these above techniques.

Bastanfar & Hashemi(2010) have investigated vocabulary Learning Strategies and ELT Materials A Study of the Extent to Which VLS Research Informs Local Coursebooks in Iran. According to these researchers, Lexical competence is now regarded to be at the heart of communicative competence. This is endorsed by psycholinguistic research and corpus linguistics which show more use of prefabricated chunks than rule-based constructions. The change has been embraced in ELT. But lexical needs are unique to the individuals, personally, professionally and academically. Research demonstrates that vocabulary learning strategies make learning more self-directed and transferrable to new situations but there is a need for training learners in the use of VLS. ELT coursebooks are agenda for classroom practices; hence a good place to incorporate learner training. This study analyzed local ELT materials to study to what extent insights from VLS research and learner training have informed the sampled coursebooks. The results show the new edition of Pre-University coursebook is a significant step in incorporating such insights however there is a long way before the treatment is adequate in the whole series.

In addition to these studies, Walters & Bozkurt(2009) have investigated the effect of vocabulary notebooks on EFL students' vocabulary acquisition. Here, students in three lower intermediate EFL classes participated in their study. A vocabulary notebook program was implemented in one class over a 4-week period, with the remaining two classes acting as control groups, following the same curriculum with the same materials but without keeping vocabulary notebooks. Receptive and controlled productive vocabulary tests revealed significantly greater learning of the target words in the treatment group. In addition, students in the treatment group demonstrated a greater tendency to use the target words in free writing compositions. However, a positive impact on learner autonomy was not observed. On the basis of these findings, the authors 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.

Dakun and Gieve(2008) have studied another topic regarding vocabulary. Their investigation reports a survey study of how Chinese students use strategies when learning second language vocabulary. The focus of the study is on the effect of learning environments (EFL vs. ESL) on the use of vocabulary learning strategies. The subjects are Chinese secondary school students learning English in China (EFL context) and in Singapore (ESL context).The questionnaire used in the survey was a modified version of Gu and Johnson (1996). 450 secondary school students, aged from 16 to 19, from two secondary schools in Harbin, China, and one boarding school in Singapore participated in the survey. The profile of the students' learning beliefs, sources and strategies was examined in relation to their learning environments. The t-test results showed that learning environment was significant factors in affecting vocabulary learning beliefs, sources and strategy use. The findings suggest that language environments can influence individuals' vocabulary learning profile. Thus, the combined effects of the teaching emphasis and the amount of exposure to the target language in and out of the classroom should be considered closely in order to understand the strategy choice of Chinese EFL and ESL learners.

Lotfi Ghazal(2007) has examined learning vocabulary in EFL contexts through vocabulary learning strategies. She believed that vocabulary learning is one of the major challenges foreign language learners face during the process of learning a language. One way to alley the burden is to assist students in becoming independent learners during the process of L2 vocabulary learning. This could be achieved through instructing learners to apply vocabulary learning strategies as efficiently as possible. The main pursuit of the article is to suggest a framework for training EFL learners in vocabulary learning strategies. In so doing, an account of different taxonomies of vocabulary learning strategies and a rationale for strategy training are presented.

Pulido(2004) is another researcher, who has studied the effects of cultural background knowledge on immediate incidental vocabulary gain through reading brief narratives that depicted either culturally familiar or culturally unfamiliar versions of everyday scenarios. In this study, participants were high-intermediate adult learners of Spanish. Independent variables included (a) cultural familiarity, (b) group assignment, and (c) L2 passage sight vocabulary. The dependent variable was an adapted version of the Vocabulary Knowledge Scale (VKS), (Paribakht & Wesche, 1993). Each narrative contained 5 nonsense words depicting concepts frequently associated with the scenarios. Results of an ANCOVA revealed significant effects of cultural familiarity whereby vocabulary gains were greater after participants read within the culturally familiar versions of the scenarios. No significant effects were obtained for the variables of group or of L2 passage sight vocabulary, although a significant positive correlation was obtained on one passage.

Concerning vocabulary, another study has been examined by Pulido(2003). This study investigates the impact of topic familiarity, second language (L2) reading proficiency, and L2 passage sight vocabulary on incidental vocabulary acquisition. Independent variables include (a) a topic familiarity questionnaire, (b) the *Adult Basic Learning Examination, Spanish Battery*(Karlsen & Gardner, 1990), and (c) a passage sight vocabulary test. A repeated-measures design was used with a cross-sectional sample. Participants read narratives (2 more and 2 less familiar) containing nonsense words.

Two and 28 days after reading, 2 gain measures were administered: (a) translation production and (b) translation recognition. Analyses reveal robust effects of reading proficiency, differential effects of topic familiarity, and isolated effects of passage sight vocabulary.

Fountain & Nation(2000) have examined a vocabulary-based graded dictation test. This study describes a dictation test which is graded according to vocabulary frequency. The article describes how the tests are made, used and marked. Four equivalent forms are included in the article. Statistical data on the tests is provided, showing that the tests have high reliability, and are valid tests of vocabulary knowledge. Evidence is provided to show that the four forms are equivalent.

Other than these above mentioned studies, Laufer & Nation(1999) have studied a vocabulary-size test of controlled productive ability. In terms of these researchers, It is important in the design of the vocabulary component of a teaching program that teachers are able to discover the state of their learners' vocabulary knowledge. It is also important that researchers can draw on a variety of vocabulary measures to investigate the nature of vocabulary growth. This study focuses on a controlled production measure of vocabulary consisting of items from five frequency levels, and using a completion item type like the following. The garden was full of fra flowers. The controlled-production vocabulary-levels test was found to be reliable, valid (in that the levels distinguished between different proficiency groups) and practical. There was a satisfactory degree of equivalence between two equivalent forms of the test.

Marjorie and Paribakht(1996) have studied Assessing Second Language Vocabulary Knowledge: Depth Versus Breadth. Here detailed analysis of techniques used for second language vocabulary assessment and the implied assumptions about the underlying construct of vocabulary knowledge. The article notes that existing measures of vocabulary size are uninformative as to the depth of knowledge that learners have about particular words.

There have been many researches regarding role-play, through these studies we can realize its importance in language learning process. The researcher has already pointed out some of them.

It is essential to point out that there are many studies regarding role-play, in fact, through such studies, we can pay attention to the significance of administrating role-play in EFL classrooms. For instance, recently a study has been conducted by Shen (2011). Shen believed that recently, speaking has played an increasingly important role in second/foreign language settings. However, in many Chinese universities, EFL students rarely communicate in English with other people effectively. Because of this Shen focused on a study, which aimed at investigating the implementation of constructive role plays via e-learning and its effect on Chinese EFL learners' speaking in college English classes. Speaking pretests and post-tests, student role play recording analysis, student questionnaires, and student interviews employed to collect data during the 18-week instruction period. Results showed that the e-learning constructive role plays have positive effects on improving students' speaking in terms of language quality and language production, and students express positive opinions towards the implementation of e-learning constructive role plays.

There is another research, which has been examined by Huang Qiang1 & XIA Hong-Zhong2(2010). It has investigated role-play: an effective approach to learning EFL for

Chinese students from the perspective of psychodynamics and pedagogy. These researchers believed that EFL learning in China is very popular; however, the effect of learning seems to be unsatisfactory. So, they analyzed three major obstacles of Chinese students in EFL learning, which are as follows: the introversive character of Chinese students, the lack of English-speaking environment and atmosphere, and the traditional way of “teacher as the center”. After the analysis these three obstructions, they believed that role-play, as a common approach to learning EFL, can help to eliminate these impediments. They believed that role-play can stimulate the enthusiasm and initiative of Chinese students to express their opinions in English if a teacher can fully make the advantage of the inborn instinct of show desire of human being, adopt the approach of role-play, and get rid of the traditional way of English teaching.

There is another investigation, which has been assessed by Lin(2009). The researcher explored role-play implementation in secondary school EFL classrooms in China. Yi Lin posed this main research question: How can Chinese EFL teachers make effective use of role-play in their classroom teaching? To explore this question, this author reviewed relevant literature and proposed a theoretical framework for the use of role-play that incorporates three lenses: particular research background in Chinese EFL education context (including a proposed CRCTL approach to meet learner's cultural needs), theoretical ground for positioning role-play in EFL education, and introduction of particular role-play literature (concept, strength and weakness, tutor roles and tasks, previous research studies). A multiple case study on seven Chinese EFL teachers using role-play in their classes is the overall methodology and data were obtained from individual/focus group interviews, direct classroom observations, and questionnaires. The findings not only reflected the benefits of role-play as a language teaching strategy; the strength of CRCLT in particular cultural contexts, but also responded to a complex question of the needs of teachers and students doing role-play in EFL classrooms in China and to the question of a series of issues that need to be considered in order to meet their needs. Based on the findings, recommendations to classroom teachers, teacher educators and educational administrators have been made followed by a sample role-play project "Christmas" which integrates various levels of role-play in different EFL classes. Supported by detailed information from classrooms, this study intends to facilitate more in-depth discussions from researchers and practitioners regarding role-play implementation in EFL classrooms. This study is expected not only to be helpful for EFL teachers and students in China but also for those in other countries.

Another study has been implemented by Mollazamani & Dr. Fathi Ashtiani(2008). This study has investigated the effect of role-play training on improving self-concept in adolescent girls. At first, all students in one of the mid-schools in Tehran were selected by census and filled out Beck self-concept inventory. In the second step, 202 students who got the lowest scores were selected and randomly divided into two groups (101 in case and 101 in control group). Then, the case group had six 90-minute sessions of instructing role-play. At the end of the training, both groups had a test. Data were analyzed using mean score difference analysis of pre-test, post-test and t-test. The results showed a significant difference between the students who received the training and those who did not with regards to self-concept.

Many articles regarding vocabulary, as one of the substantial components of a language, have been accomplished. Through these articles, the importance of vocabulary learning in a language has been considered. As well as concerning role-play, many researches have been examined, via these ones, role-play, as an efficient technique, has been known in second language learning. Now, the researcher of this study focuses her attention on memorization, as one of the traditional technique, in second language learning. It goes without saying that like vocabulary and role-play, there have been various studies in the field of learning vocabulary. Here, the researcher mentions some of them.

Recently, a study has been conducted by Yang & Dai(2011), on the topic of rote memorization of vocabulary and vocabulary development. The researcher in this study states that Rote memorization of vocabulary has long been a common way for Chinese students to learn lexical items. Cultural, educational background and traditional teaching practice in China are identified to be the factors that contribute to many students' heavy reliance on memorization as their sole approach to vocabulary learning. In addition to rote memorization which has been proved useful and effective in the Chinese ELT context, the researcher suggested vocabulary learning strategies in order to be presented to learner and to be taught to them so as how to build vocabulary through other useful learning methods.

Here, Vocabulary selection is based solely on the reading texts used, and words are taught through bilingual word-lists, and memorization. In a typical grammar-translation text, the grammar rules are presented and illustrated. A list of vocabulary items are presented with their translation equivalents, and translation exercises are prescribed. For home work, students are required to memorize part of a lesson and lexical items (vocabulary lists) from the textbook. In the next class contact, teacher would test students of their memory of words of previous lesson(s). At the end, the result has shown that Vocabulary development on the part of Chinese learners can not be reached solely through such traditional means as rote memorization of vocabulary. In order to help students facilitate vocabulary building, Chinese teachers in ELT course should weave instruction on vocabulary learning methods and strategies into regular vocabulary task-related activities. In this way learners can be armed with variety of approaches to word learning, and can be equipped with useful vocabulary learning strategies, which will surely contribute significantly to students vocabulary development.

Moreover, a research has been done by Duong Thi Hoang Oanh(2006). The researcher investigated memorization and EFL students' strategies at university level in Vietnam. The researcher chose two questionnaires, one for students and another for teachers at the university in Vietnam, as well as, an in-depth interview was utilized on both teachers and students. After analysis of data, a majority of students (96%) stated that memorization is a good strategy to learn vocabulary, as well as, similar results were found with the teachers' responses, that is, about 85% of the teachers believed that memorization was needed for learning vocabulary and grammar structures. Moreover, from the interview data, both teachers and students seem to feel that good memorization means memorizing in a selective and flexible manner, as well as the capacity to apply what has been learned in real use for communicative purposes. This is one important aspect of memorization.

Memorization and improvisation: a comparison of two strategies in the oral acquisition of English as a second language, as an inquiry, has been examined by Liu(2006). The purpose of this research is to investigate the effects of two teaching strategies, memorization and improvisation, on ESL(English as a second language) students' oral proficiency and how they perceived the strategies and the activities used in the classroom. They had learned English for at least three and a half years before joining the study, but most of their previous learning was focused on reading and writing. They were divided into three groups, experiencing a memorization strategy, an improvisation strategy, and a strategy combining memorization and improvisation respectively. Data were collected from their oral pre-test and post-test, perception questionnaire, and perception in-class observation. Data were analyzed in both quantitative and qualitative ways. The results show that each of the strategies had acquisition, but the improvisation group performed significantly better than the memorization group, and the memorization group did better than the combination group. However, the satisfaction and perception surveys show that participants preferred the combination strategy to the improvisation strategy, and the improvisation strategy was preferred to the memorization strategy. The findings also show that participants' initial oral language levels made no difference on the rate of oral improvement. The high-level and intermediate students have demonstrated no difference in their preference for the two strategies, but the low-level students have showed significant preference for the memorization strategy. In terms of the teaching activities, participants preferred task-based activities to discussion activities, and activities involving multiple people were preferred to monologues such as storytelling and news reports. Nevertheless, preference made no difference on participants' oral improvement.

Many studies concerning vocabulary, as one of the sub-skills of English, as a foreign language, have been accomplished. Apparently, each of these studies has opened a door toward the importance of learning vocabulary and the necessity of teaching vocabulary better. Through such studies we realize that vocabulary must be considered seriously in EFL classes because it is a substantial sub skill that mustn't be ignored. As well as, many researches have been conducted with regard to role-play and memorization, as the helpful techniques in second language learning. Presently, the researcher of this study has decided to investigate an important issue in the field of learning English vocabulary. That is, she has planned to examine this substantial topic, which its result is needed in academic fields: Contrastive study on learning vocabulary through role-play and memorization among EFL female learners. it is hoped that the outcome of this research topic will be a great help to all teachers and learners.

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1. Context and Participants**

This study was conducted in Hegmataneh English institute, which is located in Tehran. The participants, who were attending this study, were 75 EFL female learners. They were at the upper-intermediate level of English proficiency with an average age of 15 to 23 years old. Their home language was Farsi.

##### **3.1.1. Homogeneity of learners**

It is necessary to point out that initially the researcher compared the mean scores of pre-tests in both groups. She did it in order to see whether these participants are homogeneous or not.

Table 3.1. Descriptive Statistics

	Techniques	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Learning	Role-play	37	39.9459	17.31721	2.84693
vocabulary	Memorization	38	39.6316	15.82919	2.56783

As table 3.1 shows, after comparing the scores of pre-tests in both groups through independent samples t-test, very close means in both experimental and control group have been obtained.

As well as, the amount of Sig.(2-tailed), which is under the heading of tests for equality of means, in table 3.2, ( table of homogeneity), is .935 (this amount is larger than p value 0.05), so it shows that these participants are homogeneous. In other words, it shows that they have the same level of English language proficiency.

### 3.2. Instrument

In this study a paper and pencil test was used twice with two different purposes. The researcher administered a test of vocabulary as the pretest at the beginning, then she employed pretest as the posttest at the end of instruction (see the test in appendix A). Definitely, the researcher had some major reasons to give these two tests. These logical justifications are as follows:

1. A pretest was given in order to evaluate EFL learners' entry behaviors. That is, to tap the learners' knowledge of English language proficiency before starting instruction.
2. A pretest was given so as to assess whether learners are homogeneous or not.

Table 3.2. Table of Homogeneity

		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 Vocabulary	Equal variances assumed	.530	.469	.082	73	.935	.31437	3.82926	-7.31734	7.94607

3. The researcher gave a posttest of vocabulary so as to measure their terminal behaviours as well as how much learners' English language knowledge has improved in vocabulary through presenting new vocabularies through role-play and memorization techniques.

Before starting this study, the researcher had taken into account 42 participants as pilot. It is vital to state that these learners had the same characteristics of main subjects of this study in terms of English proficiency. Then, the researcher had distributed the vocabulary test papers among these subjects. After answering the questions, the researcher emended them, then, the reliability, which was computed by KR-21 formula, was 0.85 (see appendix B).

There were 50 items in this vocabulary test, which were in the form of multiple choices. It is essential to point out that each multiple choice contains three items. Through these items, one is the correct answer (see the test in appendix B). Among these fifty questions, forty two ones assess synonyms. Moreover, there are seven questions, which tap collocations, as well as, there is one question, which evaluate antonym.

### **3.3. Procedure and Time-Frame**

To accomplish the purpose of the study, the following procedures were carried out:

This study has taken about one month and seventeen days. The exact time that the researcher initiated her examination was 16<sup>th</sup> April of 1391, and the accurate time that this investigation in the class terminated was 9<sup>th</sup> June of 1391.

The subjects, who were participated in this study, were composed of 75 EFL female learners in Hegmataneh English institute in Tehran. There were 37 learners in experimental group and 38 students in control group. They were homogeneous, on the basis of both the placement test, which had already been given by the institute and the comparison of mean scores of pre-tests. The amount of time, which was allocated to the treatment in experimental group, was 45 to 50 minutes in each session. Before starting, the researcher, as the instructor, informed her learners that they aren't taking a test and their performance would have no bearing on their regular class mark.

In each group, the researcher chose between 8 to 17 new words in order to teach in each session. After pretest, treatment was going to be given to the experimental group. In this group, the teacher, as the researcher, presented the new words based on the conversation of the book.

First the dialogue was played to learners. Then it was read by the teacher, here, the new words along with their definitions were presented to the learners. After that, they read the dialogue in pairs, and sometimes more than two learners read it to the class, in this way the teacher could be sure of whether they have learned those new words and their pronunciation or not. After that, learners were asked to work in pairs, took the roles of each person in the dialogue, and memorize their own part. Then they were asked to come in front of the class, and practice the conversation based on the roles that they had already accepted and practiced. They were also asked to make their voice based on the people in the dialogue, which would be interesting to them. In some cases, before initiating the next conversation in the following session and based on the topic, learners had been asked to wear diverse kinds of clothes. Except the conversation of each lesson, the teacher asked learners to make an extra conversation in pairs by using those new words that they have learned in that session. Meanwhile, the teacher walked around the class, checked each group to see whether they have a

problem or not. After constructing the conversation and checking it, each group came in front of the class and conversed with each other based on their roles that they have already accepted. After practicing and administrating role-play within the conversation, some exercise were presented to learners to check whether they have learned the words meaningfully or not, like listening to the conversation, which is in multiple-choice form, another exercise was matching, reading comprehension texts along with answering the questions, as well as gap-filling.

Now, let's state what happened in the control group. Like experimental group, in this group, dialogues of each unit were provided by the teacher.

In some conditions, the teacher asked some questions regarding the photos, or talked about her own background knowledge based on using those new words. Simultaneously, she tried to ask learners what does "x" mean? In fact, she tried both to activate learners' background knowledge to learn some new words before starting the conversation. Then, she started to display listening in the class, for the first time, there was no pause, learners only listened, for the second time, the teacher repeated each part as a phrase or sentence, and learners had to repeat after the teacher. In this way the new words were being presented by the teacher. She wrote the meaning of the words on the board. Learners repeated words with along their meanings after the teacher.

Initially, the teacher tried to get the synonyms/definitions from learners, if the teacher didn't get a correct feed back from learners, she herself explained them. After finishing the dialogue, the teacher asked those new words from learners. For example, 'what does "x" mean?' She asked both the whole and individual, it is to mention that in this case all those new words along with their definitions, which had been written on the board, were cleaned. Then, some exercise were presented to learners to check whether they have learned the words or not, like listening to the conversation, which is in multiple-choice form, another exercise was matching, reading comprehension texts along with answering the questions, as well as gap-filling.

After twenty one sessions, the researcher, who is also the instructor of these classes, gave learners of both groups, a vocabulary post-test, which was the same as the former vocabulary pretest.

### **3.4. Data Collection**

In this research the researcher used a pretest and posttest vocabulary, then, she analyzed the scores by SPSS 18, as a statistical software. Therefore, quantitative data was collected through a pretest and posttest vocabulary.

Before starting this study, the researcher implemented a pilot study, which contained a group of 42 students. This pilot group was selected in order to see whether the tests are reliable or not. Like the participants of the present study, all the learners in pilot group were in upper-intermediate. After computing the reliability of the test and being sure about its high reliability, the researcher, in order to conduct this study, asked an English institute in Tehran to get permission to do the study. In the first session, the researcher gave a vocabulary pretest to each group. In the second session, the researcher started giving treatment. It took 20 sessions.

After finishing the treatment on the last session, the vocabulary post-test was given to both groups. This test was exactly the same as the former pre-test on vocabulary.

### **3.5. Data Analysis**

The obtained gained scores of control and experimental groups were processed through the application of the statistical software of SPSS 18. As well as the type of the test was independent samples t-test, which was utilized to analyze the gained scores.

First, the gained scores of each group were calculated. That is, the post-test score of each individual in each group was subtracted from her own pre-test score in that group, the achieved score was known as the gained score. Then, after accomplishing the gained score of each learner in each group, an independent sample t-test was given based on those gained scores.

Here, the researcher initially found the gained score because gained score causes to have two means, after that, the gained scores were examined through independent sample t-test.

The reason for using such kind of t-test is that independent samples t-test is used both to compare mean scores of two different groups, and to tell whether there is a statistically significant difference in the mean scores for the two groups.

#### **4. Result and Data Analysis**

This study follows some efficient purposes. The first goal is to show teachers that there is always a practical way to solve the problems in the class. Most teachers always whine that why their learners are weak in some fields. One way to answer their complaints is that they must try to shift these old methods to modern and applicable ones. The second purpose is to help learners, who always complain about why they can not retain the words in their mind for a longer time, and why they can not use the words in their own relevant situational contexts. In this study, role-play can be applied by learners in order to learn vocabulary better than before. And the third goal is to assist greatly the academic systems so as to resolve one of the problems in the field of education.

Based on these statements, the researcher's main purpose is to see whether there is a significant difference between these two above-mentioned techniques, that is, "role-play" and "memorization" or not.

The research question, which was posed by the researcher, is as follows:

"Is there any significant difference between "role-play" and "memorization" techniques in learning vocabulary among Iranian upper-intermediate EFL learners?"

Then, based on this research question, the following null hypothesis is formulated:

"There is no significant difference between "role-play" and "memorization" techniques in learning vocabulary among Iranian upper-Intermediate EFL learners."

On the basis of these above research question and research hypothesis, the researcher selected a sample of 75 learners learning English in an institute. These learners were homogeneous based on both the placement test that had already been given by the institute and the comparison of their pretest mean scores by the researchers.

#### **4.1. Analytical Statistics**

##### **4.1.1. Tests of Normality**

Before going through any tests to accomplish the results, the researcher should be sure of the data have been normally distributed.

Because of this, when the researcher computed the gained scores in both control and experimental groups, she examined them in SPSS software version 18 to see whether the data are normal or not. Then the following results have been obtained.

##### **4.1.1.1. Normality of the Data in Experimental Group**

Table4.1. Tests of Normality in Experimental Group

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov <sup>a</sup>			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Learning Vocabulary	.118	37	.200 <sup>*</sup>	.947	37	.078

In table 4.1, that is, tests of normality, the amount of sig. under the heading of Shapiro-Wilk is greater than .05 thus it is concluded that the data in experimental group are normally distributed.

#### 4.1.1.2. Normality of the Data in Control Group

Table 4.2. Tests of Normality in Control Group

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov <sup>a</sup>			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Learning Vocabulary	.132	38	.092	.958	38	.161

As table 4.2 has been showed, in Shapiro-Wilk part, the amount of sig. is greater than .05 therefore the data in control group have been normal, as well. After having collected the quantitative data, the researcher analyzed them through the application of SPSS software version 18. Then some fundamental results have been gained. These results have been presented here.

First notice the amount of mean in table 4.3, descriptive statistics; here experimental group mean is greater than control group mean respectively (34.9730 vs. 28.7895).

Table 4.3. Descriptive Statistics of the Obtained Data by Two Groups

	Techniques	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Learning Vocabulary	Role-play	37	34.9730	9.78232	1.60820
	Memorization	38	28.7895	12.27205	1.99079

Then, look at the std. Deviation, in experimental group, scores distribution is less than control group std. Deviation. This indicates that in experimental group, after giving treatment and posttest, the students' knowledge rate toward learning vocabulary has been augmented over students' vocabulary knowledge in control group.

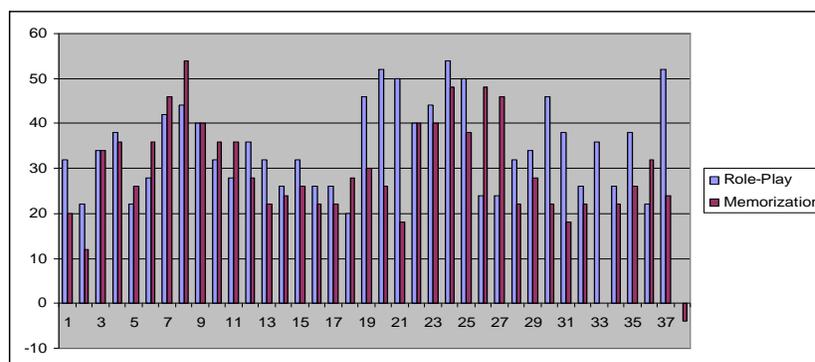
Table 4.4. Independent Samples Test

		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 Vocabulary	Equal variances assumed	.682	.411	2.409	73	.019	6.18350	2.56693	1.06761	11.29939

According to the table 4.4, as an independent samples test, here, the significance (p value) of Levene's test is .411, this amount indicates the variances of two groups are equal and similar to each other. Therefore, on the basis of the obtained sig., which is less than .05, that is .019 it is concluded that there is a significant difference between "role-play" and "memorization" techniques in learning vocabulary among Iranian upper-intermediate EFL female learners. So, the null hypothesis, which has been as follows, is rejected:

"There is no significant difference between "role-play" and "memorization" in learning vocabulary among Iranian EFL female learners."

Figure 4.1. Gained Scores of Both Groups



## **5. Discussion and Conclusion**

### **5.1. Discussion Concerning the Null Hypothesis of the study**

After administrating the procedure, giving treatment to the experimental group, and giving the related tests, as pre-tests and post-tests to each group, the result indicates that there is a significant difference between role-play and memorization, as two techniques of teaching and learning vocabulary, among EFL female learners. So, the result rejects the null hypothesis of this study.

Although in control group learners had promotion in achievement but this promotion wasn't significant over learners in experimental group, who performed role-play. That is, role-play implementation in the class showed more significant enhancement than memorization use.

Furthermore, the researcher believes that this noticeable progress made through role-play in the classroom led to a better understanding, better retention vocabulary in mind for a longer time, faster recalling and more successful using.

In addition, the researcher, as the instructor, observed that learners, via the role-play, focused on how to behave, and what to say within the conversation. This is exactly what Richard Courtney(1974), cited in Irene Y. Huang(2008), proved and explained that "playing, acting, and thoughts are interrelated with in the role-play. They are mechanisms by which the individual tests reality, gets rid of his anxieties, and masters his environment."

Moreover, learners practiced their interactions, which was on the basis of different social roles. So, accepting to perform role-play in a variety of roles will assist learners to be successful communicators in their real life society.

### **5.2. Conclusion**

Learning vocabulary is a fundamental issue in learning a language. So, the way the words have been presented to learners and the way learners learn those words are such considerable issues that teachers must pay attention to them. Based on the obtained results in previous chapter and discussion in this chapter, the following conclusions have been achieved.

In this study, the researcher utilized "role-play", as an efficacious technique, to present vocabulary in the class. Through administrating such technique, the researcher obtained the following conclusions:

1. Through role-play, Not only can students have more opportunities to "act" and to "interact" with their peers trying to use the English language, but also students' English speaking, listening, and comprehension will improve.
2. Even introvert and shy learners will be interested in attending conversational interaction via role-play. Gradually, their social behaviours will be developed through the performance of role-play.
3. Role-play brings about students learn to use the language in a more realistic, more practical way. Thus they can become more aware of the usefulness and practicality of English.
4. Role-play, as a worthwhile learning experience, requires energetic and mature teachers in order to apply and experiment in the classrooms. Because this is the teacher, who must tells learners what to say, and how to react.
5. Role-play reduces learners' anxieties and makes them excited about interaction.

6. It is necessary to state that role-play help learners to produce sentences, to use the correct accent, to construct some other conversations, to speak fluently, and to learn the new words along with the synonyms well.
7. This study has shown that teaching vocabulary through “role-play” enhances vocabulary learning among EFL female learners over the traditional technique, that is, “memorization”. So, teachers should encourage learners to use such helpful technique more than before. And the way it is employed in the class, should be trained to learners.

### **5.3. Pedagogical Implications**

The obtained findings in this study provide some advantageous evidence for teachers’ and students’ deep insights. That is, role-play as a fruitful and helpful technique can be administered in English institutes, at schools(both middle and high schools), and even at universities. Moreover, the result of the present study may be beneficial to syllabus designers so as to take role-play into consideration for teachers in their classrooms. The findings may encourage teachers, who believe in their own traditional techniques in vocabulary teaching to shift their opinions and follow some more modern and practical techniques. Role-play has been implied in order to improve learner’s listening, understanding, and speaking. That is, within the interaction, learners know themselves responsible to listen consciously to what their interlocutors have said, simultaneously, they should analyze the received information in their mind in order to provide a constructive feedback through speaking. So, not only do they use the language, but also, synchronically, they process the information that they have already listened. This shows both a generative learning vocabulary and communication.

Most learners can not speak fluently in the class; it has been proved that through role-play, as a result of interaction, step by step, learners learn to speak fluently. In some classes, learners prefer to work individually rather than cooperatively. Through performing role-play, learners talk to each other, understand each other, give and take feed back within the interaction, therefore, they learn to work cooperatively. As a result of this procedure, peer learning will develop in the classes. There are some students, who can not express themselves in the class, they have low self-confidence, low self-esteem, and they look down at themselves, whereas via administrating role-play, gradually, learners learn to express who they are and how much they believe in themselves. In most classes learners only memorize the words and the teachers can not assess accurately whether they have learned conceptually the words or not, however, by doing role-play, learners can be evaluated whether they learn the words and their uses or only memorize them. It can be a useful and attained feedback for the teacher.

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