The Effect of Meaning-focused Listening Input on Iranian Intermediate EFL Learners' Productive Vocabulary Size

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Abstract
Vocabulary as a significant component of language learning has been widely researched. As well, it is well documented that vocabulary could be learned through listening and reading. In addition, measuring productive vocabulary has been a chief concern among scholars. However, few studies have focused on meaning-focused listening input and its effect on learners' productive vocabulary size, particularly in EFL contexts. Therefore, the present study aims to figure out whether meaning-focused listening input has effect on productive vocabulary size of Iranian intermediate EFL learners. Moreover, it explores teachers' views about feasibility of training vocabulary through listening input. In the present study, 63 leaners were randomly assigned into two groups. After 12 sessions of treatment, Lex30 was conducted to measure productive vocabulary size of both control and experimental group. Also, six EFL teachers were interviewed to investigated their viewpoints. The results of independent sample t-tests show that experimental group who were treated through meaning-focused listening input outperformed the control group members who received traditional instruction in vocabulary. Qualitative data analysis, revealed that teachers did not believe in feasibility of vocabulary instruction through meaningful listening-input due to many limitations such as time constraint and EFL learners' insufficient vocabulary size. Finally, some pedagogical implications are offered.
Keywords: Vocabulary learning, meaning-focused listening input, productive vocabulary size, Lex30.

1. Introduction

Vocabulary is an inseparable element of successful language learning. Vocabulary learning is an essential component in the process of language learning (Coyle & Gracia, 2014). Learners are supposed to use language in order to communicate properly in a meaningful way. Consequently, fundamental means of communication and meaning expression is achieved by vocabulary (Schmitt, Cobb, Horst, & Schmitt, 2017). Notably, the knowledge of vocabulary is multifaceted in nature (Schmitt, 2010) and involves many constituents. Therefore, it seems that offering a precise definition of vocabulary knowledge is a complex task (Schmitt, 2014). Based on a general classification, there are two aspects for vocabulary knowledge; receptive vocabulary and productive vocabulary. According to Schmitt (2014), receptive vocabulary refers to learners' understanding of lexical items when they are reading or listening. Productive vocabulary refers to the ability of learners in recognizing and producing new vocabulary items through productive skills of speaking and writing (Nation, 2001). Moreover, Schmitt (2014) asserted that the aim of mastery of vocabulary is enabling learners to interact properly and communicatively. Thus, with regard to recognized significance of communication as an output of language learning process, measuring productive vocabulary has always been a chief concern of scholars in the realm of language learning.

As well, many studies have focused on listening skill and listening strategies (Graham, 2017; Nix, 2016; Vidal, 2011) and its effect on learning outcomes (Bonk, 2000; Vidal, 2003). According to Rost (2002), considering L2 to be obtained fully by means of listening is the ultimate purpose of improving L2 listening. Concurrently, the rationale behind listening could be acquiring new vocabulary items. In other words, listening input would act as a source for incidental vocabulary acquisition. Incidental learning refers to learning one skill or subskill while learning another skill or subskill is mainly intended (Brown, Waring, & Donkaewbua, 2008).

Based on exiting literature of SLA, this is accepted by many of researchers that input is of special importance in developing learners' L2 linguistic competence (VanPatten, 2004). Consequently, the role of listening input in English language curriculum and successful language pedagogy should be emphasized. Although there are lots of chances to listen to authentic input in ESL or native contexts, little exposure to meaningful listening input in EFL contexts happens. Notably, many research studies have been conducted to explore the role of reading, whether intensive or extensive, in vocabulary learning (Coady, 1997; Horst, 2005; Nation, 2011; Paribakht & Wesche, 1993; Pigada & Schmitt, 2006). As well, some vocabulary studies have focused on listening to stories (Elley, 1989; Kintsch & Kozminsky, 1977). However, this issue has not been researched recently, especially in EFL contexts, to explore whether meaningful listening input is effective in enhancing productive vocabulary size of EFL learners in order to make them capable to communicate properly or not. Lack of research on vocabulary learning through listening could be due to difficult task of learning words through listening in comparison with reading (Brown et al., 2008).

Moreover, it has been found that academic listening has effect on vocabulary gains and acts as a source of L2 vocabulary learning (Vidal, 2003). This is of importance especially in EFL contexts because learners require to enhance their vocabulary span, both receptively and academically. Regarding the essential role that

productive vocabulary would play in improving communicative abilities of language learners (Schmitt, 2014), it seems necessary to explore to what extent listening input has effect on productive vocabulary knowledge of EFL learners. Although abundant studies have examined incidental vocabulary learning through reading, few studies have focused the potential role of listening in learning L2 words (Webb, 2016). Therefore, the present study seeks to address the following questions:

1- to what extent does meaning-based listening input has effect on productive vocabulary size of Iranian intermediate EFL learners?

2- How much feasible is instructing vocabulary by means of meaning-based listening input for Iranian EFL teachers?

2. Literature review

Generally, listening has often been considered among the most complex skills in language learning process (Oxford, 1993). At the same time, the body of literature evidenced the beneficiary role of listening and visual supplies as major sources of input for language learning. Consequently, audiovisual materials have been recognized as informative and helpful resources of language learning (Vanderplank, 2010). However, Ellis (1995) believed that reading and print materials are the supreme and permanent sources of vocabulary learning as opposed to transitory speeches and consequently ephemeral listening input. One possible explanation could be that in contrast with reading, in listening learners cannot go back to earlier words and therefore cognitively guessing is a more demanding task (Peters, Heynen, & Puimège, 2016). As well, research shows that through listening incidental L2 vocabulary learning occurs (Brown et al., 2008). In addition, high level of correlation between effective listening and vocabulary size of learners has been evidenced; whether in terms of vocabulary knowledge required for successful language learning or need vocabulary for television programs (Staehr, 2009; Webb and Rodgers, 2009).

Meaningful input plays an important role in extending incidental vocabulary knowledge as the lack of meaning-based input would be a challenging obstacle that limits continuous learning of incidental L2 vocabulary (Cobb, 2007). Reading as a major source of input for learning L2 vocabulary. Mostly, research studies of incidental vocabulary acquisition have been conducted with regard to reading (Cobb, 2007; Horst, Cobb, & Meara, 1998). However, limited number of studies have considered the potential for learning L2 vocabulary by means of listening input (Webb, 2016). It is believed that authentic audiovisual input offers rich contexts for students and like reading input has a positive effect on L2 vocabulary learning (Peters et al., 2016). Scrutinizing various factors in incidental vocabulary learning, Hulstijn (2003) asserted that findings show that the most significant element which regulates vocabulary recall is elaborative explanation for and contribution in new lexical items which are supposed to be processed. In other words, more meaningful input results in more cognitive processing which leads to higher vocabulary gains (Craik, 2002).

Although there are some studies which have explored the effects of audiovisual input on foreign language vocabulary learning (e.g. Lin, 2014; Webb, 2015), few studies have examined young learners' vocabulary acquisition through listening input (e.g. Montero Perez, Peters, Clarebout, & Desmet, 2014). One of the first studies of incidental L2 vocabulary learning by means of listening was administered by Elley (1989). In this study, Elley investigated the effects of repeating the listening of a story on incidental L1 vocabulary learning of 157 seven-year-old learners in the context of New Zealand. As well, the effect of teacher explanation was explored. Notably, this quasi-experimental study contained no control group and followed a pre-test post-test design. However, this limitation has been addressed in the second experiment which included 178 eight-year-old students from eight intact classes. In both experiments, it was indicated that listening could result in various amount of incidental learning of vocabulary. While, in contrast to listening-only, teacher explanation of target words during the process of reading the stories aloud contributed to better learning of vocabulary items.

Vidal's (2003) exploration of incidental vocabulary acquisition of 116 university students through lecture presentation indicated significant vocabulary gains. Results of a delayed posttest showed that even four weeks after treatment sessions, learners' vocabulary retention was higher than their previous knowledge of vocabulary they have had before listening to the lectures. Unsurprisingly, in this study, higher levels of vocabulary gain were for technical words in contrast to academic lexical items. It implies that technical words are essential for understanding the lecture presentations. Concurrently, it refers to difficult task of learning academic words through listening process.

In another study, Vidal (2011) explored the effect of reading and listening input on incidental vocabulary learning of 280 first year undergraduate students at the Universidad Autònoma de Madrid. The participants were assigned in three groups. The first group read three academic texts; the second group just watched three lectures; and the third group did not receive any input at all. After assessing incidental vocabulary knowledge of the participants, the ANCOVA results revealed that reading group performed better than learners who received vocabulary through listening input. As well, the findings indicated that as learners' language proficiency increases, the gap between reading group and listening group decreases.

Recently, Coyle and Gracia (2014) examined the effects of three 30-minutes song-based instructive lectures in L2 vocabulary acquisition of 25 preschool children. There was some evidence which showed receptive vocabulary knowledge of learners could be developed through songs while this kind of listening input was not sufficiently effective to develop learners' productive knowledge of vocabulary. One possible explanation for insignificant development of productive vocabulary knowledge of learners could be that their exposure to required input has been inadequate for them to incorporate the lexical items into their productive knowledge of vocabulary. Finally, Coyle and Gracia (2014) suggested teachers to use songs as a source of input for their classes and complete their instruction with use of different activities (i.e. narrating the song, modelling the content, checking students' comprehension) to make learners capable to produce new words and communicate well. In addition, Perez, Van Den Noortgate, and Desmet (2013) conducted a meta-analysis to explore the effects of L2 videos with L2 subtitles on listening comprehension and vocabulary acquisition. The findings of their study showed that videos with captions are significantly helpful both in improving listening comprehension and in enhancing vocabulary acquisition.

There are also some studies which have explored the effect of vocabulary instruction on listening comprehension. For example, Hennebry, Rogers, Macaro, and Murphy (2013) conducted a quasi-experimental study to compare the effects of instructing vocabulary after listening on vocabulary recognition or vocabulary recall of French learners in the context of UK. The foundation of listening activity which was used for their study was meaning-focused. The findings of their study indicated that vocabulary instruction after meaning-focused listening activities leads to more gains in terms of vocabulary recall in comparison with the case of listening-only situation. Moreover, they found out the advantageous act of providing L1 information in vocabulary learning. Similarly, Sonbul and Schmitt (2010) found out that explanation of lexical items briefly is worthwhile as well as the use of L1 in providing this information.

In another study, Chang (2007) examined the effects of vocabulary preparation on listening comprehension. The findings of Chang's (2007) study indicated that reviewing vocabulary items was useful to their listening comprehension. Moreover, other kind of support at previewing phase such as visual aids and realia or repeated listening could be engaged to empower vocabulary program (Chang, 2007). This view has been supported by Kim (2006) who suggested teachers' use of eclectic method of word elaboration (i.e. implicit and explicit vocabulary elaboration) to enhance learners' word recognition. Moreover, Bonk (2000) figured out the mutual relationship between lexical knowledge and listening comprehension. In this study, a correlated interaction was found between text-lexis familiarity and listening comprehension. From this study, it was implied that effective strategies of listening comprehension would be helpful in facilitating complicated lexical input.

In short, empirical study which attempts to examine the effect of meaning-focused listening input on productive vocabulary size of EFL leaners is lacking. Thus, the present study is aimed to fulfill this gap.

3. Method

3.1 Participants

In present study, 63 intermediate EFL learners were randomly selected among 126 first-year students of Hakim Sabzevari University. All the participated were educating English language and literature at BA level. At the time of conducting the study, they had Listening course. As well, their age ranged from 18 to 24. Notably, all of them had at least 5 years of experience at English learning at language institutes in their local areas. Their language proficiency was approximately in the same intermediate level. However, to ensure their proficiency Oxford Placement Test was run. Then, they were randomly assigned to two groups; control (N= 31; Male= 15, Female= 16) and experimental (N= 32; Male= 14, Female= 18).

3.2 Instruments

3.2.1 Lex30

Lex30 was first introduced by Meara and Fitzpatrick (2000). It was designated for measuring learners' productive vocabulary size. This test includes thirty stimulated words. When learners see these words, they are supposed to write at most four other words that they remember or recall. Notably, the stimulated words are of first 1000 words band. This subtle selection has three advantages. First, leaners with lower proficiency levels could also participate in this test. Second, they could elicit a large amount of vocabulary items from different word bands. Thirds, the elicited words are usually content words which is supposed be a reliable measurement of productive vocabulary size (Fitzpatrick & Meara, 2004).

In the body of literature, it has been evidenced by some studies that Lex30 enjoys from high levels of reliability and validity (Fitzpatrick & Clenton, 2010; Fitzpatrick & Meara, 2004; Walters, 2012). For example, Walters (2012) reported that Lex30 was a reliable and concurrently valid instrument for measuring productive vocabulary knowledge. Although Meara and Fitzpatrick (2000) suggested future studies to consider the issues of reliability and validity of Lex30, Fitzpatrick and Clenton (2010) established a strong claim and framework that

revealed Lex30 benefits from high proportion of reliability and validity.

Moreover, it has more advantages. Lex30 takes little amount of time to run and interestingly contributes to precise scoring and therefore acceptable level of reliability. Regarding complex nature of productive vocabulary knowledge (Schmitt, 2014), there has been a concern that Lex30 could also measure vocabulary recall (Fitzpatrick & Meara, 2004); however, vocabulary recall is supposed to be one part of productive vocabulary knowledge which could be measured by Lex30. With regards to these reasons, in this study, Lex30 was preferred to be the instrument for measuring the productive vocabulary size of EFL learners.

3.2.2 Semi-structured interview

To explore EFL teachers' attitude toward treating vocabulary by means of meaning-focused listening input with the aim of enhancing productive vocabulary size, six semi-structured interview sessions were held. In this study, six EFL teachers participated in conducting semis-structured interview sessions. The rationale behind using this type of interview was eliciting teacher participants' ideas widely and freely without any kind of bias as in semi-structured interview a general question is raised and the interviewee, with his or her answers and explanations, determines the direction of interview (Nunan & Bailey, 2009). Therefore, due to its flexible nature in conduction, it is really popular and practical. In this study, then, this type of interviews was preferred.

3.3 Procedure

This study follows an experimental pretest-treatment-posttest design. Moreover, to explore teachers' viewpoints, a qualitative phase has been added. To ensure that learners are in the same level (i.e. intermediate), Oxford Placement Test was administered to all the participants in a separate session before pretest phase. Afterwards, the achieved data was imported to SPSS version 23 to be quantitatively analyzed. After randomly assigning learners to control and experimental groups, Lex30 was run in the first session. Before running the test, all needed instructions were provided to participants. Then, they were asked to write each word they could remember after seeing the stimulated words. This process took 30 minutes at most. The developers of this test have suggested that it is better not to set any time limit for the test (Meara & Fitzpatrick, 2000).

In the present study, the pencil-and-paper format of Lex30 has been used. When, leaners completed their papers, their responses were typed into Lex30 online version, available at http://www.lognostics.co.uk/tools/Lex30/index.htm. The rationale behind importing the data to online version of Lex30 was ease and precision of scoring. Afterwards, 12 treatment sessions were planned for the experimental group. In each session, learners were provided with new vocabulary items by means of meaningful listening. On the other, the same new words were offered to the members of control group through traditional ways such as word-list. At the very last treatment session, Lex30 was conducted again. The same procedures were followed. Simultaneously, the control group also took part in this exam.

3.4 Data analysis

After entering exam papers in online version of Lex30, the achieved results were imported to SPSS version 23 to be quantitatively analyzed. As well, to run the qualitative phase of the study, six EFL teachers were asked to participate in semi-structured interviews. To achieve a valid data, all required moves were followed. Before holding interview sessions, the participants were asked to express themselves freely and were told that their feedback will be welcome. Then, the sessions were recorded and subsequently transcribed to be quantitatively analyzed with MAXQDA version 12. The reason behind preferring the use of this software was ease of coding process and precision of finding major themes.

4. Results and discussion

The current study seeks to explore to what extent meaning-focused listening input has effect on productive vocabulary size of Iranian intermediate EFL learners. to achieve this aim, first of all, Oxford Placement Test was run to ensure learners are at the same level of language proficiency. After calculating descriptive statistics, mean score of control group turned out to be 22.29 (SD=4.00) and that of experimental group was 22.25 (SD=2.88). When independent samples t-test was run, the obtained p value was 0.96>.05 (T(61)= 0.046). It means that the selected sample is significantly homogenous and there was no significant difference between their performance in test of language proficiency.

To ensure the normality of the collected data, test of normality was administered by SPSS version 23. Schematic representation of the calculated data is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Test of data normality for Oxford Placement Test

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
score	.157	63	.001	.944	63	.007

As shown in Table 1, the obtained values, based on both tests of Shapiro-Wilk and Kolmogorov-Smirnov, indicated that the collected data is significantly normal. Then, this prerequisite condition foe the

experimental study was followed.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics for Lex30 at pretest phase

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
score	Control	31	30.387	1.943	.349
	Experimental	32	30.562	2.108	.372

First, the performance of two groups were compared at pre-test phase to ensure they are at the same level in terms of productive vocabulary size. When descriptive statistics were calculated (see Table 2), the mean score of control group was 30.38 (*SD*=1.94) and mean score of experimental group was 30.56 (*SD*=2.10). The results of independent samples t-test for Lex30 at pretest phase of the study are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Independent samples t-test for Lex30 in pretest phase

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
									95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
score	Equal variances assumed	.010	.921	-.343	61	.733	-.175	.511	-1.198	.847
	Equal variances not assumed			-.343	60.853	.732	-.17	.510	-1.196	.845

As Table 3 suggest, no significant difference between the performance of control group and experimental group in Lex30 at pretest phase of the study is seen; T(61)= -0.343, *p*= 0.73>0.05. In other words, at the beginning of this study, learners were approximately the same in terms of their productive vocabulary size. Taken together, the results of independent-samples t-test revealed that the mean scores of the two groups in Oxford Placement Test and Lex30 are really close. Therefore, it is conduced that at pre-test phase, leaners have been at the same level of language proficiency and productive vocabulary size.

After 12 instructive treatment sessions, in which experimental group has received vocabulary through meaning-focused input while the control group received those vocabulary items by means of no particular treatment, Lex30 was run again. Descriptive statistics of Lex30 as the posttest are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Descriptive statistics for Lex30 at posttest phase

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
score	Control	31	30.612	3.333	.598
	Experimental	32	47.593	4.528	.800

As Table 4 suggests, the findings suggested that the mean score of experimental group was significantly higher than control group. The experimental group significantly has progressed and has attained mean score of 47.59 (*SD*= 4.52) while the control group achieved mean score of 30.61 (*SD*= 3.33). Interestingly, the mean score of control group at pretest was 30.38. In other words, their progress has not been sufficiently significant.

To examine the effect of listening to meaning-focused input on productive vocabulary size of learners, independent samples t-test was conducted to compare the performance of control group and experimental group after treatment sessions. The results are shown in Table 5 as follows.

Table 5. Independent samples t-test for Lex30 in posttest phase

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
									95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
score	Equal variances assumed	4.594	.036	-16.906	61	.000	-16.980	1.004	-18.989	-14.972
	Equal variances not assumed			-16.987	56.962	.000	-16.980	.999	-18.982	-14.979

As Table 5 shows, with regard to productive vocabulary size, significant differences were found between posttest scores of the control group and experimental group; *p*=0.00<0.05, T(61)= -16.90. The obtained p value of 0.00 indicates that there is significant difference between two groups. In other words, experimental group who has benefited from treatments sessions with meaning-focused listening input outperformed the control group. Therefore, from this finding, it could be concluded that meaningful listening input has a significant effect in enhancing productive vocabulary size of Iranian intermediate EFL learners. Moreover, it was shown that listening to meaning-based input caused large gains in productive vocabulary.

The findings of the present study were in line with the findings of Vidal's (2003) study as well as

Staehr's (2009) research in that it was shown that listening could enhance L2 vocabulary learning. Unlike many previous studies which have highlighted low gains of vocabulary through listening (Peters et al., 2016; Webb, 2016), the findings of the current study showed vocabulary achievement from meaning-focused listening input could be significantly high. Yet, Webb (2007) considered this vocabulary accomplishment as a result of frequency and many times of exposure. Ellis (2002) also supported this notion and considered frequency is a main element in acquisition. Although Elley (1989) established that vocabulary learning needs many exposures to an item, Vidal (2003) asserted that this is the least contributive factor in vocabulary acquisition process. In line with her claim, Nation (2001) confirmed that repetitive exposure is just one the affecting factors of successful L2 vocabulary learning.

In contrast to the study of Coyle and Gracia (2014) which revealed that learners' productive vocabulary achievement after listening has not been sufficiently progressed, the present study showed that productive vocabulary size of learners has been enhance notably by means of treating vocabulary with the use of meaning-focused listening input. However, it should be emphasized that the participants in Coyle and Gracia's (2014) study were preschool children while in the present study participants were adults.

In addition, this study asserted the beneficiary role of audio input in instructing and learning vocabulary. Thus, it is in line with studies of Webb (2015) and Lin (2014) which asserted that due to authentic nature of rich meaningful listening input, they are as effective as reading input in L2 vocabulary acquisition. However, it has been claimed that online processing requirement of audiovisual input makes it crucially demanding that results in low level of learning of new words (Montero Perez et al., 2014). In addition, De la Fuente (2002) believed that working and negotiating with output is more effective in acquiring new vocabulary items in general and in producing lexical items in particular.

The findings of the current study cast the light upon the significance of listening-input lectures for productive vocabulary acquisition. In this regard, Brown et al. (2008) highlighted the importance of negotiation of aurally presented input to enhancement of long-term memorization of new words which has been previously presented through written input.

In the other phase of the present study, six EFL teachers were interviewed to discover how much they find treating vocabulary through meaning-focused listening input practical. The qualitative analysis of the data suggested that teacher participants believed in the beneficiary role of sufficient amount of listening to meaningful input; however, they find this innovative method of vocabulary instruction time-consuming and too demanding. For example, Richards (a pseudonym) put it:

"Authentic listening input is useful for learners. But, we do not have enough time to instruct new vocabulary items with listening. That is why I, personally, prefer using other techniques such as use of L1 or encourage students to check in in order to ensure the quality of their learning."

Lack of proper amount of time has always been as one of the most challenging problems for EFL teachers. In this regard, Kim (2014) who explored the challenging issues which Colombian university instructors encounter in their communicative language teaching marked that after qualitative data analysis it was revealed that the most troublesome concern of teachers was time shortage.

The matter of time constraint was mentioned by another teacher participant. Beth (a pseudonym) said:

"Three times a week is not sufficient amount of time to instruct needed and extra vocabulary items by means of listening to meaning-focused input. Thus, I have to work on listening to improve this skill, not to enhance vocabulary knowledge."

When there are many problems which limit the efficiency of a vocabulary program, it seems legible if teachers focus on the quality of their selected approach of vocabulary instruction rather than relying on authentic sources to provide new lexical items. That is why Laufer (2009) stressed that recent trends give less importance to learning sources, but more to the quality of vocabulary instruction by means of different tasks, word elaboration, and frequent exposures. In other words, experimental studies suggest the engagement of meaning-focused input and tasks with increasing number of repeated exposures.

Similarly, Jane (a pseudonym) said:

"As far as the predetermined educational schedule is not well-organized, we are limited both in terms of time and required facilities. Then, this is going to be a hard task to devote this limited amount of time to listening to meaningful input. In fact, the production aspect of receptive knowledge of vocabulary has been left to leaners themselves; however, I believe this is not fruitful enough."

This remark is in line with findings of the study of Brown et al. (2008) because it implies that listening-only input is neither feasible nor desirable in Iranian EFL teachers' viewpoints. In the aforementioned study, as the most preferred and comfortable input of approaching vocabulary was reading-while-listening. The minority preferred reading-only input. Surprisingly, no participant enjoyed from listening-only input. In the case of the present study, it was the same as no teacher participants favored treating vocabulary be means of listening-only input.

Another major theme, mentioned mostly by interviewees, was the issue of inadequate knowledge of

receptive vocabulary and consequently problems in understanding meaning-focused listening input. Therefore, learners with poor listening will be deprived from receiving meaningful input and then they would not be able to enlarge their productive vocabulary size. Anderson (a pseudonym) marked:

"With regards to EFL context, leaners' receptive vocabulary knowledge is not properly enough. Therefore, they need much more attempt and consequently teaching them will be more demanding. However, it should be mentioned that though meaningful listening, not only their listening skill, but also their productive knowledge of vocabulary will improve."

In relation with this quote, Bonk (2000) emphasized on learners' high vocabulary knowledge. The research showed that the majority of learners are in need for high levels of lexical familiarity and consequently vocabulary size for comprehending properly (Bonk, 2000), particularly in EFL context. In addition, Webb (2007) has figured out larger L2 vocabulary gains are for those language learners who have faced unknown lexical items many times within the framework of informative and authentic contexts. Therefore, to enhance learners' receptive vocabulary size, they should be provided with informative tasks, whether aural or written, to get familiar with unknown words.

In the same line with previous excerpt, Mark (a pseudonym) expressed:

"Of course, there is imbalance between learners' receptive and productive vocabulary size. As well, in our context, the leaners' listening skill is generally weaker than other skills. Therefore, it could be a serious impediment which prohibits them to enlarge their vocabulary size, whether receptive or productive."

In body of literature, some studies have mentioned the difficult task of acquiring vocabulary only through listening. Brown et al. (2008) suggested Japanese EFL teachers not to expect learners to listen to meaningful input and to enhance their vocabulary with the same speed they advance and progress in vocabulary learning through reading. However, teachers should do their best to make a balance between these receptive and productive categorizations of vocabulary knowledge.

Taken all together, Iranian EFL teachers mentioned the obstacles in the path of successful vocabulary instruction by means of meaningful listening input which makes this innovative and fruitful method of treating vocabulary not to be feasible. Some of the challenging issues roots from lack of organizational schedule and educational facilities. The other source of problem was lack of balance between learners receptive and productive knowledge of vocabulary. Future studies would focus on the source of difficulty students encounter when they listen to meaning-focused input in order to pave the path of their L2 vocabulary acquisition.

5. Conclusion and pedagogical implications

The present study was conducted to investigate the effect of meaning-focused listening input on productive vocabulary size of Iranian intermediate EFL learners. The results revealed that experimental group which enjoyed from meaningful listening input outperformed the control group which were taught traditionally. In other words, meaning-based listening input was effective in enhancing EFL learners' productive vocabulary size. Qualitative findings suggest that all interviewed teacher participants commonly mentioned the positive role which meaning-focused listening input plays in enlarging vocabulary knowledge in general. However, according to their viewpoints, the process of treating vocabulary through meaningful listening input is not supposed to be feasible. They mentioned many constraints such as large class population, time limitation, and authenticity of listening materials. Therefore, in spite of effectiveness of treating vocabulary and improving learners' productive vocabulary span by means of meaning-focused input, this kind of innovative method seems not to be feasibly practical for Iranian EFL teachers.

It implies that there are obstacles in the path of innovations in language teaching which should be removed. Instructing vocabulary through meaning-focused input by means of listening is going to be an innovative method which calls for future studies to be conducted in different settings with leaners of different language proficiency levels. The results of the present paper revealed the significant effect this approach; however, the leaners still lag behind what is expected. It implies that in context of Iran where English is a foreign language, productive vocabulary knowledge is ignored at the cost of receptive knowledge of vocabulary and therefore language learners suffer from inadequate productive vocabulary size. Consequently, future studies may focus on the ways of improving productive vocabulary knowledge in EFL contexts.

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