THE IMPACT OF CUE-ADEQUATE CONTEXTUALIZATION ON IRANIAN EFL LEARNER'S GUESSABILITY OF NEW WORDS OF A TEXT AT ELEMENTARY AND INTERMEDIATE LEVELS

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ABSTRACT
The present study has made an attempt to investigate the impact of cue-adequate contextualization on Iranian EFL learner's guessability of new vocabularies in a text. The participants of the study were selected based on their performance in an OPT test, KET and Barton English vocabulary tests. In the next step 120 EFL learners whose score fell between 1SD±Mean were divided into four classes of 30, two groups of elementary participants and two groups of intermediate participants. A multiple-choice vocabulary test, which consisted of 60 cue-adequate contextualization and cue-inadequate sentences for each level, was run. In other words, members of the control groups received 30 cue-inadequate sentences and experimental groups received 30 cue-adequate contextualization. By the end of the term, post-tests were administered and the data were analyzed through an Independent Sample T-test. The results showed significant difference between the control and experimental groups. The findings of the study indicated that cue-adequate contextualization has an effect on learner's guessability of new words in a text at elementary level. Also, this study has suggested that, guessing words from context is an important way to cope with unknown words in texts and to do so the reader requires knowledge of the first and second language words, familiarity with or recognition of proper nouns and a small number of technical, textual and technology words.

Keywords: Context, Cue-adequate Contextualization, Guessability

INTRODUCTION
Recent years have seen the re-emergence of vocabulary as an important component of the foreign language curriculum. Vocabulary is an inseparable part of any language learning process. It would be impossible to learn a language without vocabulary. "If language structures make up the skeleton of language, then it is vocabulary that provides the vital organs and the flesh (Harmer, 1991)."
There is a close link between the learner's reading ability and vocabulary as vocabulary expansion can lead to an improvement in reading comprehension, and reading is an important means by which new words are understood and learned. Limited vocabulary knowledge prevents students from understanding a text. According to Hameed (2009), a word may have different meanings in different contexts. Learning words without any examples of their occurrences and reference to the context is a memorization exercise and will not help learners to fully understand their meaning. As a result, learners will have problems in using the words in spoken and written language.
A better way to discover the meaning is to guess what the new words mean in a context. Guessing from context is the most frequent and preferred strategy when learners deal with unknown words in context (Cooper, 1999; Fraser, 1999; Paribakht and Wesche, 1999). With the growing acceptance of context as an important factor in vocabulary development, researchers have paid attention to methods of improving learner's use of contextual clues to infer the meaning of unknown vocabularies (Sinatra and Dowd, 1991; Sternberg, 1987; Ying, 2001).
 When you guess the meanings of the words, you need clues. According to Oxford (1990), Guessing smartly in reading, sometimes called "inferencing" includes using different linguistic and nonlinguistic clues to guess the meanings when the learner does not know all the words. Nagy (1985) showed that context clue is a vital way to deal with new words when the advanced learners read texts. The skill to

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infer the meaning of the new vocabularies from the context is a valuable skill. So, it is obviously in the interests of the learner to acquire the skill of using contextual clues to infer the meaning of unknown words and employ it efficiently in reading (Dunmore, 1989).

Therefore, to shed light on the concept of cue-adequate contextualization and guessability, the present study aims at investigating the effectiveness of contextual clues on guessability of new vocabularies among Iranian EFL learners.

Review of Literature

Reading is a skill which is highly valued by students and teachers. Many second or foreign language learners often have reading as one of the most important purposes. "Extensive exposure to linguistically comprehensible written texts can enhance the process of language acquisition (Richards and Renandya, 2002)." Reading for comprehension is the primary purpose for reading. According to Lenz (no date), Reading comprehension is the process of establishing meaning from text. Lexical knowledge is a basic idea of language learning and communication. To be a successful language learner, one should have large vocabulary knowledge; one way to acquire it is through incidental reading.

A number of researchers acknowledge that the nature of the text in which unfamiliar words are embedded is an important factor influencing word inferencing (Li, 1988; Huckin and Bloch, 1993; Paribakht and Wesche, 1999). Also writers such as: Moulton (1966), Twaddle (1980), Schouten-van Parreren (cited in Mondria and Wit-De-Boer, 1991), Sternberg (1987) and Krashen (1989) emphasized on the value of reading and the importance of context in the learning of vocabulary meanings.

Wilkins (1972) stressed the importance of vocabulary: "Without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed". Fu (cited in Abdollahi, 2011) believed that words are the sole vehicle in expressing something; therefore, difficulty in vocabulary learning and recall lead to major problems in language use. To know a word, it is necessary that learners encounter it in context and guess its meaning according to the words around it. Researches in the past twenty years supported the possible value of deriving vocabulary meaning from context was found as follows (Jenkins *et al.,* 1989; Watts and Truscott, 1996; Fukkink *et al.,* 1998; Chin, 1999; Goerss, 1999; Robb, 2000; Ying, 2001; Baumann *et al.,* 2002).

Of all the reading strategies commonly recognized today in both L1 and L2 reading, the most encouraged is guessing the meaning of unknown vocabularies from context. Over the past two decades, guessing from context has been greatly promoted. In many researches contextual guessing was found successful for L1 and L2 learners in deriving unknown words meaning from context (Baumann *et al.,* 2002; Goerss, 1999; Fukkink and Glopper, 1998; Ward-Lonergan *et al.,* 1996; Buikema and Grave, 1993; Jenkins *et al.,* 1989).

Some researchers (Jenkins *et al.,* 1989; Fukkink *et al.,* 1998; Chin, 1999; Goerss, 1999; Robb, 2000; Watts and Truscott, 1996; Ying, 2001; Baumann *et al.,* 2002) indicated that using contextual clues is useful to improve the capacity of learners to derive meaning of vocabularies. Also the results from four studies by Walters (2005) have shown that context clues have positive effects on ability to infer meaning from context. Fukkink and de Glopper (1998) discovered that context clue instruction is better and more effective than other forms of instruction. They support the importance of using context clues in deriving word meaning. Also Kuhn and Stahl (1998) found that context clue instruction is as successful as general strategy instruction. Nagy (1985) showed that context clue is a vital way to deal with new words when the advanced learners read texts.

Levinson (2002) defined a contextualization cue as "an encoded or conventional reminder, like a knot in a handkerchief, where the content of the memo is inferentially determined". Contextualization cue was also defined as "any feature of linguistic form that contributes to the signaling of contextual presuppositions" (Gumperz, 1982). A sentence with certain input information that contains clues sufficient for inferring the contextual meaning of a target word is cue-adequate contextualization and a sentence without input information is cue-inadequate sentence (Xiaolong, 1988; cited in Elizabeth, 2006). According to Wilson (2004), In any case, the contextualization cue serves to activate and retrieve the necessary background knowledge base so that a contextually appropriate process of inference can take place**.** He believes that an

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incorrect interpretation of the sender's utterance can result when a receiver may perceive something as a contextualization cue that is not intended as such by a sender.

The most useful clues are in the immediate context of the vocabularies. So when there are not any confusing clues in the immediate context of the word, guessing will be useful (Beck *et al.,* 2002; Nassaji, 2003a; Qian, 2004; Schmitt, 2000; see also Coady and Huckin, 1997; Huckin *et al.,* 1993). If the learners pay attention directly to the clues in the context, they will have better guessing (Fukkink and de Glopper, cited in Nation, 2001).

Nation and Coady (1988) recommend a five-step strategy for guessing in context:

(1) Recognize the part of speech of the new word, (2) Look at the immediate context of the unknown word and if it is necessary, simplify the context, (3)Look at the wider context of the unknown word, (4)Guess the meaning of the unknown word, (5) Check that the guess is correct.

Research Questions

1) Does Cue-adequate contextualization have an effect on the guessability of new words of a text at elementary level?

2) Does Cue-adequate contextualization have an effect on the guessability of new words of a text at intermediate level?

Research Hypotheses

1) Cue-adequate contextualization has no effect on the guessability of new words of a text at elementary level.

2) Cue-adequate contextualization has no effect on the guessability of new words of a text at intermediate level.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Participants

The participants of the present study were 120 elementary and intermediate students in Melal Language Institute in Karaj, Iran. They were all female native speakers of Farsi aged from 15 to 27 whose classes were held three days a week and each class period lasted for an hour and thirty minutes. The course consisted of 18 sessions, and students received 27 hours of general instruction. All participants had studied English in junior-high and high school. However, the English they had studied at school had hardly been of any use to them since before enrolling classes at Melal Language Institute they had not been able to use what they had studied. To make sure of the homogeneity of participants in terms of English proficiency and vocabulary knowledge, three different tests were conducted prior to randomization and dividing the participants into control and experimental groups.

The steps to select the participants of this study were as follows: Step 1: First of all an OPT test (which is a standardized test and there is no need for the reliability and validity to be tested) was conducted on 200 intermediate and elementary students. Having calculated the mean and the SD, participants with the score of 1 SD above and below the mean (1SD ± mean) were selected to conduct the study. Step 2: The Key English Test (KET) to elementary participants and the Barton English vocabulary test to intermediate participants were given to the selected participants from step one and the same procedure was followed. Step 3: The participants were randomly divided into two controls (N=30) and experimental (N=30) groups in both elementary and intermediate level. As this course was a general English course, Communicative Language Teaching was used in the classes.

After ensuring that the participants have the same vocabulary knowledge, the multiple-choice vocabulary test was given. This test consisted of sixty multiple-choice vocabulary questions for each level, 30 cue-adequate contextualization sentences and 30 cue-inadequate sentences, which did not have context richness. It was tried to bring the vocabularies that were unseen for the learners. There was no negative point in the test; each correct answer received one point while the wrong answer received no penalty.

Materials

During the process some materials as indicated below were used:

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1. An Oxford Placement Test (OPT), which is a standardized Cambridge exam and so reliability of the test is not needed to be tested, was administrated.
2. The Key English Test (KET) for elementary participants and the Barton English vocabulary test for intermediate participants. As these tests are standard there is no need in testing the reliability.
3. The multiple-choice vocabulary test consisted of sixty multiple-choice vocabulary questions for elementary level and sixty multiple-choice vocabulary questions for intermediate level, 30 cue-adequate contextualization sentences and 30 cue-inadequate sentences, which did not have context richness. The questions were adapted from "504" for intermediate level and "Vocabulary in Use" for elementary level. It is important to note that the reliability of the tests was also calculated.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
As already mentioned the aim of this research was comparing a group of students with cue-adequate contextualization and a group of students with cue-inadequate sentences out of a population including Iranian elementary and intermediate students. The data collected from the participant's post tests were analyzed quantitatively to answer the questions addressed in the study. This section of the article is dedicated to answering the research questions and testing the related hypotheses. To do so the results of quantitative data were analyzed through descriptive statistical methods (mean and standard deviation) and inferential statistics (T-test).

Hypothesis 1: Cue-adequate contextualization has no effect on the guessability of new words of a text at elementary level. In other words, the group with cue-adequate contextualization significantly differs from the group with cue-inadequate sentences in terms of guessing words at elementary level.
The data of the below table including descriptive and independent T-test statistics can be used to examine the above hypothesis.

Table 1: Descriptive Group Statistics of the First Hypothesis (Elementary Level)

Group	Mean	SD	SE of Mean
Cue-adequate contextualization	16.67	4.908	0.896
Cue-inadequate sentences	12.90	4.020	0.734

The above table shows that the mean of the group with cue-adequate contextualization is 16.67 with SD of 4.908, which is higher than the mean of the group with cue-inadequate sentences which is 12.90 with SD of 4.020.

Hypothesis 2: Cue-adequate contextualization has no effect on the guessability of new words of a text at intermediate level. In other words, the group with cue-adequate contextualization significantly differs from the group with cue-inadequate sentences in terms of guessing words at intermediate level.
The data of the below table including descriptive and independent T-test statistics can be used to examine the above hypothesis.

Table 2: Descriptive Group Statistics of the Second Hypothesis (Intermediate Level)

Group	Mean	SD
Cue-adequate contextualization	18.47	2.991
Cue-inadequate sentences	17.53	1.717

The above table shows that the mean of the group with cue-adequate contextualization is 18.47 with SD of 2.991, which is higher than the mean of the group with cue-inadequate contextualization which is 17.53 with SD of 1.717.
In order to provide enough criteria for rejecting or supporting the hypotheses of the present study Independent T-test was carried out. The independent T-test was used on the scores of participants in

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guessability of the groups to compare their means and variances. The data was analyzed by using independent T-test in order to make sure that the means of the two groups are significantly different and the difference is not due to sampling error. The results of T-test are shown in the below table:

Table 3: Results of T-test for Comparing Difference between Two Groups at Elementary Level

Group	Mean	T	Degree of Freedom	Significance
Cue-adequate contextualization	16.67	3.252	58	0.002
Cue-inadequate sentences	12.90			
Difference	3.77			

T of the means of the two groups is significant (T_{58}=3.252, p= 0.002); thus, it can be concluded that the two groups at elementary level are significantly different in terms of guessing words. In other words, the group with cue-adequate contextualization can guess more words.

Table 4: Results of T-test for Comparing Difference between Two Groups at Intermediate Level

Group	Mean	T	Degree of Freedom	Significance
Cue-adequate contextualization	18.47	1.482	58	0.144
Cue-inadequate sentences	17.53			
Difference	0.933			

T of the means of the two groups is not significant (T_{58}=1.482, p= 0.144); thus, it can be concluded that the two groups at intermediate level are not significantly different in terms of guessing words. In other words, the group with cue-adequate contextualization cannot guess more words.
 For more detailed analysis of the results of the study and considering that this section is the most important part of the study as we can find answer to the main question of research in this section, the results of the descriptive analysis are presented in tables 5 and 6 of T score between the groups.

Table 5: Independent Samples Test

		T-test for Equality of Means			
		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Guessing words	Equal variances assumed	3.252	58	.002	3.76667
(Elemantary)	Equal variances not assumed	3.252	55.833	.002	3.76667

As shown in the table 5, because Sig (two-tailed) was less than 0.05(α=0.05), there was significant difference between experimental (cue-adequate contextualization) and control (cue-inadequate sentences) groups. This indicates that the elementary participants in experimental group who received cue-adequate contextualization can guess more words in a text.

Table 6: Independent Samples Test

		T-test for Equality of Means			
		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Guessing words	Equal variances assumed	1.482	58	.144	.93333
(Intermediate)	Equal variances not assumed	1.482	46.235	.145	.93333

According to the table 6, because Sig (two-tailed) was 0.144 and it was more than 0.05(α=0.05), there was no significant difference between experimental (cue-adequate contextualization) and control (cue-inadequate sentences) groups. This indicates that the intermediate participants in experimental group who received cue-adequate contextualization cannot guess more words in a text.

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Conclusion
The results of the T-test which was used to analyze the data driven from the participants clearly showed the nullification of the first hypothesis and the experimental group outperformed the control group in guessing the meaning of new vocabularies. Therefore, it can be concluded that cue-adequate contextualization affect guessability of new words significantly and positively at elementary level. The results of this study are in line with the findings of the following researches. In many researches contextual guessing was found successful for L1 and L2 learners in deriving unknown words meaning from context (Baumann, Edwards, & Tereshinski, 2002; Goerss, 1999; Fukkink & Glopper, 1998; Ward-Lonergan, Liles, & Qwen, 1996; Buikema, & Grave, 1993; Jenkins, Matlock, & Slocum 1989). Also, some researchers believe that when there are not any confusing clues in the immediate context of the word, guessing will be useful (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2002; Nassaji, 2003a; Qian, 2004; Schmitt, 2000; see also Coady & Huckin, 1997; Huckin, Haynes, & Coady, 1993). Fukkink and Gloppers (1998) is the most cited work to support the importance of instruction of deriving word meaning by using context clues. To put it simply, the results showed that that cue-adequate contextualization is effective on Iranian EFL learner's guesssability of new words of a text at elementary levels.

Pedagogical Implications
In the light of the above mentioned findings, the following recommendations in terms of EFL teaching are given to teachers, practitioners and syllabus designers in the so called field:
1. Since vocabulary is thought as an essential part of learning a new language, it is important for English teachers to become conscious of the significance of vocabulary and its impact on student's learning a new language. The teachers working in the field of EFL should allocate more time and effort to teaching vocabulary to their learners. This can be achieved when English teachers at the school level discuss different learning vocabulary strategies, consider lack of vocabulary knowledge that causes problems, and explore different means to improve student's ability to use text clues efficiently and guess the meaning of new vocabularies in a context. Consequently, teachers should be careful with the techniques they follow in the class.
2. L2 students, especially at the elementary level, should be familiar with different clues and be able to distinguish between the different types of them. They should have the ability to use the most useful clues to guess the meaning of unknown words.
3. The syllabus designers can take further steps to enhance the teaching-learning outcomes and reach high levels of achievement in learning vocabulary strategies and using the useful clues in guessing the meaning of new words in the text. One way is to choose a rich book with cue-adequate contextualization especially at an earlier stage. This may help to improve student's gueesability skills in the long run and eventually prepare them for more advanced levels. Also it can lead students to recall and remember the vocabularies better.

Suggestions for Future Research
Though some positive findings were identified in this study about the impact of cue-adequate contextualization on EFL learner's guessability of new words of a text, some recommendations can be made for future research in this area. Further studies could be done in the following areas which have not been touched by the researcher.
1. Since the participants were at elementary and intermediate level, further research can investigate the effect of cue-adequate contextualization on guessability of new words of a text at upper intermediate and advanced EFL learners.
2. Moreover, in this study female participants were used; therefore, further research about the effect of cue-adequate contextualization on guessability of new words of a text, with male participants can be done.
3. As the participants of this study were Iranian learners in an institute in Karaj, a change can be made to do this study on EFL learners in other countries or it can be done in other educational settings and conditions.

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