



Journal of Teaching Language Skills  
(JTLS)

40(1), Winter 2021, pp. 83-115  
DOI: 10.22099/jtls.2021.39209.2921

Online ISSN: 2717-1604  
Print ISSN: 2008-8191

*Research Paper*

## **Vocabulary Learning by Iranian Adult L2 Learners via Extensive Viewing of Subtitled and Captioned TV Series**

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### **Abstract**

Television can be considered a rich, helpful, and valuable source to expose L2 learners to huge amounts of comprehensible input so that they can improve their L2 knowledge and, in particular, their L2 vocabulary knowledge. This study aimed to discover how effective sustainable and extensive TV viewing can be in L2 vocabulary learning, considering the language of the on-screen text (L1 or L2) and instruction type (preteaching L2 items or not). Eighty L2 learners (58 female and 22 male), who had an intermediate English proficiency and were divided into four groups, participated in the intervention over an academic term in a language institute. Participants viewed 14 episodes of a TV series under four experimental conditions: (1) captions and preteaching, (2) captions without preteaching, (3) subtitles and preteaching, and (4) subtitles without preteaching. A pre/posttest design to examine the gains regarding both L2 vocabulary meaning and form was adopted. Results suggested that extensive exposure to TV series positively affected the participants' L2 vocabulary learning, both in terms of meaning and form. Participants exposed to L2 captions outperformed those who had received L1 subtitles, concerning both L2 vocabulary meaning and form. Finally, the analyses

Received: 11/01/2021      Accepted: 08/02/2021

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showed that, overall, the groups that had undergone preteaching performed better, regardless of the language of the on-screen texts.

**Keywords:** L2 Vocabulary Learning, Extensive TV Viewing, Captions, Subtitles, Instruction

Owing to the fact that L2 vocabulary learning is an indispensable aspect of L2 learning, it has been a concern for L2 teachers (Schmitt, 2008). ELT researchers perceive L2 vocabulary learning as a significant domain of L2 teaching because they believe that words are the basic building blocks of language, forming broader and larger structures such as sentences and paragraphs (Read, 2001). Webb and Chang (2015) consider L2 vocabulary learning to be a gradual process with incremental gains on L2 word knowledge, occurring through frequent and repeated encounters with unknown or partly known L2 words. Hence, studies cannot precisely observe and measure L2 vocabulary learning unless they employ longitudinal designs (Schmitt, 2010). It is a great burden for dozens of L2 learners to put up with learning thousands of words (Li, 2013). Basically, L2 learners will naturally understand and discern the meaning and usage of L2 words they learn, provided that L2 vocabulary learning is meaningful (Chen & Li, 2010).

Research has demonstrated that L2 learners are required to have a command of nearly 3,000 word families in order to comprehend and deal with oral discourse (van Zeeland & Schmitt, 2013). Plus, according to Nation (2006), L2 learners must know as many word families as 9,000 to fathom written discourse. Obvious as it may be, there might not be sufficient time in classrooms for L2 learners to pick up all the required L2 words to fulfill higher L2 proficiency (Malone, 2018). In other words, there seems to be a substantial gap between how many words L2 learners can actually learn in classroom

settings and how many they need to master to become proficient L2 learners (Malone, 2018).

According to Nation (2006) and Schmitt (2008), we can consider extensive reading beneficial and advantageous for L2 vocabulary learning purposes outside classrooms. This is where we set foot in the realm of incidental learning. Incidental L2 vocabulary learning encourages L2 learners to do extensive reading; it makes L2 learners guess the meaning of new and unfamiliar words, taking advantage of contextual clues (Li, 2012). However, there are doubts about the impact of incidental L2 vocabulary learning because a typical L2 learner may not have the chance to read extensively and come across the same L2 items enough not to forget them (Laufer, 2005). In the wake of a downward trend in reading habits reported by the European Commission (2017), particularly among youngsters who find TV viewing more compelling than extensive reading (Lindgren & Muñoz, 2013; Peters, 2018, as cited in Pujadas & Muñoz, 2019), there is a growing tendency among L2 researchers to explore whether or not TV viewing can play a part in L2 vocabulary learning (Webb & Rodgers, 2009).

According to Pujadas and Muñoz (2019), a lot of opportunities have been offered to L2 teachers and learners by the rise and appearance of multimedia learning environments in the past couple of years. Rodgers (2018) and Webb (2015) pointed out that TV programs, films, and movies have great potential for L2 vocabulary learning. The authentic input added by captions can enable nonnative speakers to comprehend L2 materials better (Vanderplank, 2016). Taking advantage of audiovisual materials has conventionally been thought to be an extra or a supplementary activity (Pujadas & Muñoz, 2019). In order to enhance and increase L2 learning, combining explicit teaching with audiovisual input can be of great use by intentionally drawing L2 students'

attention to specific vocabulary (Hulstijn, 2013). Hence, it is believed that there is much yet to investigate about TV programs and series to improve different aspects of the L2, especially L2 vocabulary learning.

A number of studies (e.g., Chen, Liu, & Todd, 2018, Rodgers, 2013; Frumuselu, De Maeyer, Donche, & Gutiérrez Colon-Plana, 2015; Peters & Webb, 2018) have employed short clips, segments of films, educational videos, and TV series to present and teach L2 vocabulary. Also, some other researchers (e.g., Guillory, 1998; Pujadas & Muñoz, 2019; Mohd Jelani & Boers, 2018; Montero-Pérez, van Den Noortgate, & Desmet, 2013; Vanderplank, 2016) have discussed the ostensible advantages of captions and subtitles as on-screen texts. With regard to the aforementioned studies, it was found that little attention has been drawn to the instructional types of L2 vocabulary: focused (i.e., preteaching of L2 items) and non-focused (i.e., without preteaching of L2 items). In other words, deciding whether to employ focused or non-focused L2 vocabulary instruction has always been a matter of debate in the realm of L2 vocabulary learning through audiovisual input, considering their efficiency and effectiveness. Therefore, to cover the gap in the area of L2 vocabulary learning through audiovisual materials (i.e., TV series) regarding different instructional conditions among Iranian adult EFL learners, the current study was an attempt to answer the following research questions:

1. Does extensive exposure to TV series affect Iranian adult EFL learners' vocabulary learning (form and meaning) through TV series?
2. Does the language of on-screen text affect Iranian adult EFL learners' vocabulary learning through TV series?

3. Is there any significant relationship between types of instruction (i.e., focused and non-focused) and Iranian adult EFL learners' vocabulary learning through TV series?

### Literature Review

#### Audiovisual Input

The impact of exposure to L2 on the acquisition of new words is one of the most frequently addressed topics in the area of L2 vocabulary learning (Montero-Pérez, Peters, & Desmet, 2018). According to Hulstijn (2001), in order for a word to get fixed and installed in the mind, recurring encounters are needed to occur. So, how can L2 learners get enough encounters and exposure?

L2 students do not get to learn a large number of words in L2 classrooms. Therefore, they need to find other sources to compensate for this deficiency (Suárez & Gesa, 2019). As Vanderplank (2010) put it, the use of audiovisual and media is quite widespread, and there is increasing popularity of audiovisual materials in language teaching; thus, lately, studies (e.g., Kuppens, 2010; Webb & Rodgers, 2009) have focused on indicating the extent to which multimodal input can play a role in improving L2 learning.

Over the past couple of years, media technologies (e.g., video, audio, and computer software) have increasingly entered L2 classrooms, and a number of studies (e.g., Bueno, 2009; Danan, 2004; Markham & Peter, 2003; Ranalli, 2008) have attested to their value, significance, and contribution as L2 learning materials. Moreover, Kuppens (2010) states that media technologies are not only useful for intentional L2 learning, but also for incidental L2 learning.

Regarding the potential shortcomings of extensive reading, extensive viewing was put forward by Webb and Rodgers (2009) to address the need for

receiving authentic input. TV programs, films, and movies have been found so much useful for L2 vocabulary learning because they provide L2 learners with visual support and let them encounter words with a low chance of appearing (Rodgers, 2018; Webb & Rodgers, 2009). Needless to say, nonnative speakers may find it difficult to comprehend this authentic input unless they are provided with L2 captions.

### TV Programs and L2 Vocabulary Learning

In order to expose L2 learners to massive amounts of authentic input, we can employ video viewing, which happens to be a highly beneficial resource to boost L2 vocabulary learning and content comprehension (Suárez & Gesa, 2019). As Puimège and Peters (2019) stated, television can be deemed a noteworthy source, enabling L2 learners to pick up L2 vocabulary incidentally. Over the last couple of years, extensive viewing has received some attention as a possibly effective method to expand L2 learners' vocabulary size. Watching L2 TV extensively could supply L2 learners with greater L2 input and this obviates the need for more exposure to L2 contexts. Extensive viewing has been defined as regular viewing of L2 TV inside and outside of the L2 classroom by Webb (2015). TV programs are valuable with regard to their somewhat large amount of repetition and recurrence of mid-frequency and low-frequency words, compared to written input, especially in related TV programs, namely TV series (Rodgers & Webb, 2011).

L2 learners in foreign language contexts might have a limited time of exposure to the L2; hence, they should be looking for supplementary sources of authentic input to expose themselves to the L2. (Suárez & Gesa, 2019). Considering the additional sources, Lindgren and Muñoz (2013) regard viewing TV as one of the most widespread input sources for L2 learning.

Furthermore, Vanderplank (1988) holds that subtitled television can provide L2 learners with appealing samples of authentic L2 and play an important role in reinforcing their confidence and increasing their language proficiency.

TV programs have several features to be noticed. For instance, watching TV has always been a popular activity among people and, in particular, it is quite well-liked by young people (Pujadas & Muñoz, 2019). Besides, TV shows and movies are growing in popularity, preparing the ground for furthering research in the area of L2 vocabulary learning through audiovisual input (Webb & Rodgers, 2009).

TV programs could be presumed to be a wonderful source of input, even L2 learners view them in an L2 merely for entertainment (Webb & Nation, 2017). Also, the authentic input derived from TV shows happens to have a great deal of conformity with the five conditions Nation (2006) considered for helpful input: “It is processed in large quantities, it is familiar to the language learners, it provides context cues, it is comprehensible, and it is engaging” (Rodgers & Webb, 2011, p. 2). According to Neuman and Koskinen (1992), as opposed to written input which may not be very engaging, L2 TV viewing can be considered quite attractive and it may reduce L2 learners’ nervousness and agitation. Another beneficial aspect of watching TV is that it requires fewer word families (3,000) than reading (Webb & Rodgers, 2009).

A study conducted by Pujadas and Muñoz (2017) demonstrated that not only watching an L2 series in the classroom was not distracting, but it played a critical role in boosting both L2 learners’ motivation and attention. Also, it was reported that the L2 students regarded watching audiovisual material as more pleasurable, natural, and appealing compared with other routine classroom activities.

Considering different TV programs in mind, Rodgers and Webb (2011) believe that picking and following TV series would be an excellent option, due to the fact that they may contain fewer word families compared with other unrelated programs. Accordingly, word families from the 4,000 and 14,000 levels are more probable to reoccur in a complete season of a TV series. As you watch more episodes from the same series, the chances are you learn L2 vocabulary better (Webb & Rodgers, 2009). Nevertheless, as Rodgers (2013) puts it, most studies on audiovisual input for L2 vocabulary learning have taken advantage of short clips, fragmented films, and educational and inauthentic videos, which are, to a great extent, unrelated.

### **Captions and Subtitles**

Making use of authentic and original TV programs in a typical L2 classroom might bring this issue up that those audiovisual materials may be too challenging for L2 students to absorb and comprehend, due to the fast rate of speech and possibly hard vocabulary used in them (Guillory, 1998). However, adding subtitles (L1 text) and captions (L2 text) as the texts to be displayed on screen may help these L2 learners a great deal (Vanderplank, 2016). Audiovisual materials can be highly effective and consequential to improve the L2 if they are enriched with subtitles and captions (Pujadas & Muñoz, 2019).

Having looked into the research on L2 learning from captioned and noncaptioned audiovisual materials, we come to notice that the findings suggest the benefit of watching videos supported with on-screen text rather than watching them without it (Mohd Jelani & Boers, 2018; Montero-Pérez, van Den Noortgate, & Desmet, 2013). For instance, in a meta-analysis, Montero-Pérez, van Den Noortgate, and Desmet (2013) selected 10 research



studies to compare gains in L2 vocabulary learning between captioned and noncaptioned video watching. Higher gains in L2 vocabulary learning were reported, and it was found that the L2 learners exposed to captioned videos performed better than those in the control group.

Some studies (e.g., Baltova, 1999; Chai & Erlam, 2008; Markham, 1999; Sydorenko, 2010; Winke et al., 2010) have shown that the L2 students' vocabulary learning was positively affected as a result of receiving audiovisual input powered by full captioning. For example, Pujadas and Muñoz (2019), in a longitudinal, classroom-based study, investigated the potential of extensive TV viewing for L2 vocabulary learning, taking the language of on-screen text and proficiency level into consideration. The results indicated that, overall, L2 vocabulary learning was hugely triggered by viewing captioned videos. The positive effect of captioned video viewing on L2 vocabulary learning was corroborated in another study conducted by Suárez and Gesa (2019), in which they exposed 57 grade-10 L2 learners along with 60 university students to captioned videos, investigating whether proficiency and aptitude had any roles to play in L2 vocabulary learning through constant exposure to captioned videos.

On the other side of the trend, Bianchi and Ciabattini (2008), in an investigative study in a comprehensive computer environment, explored short- and long-term impacts of subtitling and captioning on 107 Italian adult L2 learners' vocabulary learning. The results indicated that, in terms of vocabulary comprehension, the subtitles were more consequential than the captions. On the whole, it was asserted that the subtitles appeared to be more helpful and advantageous for the beginners, whereas the captions were more beneficial for the advanced L2 learners. Moreover, it is believed that L2 learners cannot notice the exact meanings of words unless they can follow and

catch up with the overall story of a TV show (Laufer, 2005). Therefore, it is subtitling that comes to our mind as a better choice for L2 learners with poor vocabulary knowledge (Danan, 2004).

However, in another study by Montero-Pérez, Peters, Clarebout, and Desmet (2014), which enjoyed the participation of (high-) intermediate L2 learners, there were not any differences spotted between the full captioning and uncaptioned groups on meaning recall, that is, providing a translation of the target items.

Montero-Pérez, Peters, and Desmet (2018) pinpointed two possible weaknesses of full captioning as an enrichment technique. They believe that the first ostensible weakness of full captioning is that it does not encompass particular features that cause to draw L2 learners' attention to novel and new items. And, this is considered a problematic issue by Laufer (2003) because we cannot presume that the novel items and words are essentially noticed by L2 learners. To address the first shortcoming, Montero-Pérez, Peters, Clarebout, and Desmet (2014) conducted a study to draw an analogy among three forms of captions and discover how effective each type is. The groups were (1) full captions, (2) keyword captions (the main and novel words), and (3) full captions along with highlighted keywords as well as a control group. The findings illustrated that the groups with keywords and highlighted keywords performed the same as the full captions group in terms of the recognition test. Also, when it came to multiple-choice recognition, it was discovered that the groups with keywords outdid the control group. These results, accordingly, demonstrate that keyword captions and highlighted captions are of great use to both enhance L2 learners' noticing and activate their learning of preliminary word meaning.

The second shortcoming of full captioning is that it does not grant L2 learners access to a clear word meaning and they are to rely on cues from the context and deduce what the unknown words mean. (Montero-Pérez, Peters, & Desmet, 2018). Hence, preteaching and prelearning were proposed by Chai and Erlam (2008) to provide L2 learners with more chances to create primary links between form and meaning as they view the material.

Yet, some other studies (e.g., Galimberti, 2016; Rodgers, 2013; Yuksel & Tanriverdi, 2009) have supported the idea that uncaptioned video viewing can be equally influential and may yield similar amount of L2 vocabulary learning as captioned viewing. Hsu, Hwang, Chang, and Chang (2013) examined the impacts of different display modes of video captions (i.e., non-caption, full-caption, and target-word modes) on L2 comprehension and vocabulary learning of grade 5 participants. The results of this 1-month experiment indicated no differences between the two captioning groups, and they both had more gains than the non-captioning group. Even greater use of high-level vocabulary was triggered by viewing uncaptioned video in the L2 learners' writing than watching captioned ones, based on a study done by Hsu (2013). However, Bisson, van Heuven, Conklin, and Tunney (2014) believe that there are small or insignificant differences between captioning and subtitling.

### **Proficiency Level**

When it comes to assessing and discussing the results of studies in the area of audiovisual L2 learning, and in particular L2 vocabulary learning, L2 researchers face a lot of problems and issues regarding L2 learners' proficiency level (Zarei & Rashvand, 2011), which usually vary from beginner to advanced levels (Frumuselu, De Maeyer, Donche, & Gutiérrez

Colon-Plana, 2015). L2 learners, therefore, may show different reactions and responses to various on-screen texts (whether subtitles or captions), depending on their proficiency levels (Lwo & Lin, 2012). L2 learners with a greater knowledge of vocabulary act better, compared to the ones with insignificant and inadequate L2 vocabulary knowledge (Webb & Chang, 2015).

Taking all the ostensible uses and advantages of subtitling into consideration, it should be stated that L1 subtitling has largely been disparaged and discouraged by a number of L2 teachers because they assume that the availability of L1 subtitles will impede L2 learners' listening and focusing on the L2 (Danan, 2004). Schmitt (2008), however, asserts that it is quite plausible to take advantage of the L1 when it is to our advantage.

## Method

### Participants

The participants were 80 male and female (22 male and 58 female) L2 students in an L2 teaching institute in Isfahan (Iran) named Kalam-e-Melal, whose ages ranged from 18-35. The reasons why the participants were selected from that age range to participate in this quantitative study were as follows:

1. The participants were supposed to be adults.
2. The majority of the participants had the same age range in that L2 teaching institute.
3. The participants in this age range were believed to be more enthusiastic about the idea of viewing and following TV shows and series.

They were all native speakers of Persian and their proficiency level in English was intermediate. Plus, they were selected through convenience sampling. In order to exclude the participants whose levels were not

appropriate, the Quick Placement Test (QPT, 2004) was administered. The participants were distributed randomly into four classes, each of which was assigned to a different experimental condition, and each group contained 20 participants:

1. Captions and focused instruction group (CFIG)
2. Captions and non-focused instruction group (CNIG)
3. Subtitles and focused instruction group (SFIG)
4. Subtitles and non-focused instruction group (SNIG)

### Materials

The materials used in this study were as follows:

#### *QPT*

QPT was employed to test the participants' proficiency at the outset of the study, QPT is capable of being administered with any number of L2 participants to ensure an efficient, reliable, and precise grading and placement of the participants into classes at all levels.

#### *TV Series*

The TV series picked for the experiment was *Better Call Saul*, which was selected for the following reasons:

1. The episodes were engaging (the participants could quickly get hooked into the story because of the leading character).
2. The episodes were not strongly accented (the main character of the series is a lawyer, so the standard language was mostly used in the series).
3. This series was the prequel to *Breaking Bad* (one of the greatest TV series of all time) and was quite popular for the participants.

Fourteen episodes were chosen from the series and the participants viewed a total of 280 min of the audiovisual input. In order to avoid interfering variables, the participants were strongly urged not to view any other TV series over the course of the study.

A total of 70 L2 items (5 per episode) were singled out from the TV series based upon (a) how frequent the words were (between 2 and 16 times within each episode) and (b) how likely the words were known by the participants. In addition, the L2 items were comprised of different parts of speech.

### *Pre and Posttest*

The researcher-made pre and posttest (see Appendixes A and B for sample items) assessing the participants' knowledge of the L2 items contained 30 items and had two sections: (1) a test of aural and written form recognition (form recall), and (2) a test of meaning recall. All the participants had to listen to each L2 word twice, write it down, and provide a short definition or translation of the L2 item in Persian. The reliability of the pretest, which was calculated using *KR-21* formula, was 0.72. Also, the validity of the pretest was assessed using experts' opinions. As for the posttest, the pretest was reshuffled and administered.

### **Procedure**

In order to exclude the participants whose levels were not appropriate, QPT was administered. The participants whose scores were between 24-40 were considered intermediate. Once the placement test was over, 7 participants were disqualified from participating in the intervention because they could not meet the criterion.

This experiment was conducted over a whole academic term (14 sessions) and was embedded into the normal English lessons. The participants were pretested 30 L2 items at the beginning of the term. The bulk of the words singled out for the pretest were related to the area of law and crimes; thus, it was presumed that the participants would not know much about this field and its vocabulary. As for the post-test, the same 30 L2 items were reshuffled and administered. For the captions and focused instruction group and the subtitles and focused instruction group, each viewing session started with a previewing task in order to teach the 5 L2 items appearing in the episode. Then, the participants viewed the episodes followed by completing two immediate postviewing tasks (i.e., vocabulary task and a content comprehension task), so that the participants could notice both vocabulary and content (see Appendix C for sample items). The captions and non-focused instruction group and the subtitles and non-focused instruction groups' sessions followed the same procedure, but had nothing to do with the previewing task; therefore, the participants had no idea what L2 items they would be tested on later.

After the required data were collected, quantitative analyses were performed, using paired-samples *t*-test and one-way MANOVA through SPSS.

## Results

### Results of the QPT

Table 1.

*Descriptive Statistics for the QPT Scores of the Learners*

	<i>N</i>	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Skewness	Kurtosis
CFIG	20	39.1500	5.15318	1.15229	.65	.34
CNIG	20	38.5000	5.02101	1.12273	1.12	.46

SFIG	20	39.6500	5.51815	1.23390	.32	1.26
SNIG	20	39.3500	4.48712	1.00335	.97	.75

Such descriptive statistics as mean score and standard deviation, among other things, are reported for the four different groups of learners in the study. The mean scores of the four groups were not considerably different from one another; yet, to find there were no significant differences among them, the results of the one-way ANOVA table had to be checked. As a prerequisite to the ANOVA analysis, the skewness and kurtosis values of the four distributions were checked, and evidence of normality of the distributions was found because the skewness and kurtosis values did not exceed  $\pm 2$ :

Table 2.

*One-Way ANOVA Results for Comparing the QPT Scores of the Participants*

	Sum of Squares	<i>df</i>	Mean Square	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Between Groups	14.237	3	4.746	.185	.906
Within Groups	1944.650	76	25.588		
Total	1958.888	79			

Due to the fact that the *p*-value under the *Sig.* column in the ANOVA table is higher than the .05 level of significance, it could be inferred that there were no significant differences among the four groups at the outset of the study and that they were homogeneous in terms of their overall level of proficiency.

### Improvements from Pretest to Posttest

This study's first objective was to explore whether or not extensive exposure to TV series could affect Iranian adult EFL learners' vocabulary learning (i.e., form and meaning). To this end, the pretest and posttest scores



of the vocabulary learning, considering both meaning and form, obtained from all the four groups were compared, using a series of paired-samples *t*-tests. This was done to see whether the participants in each group had improved significantly from the pretest to the posttest in terms of vocabulary meaning and form. The results are as follows:

Table 3.

*Descriptive Statistics: Comparing the Participants' Pretest & Posttest Scores*

	<i>N</i>	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
CFIG Pretest Meaning	20	3.05	1.27	-.60	.35
CFIG Posttest Meaning	20	24.10	2.78	.58	-.16
CFIG Pretest Form	20	2.65	1.26	-.80	.008
CFIG Posttest Form	20	20.95	1.93	.32	-.46
SFIG Pretest Meaning	20	2.75	.96	.55	.17
SFIG Posttest Meaning	20	21.15	1.72	.83	.02
SFIG Pretest Form	20	3.05	1.43	-.69	.33
SFIG Posttest Form	20	20.30	1.68	-.59	-.32
CNIG Pretest Meaning	20	3.20	1.70	.009	-.81
CNIG Posttest Meaning	20	19.20	1.60	-.02	-.26
CNIG Pretest Form	20	3.20	1.76	-.20	-.58
CNIG Posttest Form	20	18.20	1.70	-.20	-1.00
SNIG Pretest Meaning	20	2.70	1.68	.16	-.71
SNIG Posttest Meaning	20	17.70	1.89	.17	-.93
SNIG Pretest Form	20	2.75	2.04	.08	-1.25
SNIG Posttest Form	20	16.20	1.98	.54	-1.05

In Table 3, the pretest and posttest scores of meaning and form for the four groups of CFG, SFIG, CNIG, and SNIG are displayed. For all the groups, there were improvements from the pretest to the posttest both in terms of L2 vocabulary meaning and form, meaning that exposure to TV series

positively affected the Iranian adult EFL learners' vocabulary learning with respect to both form and meaning. Whether these improvements regarding form and meaning reached statistical significance could be determined through the results of the paired-samples *t*-test presented in Table 4. However, before examining the *t*-test results, one should make certain that the assumptions underlying *t*-tests are met. One of these assumptions is the assumption of normality, for which the results of Skewness and Kurtosis in Table 3 should be checked. Under Skewness and Kurtosis columns, values larger than  $\pm 2$  indicated that the distribution was skewed or peaked, respectively. Because there were no values larger than  $\pm 2$  under these two columns, it could be inferred that all the distributions for the pretest and posttest scores of form and meaning obtained from the four groups were normal. Thus, we could check the paired-samples *t*-test results presented in Table 4:

Table 4.  
*Paired-Samples t-Test: Comparing the Participants' Pretest & Posttest Scores*

	Paired Differences					<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
CFIG Meaning	-21.05	2.87	.64	-22.39	-19.70	-32.75	19	.00
CFIG Form	-18.30	1.71	.38	-19.10	-17.49	-47.58	19	.00
SFIG Meaning	-18.40	1.60	.35	-19.15	-17.64	-51.34	19	.00
SFIG Form	-17.25	1.06	.23	-17.75	-16.74	-72.10	19	.00
CNIG Meaning	-16.00	.56	.12	-16.26	-15.73	-127.33	19	.00
CNIG Form	-15.00	.64	.14	-15.30	-14.69	-103.38	19	.00

SNIG	-15.00	.64	.14	-15.30	-14.69	-103.38	19	.00
Meaning								
SNIG Form	-13.45	.94	.21	-13.89	-13.00	-63.68	19	.00

The single most important piece of information in Table 4 is the *p*-value under the *Sig.* column. This value should be compared with the significance level (i.e., .05) to see if the difference between the pretest and posttest scores of a group had been statistically significant or not. A *p*-value less than .05 indicates a significant difference between the two sets of scores, and a *p*-value larger than .05 shows a difference which did not reach statistical significance. Due to the fact that the *p*-values under the *Sig.* column are all less than the significance level, it could be inferred that the difference between the pretest and posttest scores of the participants in all the groups in terms of both L2 vocabulary form and meaning were statistically significant. Accordingly, the first null hypothesis of the study, stating that extensive exposure to TV series does not affect Iranian adult EFL learners' vocabulary learning (i.e., form and meaning) could be rejected. In other words, extensive exposure to TV series did, in fact, positively and significantly affect participants' vocabulary learning in terms of form and meaning.

### Effects of Language of On-Screen Texts

Another objective of this study was to find out whether the language of on-screen texts exerted any significant effects on Iranian adult EFL learners' vocabulary learning (i.e., form and meaning) through TV series. To fulfill this aim, the posttest scores of vocabulary meaning and vocabulary form for the groups exposed to captions and subtitles were compared. Because language was the independent variable and meaning and form were the dependent variables in this analysis, one-way MANOVA was conducted to capture any significant differences that could possibly be attributed to the language of the

on-screen texts. The results of the analysis are provided in the following tables:

Table 5.

*Descriptive Statistics: Comparing the Participants' Scores in the Caption & Subtitle Groups*

	Language	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Meaning	English Caption	21.65	3.34	40
	Persian Subtitle	19.42	2.50	40
	Total	20.53	3.14	80
Form	English Caption	19.57	2.27	40
	Persian Subtitle	18.25	2.76	40
	Total	18.91	2.60	80

Table 5 shows that, with respect to meaning, those participants who had been exposed to English captions ( $M = 21.65$ ) outperformed those who had received Persian subtitles ( $M = 19.42$ ). Similarly, concerning vocabulary form, the mean score of the participants who had experienced English captions ( $M = 19.57$ ) was greater than that of those who had undergone Persian subtitles ( $M = 18.25$ ) in the course of their treatment. To figure out if the language of on-screen texts could significantly affect the acquisition of vocabulary meaning and form, the results of the MANOVA analysis in Table 6 should be consulted:

Table 6.

*MANOVA Results: Comparing the Participants' Scores in the Caption & Subtitle Groups*

	Effect	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Language	Pillai's Trace	.13	6.00	2.00	77.00	.004	.13
	Wilks' Lambda	.86	6.00	2.00	77.00	.004	.13

Hotelling's Trace	.15	6.00	2.00	77.00	.004	.13
Roy's Largest Root	.15	6.00	2.00	77.00	.004	.13

In Table 6, the  $p$ -value under the *Sig.* column in front of Wilks' Lambda is less than the significance level ( $p < .05$ ), indicating that there was a significant difference in the vocabulary scores of the participants in the English caption groups and in the Persian subtitle groups. The effect size shown under the rightmost column of the table shows that there was a moderate effect (Pallant, 2010) for the language of on-screen texts as far as vocabulary learning was concerned because .01 = small effect, .06 = moderate effect, and .14 = large effect. Whether the language of on-screen texts significantly affected vocabulary form, meaning, or both could be determined in Table 7:

Table 7.

*Results of Tests of Between-Subjects Effects for the Language of the On Screen Texts*

Source	Dependent Variables	Type III Sum of Squares	<i>df</i>	Mean Square	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	Partial Eta Squared
Language	Meaning	99.01	1	99.01	11.34	.001	.12
	Form	35.11	1	35.11	5.48	.02	.06

The results in Table 7 reveal that the language of on-screen texts had significant effects on both vocabulary meaning and vocabulary form, owing to the fact that the  $p$ -values under the *Sig.* column for both meaning and form are smaller than the significance level. The Partial Eta Squared column, however, showed that the effects were more sizeable for meaning than for form. All in all, the results boil down to the rejection of the second null

hypothesis of the study, which presumed that there was no significant causal relationship between the language of on-screen text and Iranian adult EFL learners' vocabulary learning through TV series.

### Effects of Types of Instruction on Vocabulary Learning

The third objective of the study was to find out whether types of instruction (i.e., focused and non-focused) had any significant effects on Iranian adult EFL learners' vocabulary learning (i.e., form and meaning) through TV series. To achieve this objective, another one-way MANOVA was conducted on the posttest scores of L2 vocabulary form and meaning obtained from the groups exposed to focused and non-focused instruction. In fact, the type of instruction was considered the independent variable and L2 vocabulary form and meaning were the dependent variables for this analysis. The results for this comparison are provided in the following tables:

Table 8.

*Descriptive Statistics: Comparing the Participants' Scores in the Focused & No focused Groups*

	Language	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Meaning	Focused	22.62	2.73	40
	Nonfocused	18.45	1.89	40
	Total	20.53	3.14	80
Form	Focused	20.62	1.82	40
	Nonfocused	17.20	2.09	40
	Total	18.91	2.60	80

As seen in Table 8, as to L2 vocabulary meaning, the participants who exposed to focused instruction ( $M = 22.62$ ) could excel those provided with nonfocused instruction ( $M = 18.45$ ). Likewise, regarding L2 vocabulary form, the mean score of the participants who had received focused instruction ( $M =$

20.62) turned out to be larger than that of those given nonfocused instruction ( $M = 17.20$ ). In order to realize whether the type of instruction had any significant effect on the learning of L2 vocabulary meaning and form, the MANOVA analysis results in Table 9 should be checked:

Table 9.

*MANOVA Results: Comparing the Participants' Scores in the Focused & Nonfocused Groups*

Effect	Value	$F$	Hypothesis $df$	Error $df$	$Sig.$	Partial Eta Squared	
Type of Instruction	Pillai's Trace	.59	55.43	2.00	77.00	.00	.59
	Wilks' Lambda	.41	55.43	2.00	77.00	.00	.59
	Hotelling's Trace	1.44	55.43	2.00	77.00	.00	.59
	Roy's Largest Root	1.44	55.43	2.00	77.00	.00	.59

Table 9 indicates that the  $p$ -value under the  $Sig.$  column across from Wilks' Lambda is smaller than the significance level ( $p < .05$ ), implying that there was a significant difference in the vocabulary scores of the participants in the focused and non-focused groups. The partial eta squared index reveals that there was a very large effect for the type of instruction so far as vocabulary learning was concerned. Table 10 should now be consulted to find out whether the type of instruction significantly affected vocabulary form, meaning, or both:

Table 10.

*Results of Tests of Between-Subjects Effects for the Type of Instruction*

Source	Dependent Variables	Type III Sum of Squares	$df$	Mean Square	$F$	$Sig.$	Partial Eta Squared
	Meaning	384.61	1	384.61	63.05	.00	.44

Type of Instruction	Form	234.61	1	234.61	61.04	.00	.43
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Table 10 makes it clear that the type of instruction exerted statistically significant effects on both L2 vocabulary meaning and form due to the fact that the *p*-values under the *Sig.* column for both meaning and form appeared to be lower than the .05 significance level. Besides, the effect size index under the Partial Eta Squared column shows that the effects of instruction type were almost the same (.44 vs. .43) for L2 vocabulary meaning and form. On the whole, these results lead to the conclusion that there was a significant causal relationship between the type of instruction and Iranian adult EFL learners' vocabulary learning (i.e., form and meaning) through TV series. Differently put, the results point to the rejection of the third null hypothesis of the current study.

### Discussion

The first aim of the study was to indicate the extent to which extensive exposure to TV series had any effects on Iranian adult EFL learners' vocabulary learning (i.e., form and meaning). According to the results obtained from all of the experimental groups, improvements were spotted from the pretest to the posttest, both in terms of L2 vocabulary meaning and form, meaning that no matter to which experimental group the participants belonged, exposure to the TV series positively affected their vocabulary learning with respect to both form and meaning. This finding is in accord with previous studies (Peters & Webb, 2018; Puimège & Peters, 2019; Pujadas & Muñoz, 2019; Rodgers, 2013; Rodgers & Webb, 2011; Webb, 2015).

The second research question was whether the language of on-screen text wielded any influence on Iranian adult EFL learners' vocabulary learning (i.e.,



form and meaning) through TV series. According to the results, regarding meaning, those participants exposed to English captions outperformed those who had received Persian subtitles. Likewise, concerning vocabulary form, the participants who had taken advantage of the English captions did better than those who had received the Persian subtitles. On the whole, including subtitles (L1 text) and captions (L2 text) was found helpful and supportive for the participants. The findings are in line with a number of previous studies (Birulés-Muntané & Soto-Faraco, 2016; Frumuselu, De Maeyer, Donche, & Gutiérrez Colon-Plana, 2015; Matielo, D'Ely, & Baretta, 2015; Naghizadeh & Darabi, 2015; Zarei & Rashvand, 2011). On the contrary, Bianchi and Ciabattini (2008) assume more favorable results are derived from subtitling than captioning, particularly for L2 beginners. Also, some other studies (e.g., Galimberti, 2016; Rodgers, 2013; Yuksel & Tanriverdi, 2009) have adhered to the idea that uncaptioned video viewing can be similarly influential and may yield a relatively equal amount of L2 vocabulary learning as captioned viewing. Even a study conducted by Hsu (2013) showed the uncaptioned videos prompted a larger use of high-level L2 vocabulary in the L2 students' writing than viewing the captioned videos. These somewhat opposing results derived from the aforementioned studies may pertain to the dissimilar proficiency levels of each group of participants in each experiment. Generally, it appears that captions might be more beneficial for the participants who possess intermediate and advanced L2 proficiency, and subtitles may be more helpful for the low-level participants.

The last research question of the present study was whether types of instruction (i.e., focused and non-focused) had any significant effects on Iranian adult EFL learners' vocabulary learning (i.e., form and meaning) through TV series. In this study, the participants exposed to focused

instruction (i.e., preteaching of L2 words) were able to outperform those provided with nonfocused instruction (i.e., without preteaching of the L2 words) in terms L2 vocabulary meaning. Likewise, as for L2 vocabulary form, the mean score of the participants who had received focused instruction ( $M = 20.62$ ) was larger than that of those who had been given non-focused instruction ( $M = 17.20$ ). Therefore, the results lead to the conclusion that there was a significant relationship between the types of instruction and the participants' vocabulary learning (i.e., form and meaning) through TV series. The results confirm the conventional idea that intentional learning may yield more gains than incidental learning, at least, in classroom settings. Even though the last finding of this study is in line with that of Pujadas and Muñoz (2019), research on the relationship between instructional types (i.e., focused and non-focused) and L2 vocabulary learning through extensive TV viewing seems to be scarce and further research on this could much more enlightening.

### Conclusion

The present study was an attempt to explore the (possible) impacts of extensive, constant, and sustainable viewing of a TV series on L2 vocabulary learning, depending on what language to display on the screen and what instruction type to employ. With regard to the significance of L2 vocabulary learning as an essential means of acquiring proficiency in English, this study was an attempt to broaden the horizons of L2 vocabulary learning and teaching methods. As opposed to the conventional technique of L2 vocabulary which included looking up the new words, repeating them over and over again, and making a couple of examples with them, this study aimed at finding more pleasurable and effective ways to learning and teaching L2 vocabulary.

This study shows that extensive and sustainable exposure to a TV series may have significant effects on L2 vocabulary learning, concerning both

vocabulary forms and meanings. Furthermore, the results of the current study suggest that the language of on-screen text may positively affect L2 vocabulary learning. Besides, captions were found more beneficial and consequential in terms of the learning of both vocabulary forms and meanings than subtitles. Finally, the focused instruction type (i.e., preteaching of target L2 items) was found significantly better than the nonfocused instruction type (i.e., without preteaching of L2 items), regarding both L2 vocabulary forms and meanings.

As we live in a world full of media, L2 learners are surrounded by various types of potential sources, such as TV series, for improving and extending their L2 knowledge. Therefore, the present study was an attempt to make L2 teachers, materials developers, and decision-makers come to perceive TV series as something more than merely a means of entertainment. They need to incorporate extensive TV viewing in actual classroom settings, and so the findings of this study will hopefully have a subtle enlightening and productive role in such doing. Another implication of this study is that more attention may be drawn to the role of preteaching when it comes to receptive activities.

The findings of this study may not be broadly generalizable because the experiment was conducted by intermediate participants only. In other words, this study did not take other proficiency levels into consideration (e.g., elementary and advanced). Further research in this area could shed some more light on L2 vocabulary learning (i.e., forms and meanings) through TV series using focused and non-focused instruction types.

It would seem quite thought-provoking and interesting if future studies in this area focus on other aspects L2 learning through extensive exposure to TV series such as L2 grammar learning. After all, a TV series can be considered a full package of L2 authentic materials, which can be used to boost different L2 properties. Future studies, therefore, could investigate the role of being

extensively exposed to TV series on the possible grammatical and syntactic knowledge improvements. The TV series employed in this study was a drama about a simple lawyer who wanted to make his way to the world of top and acclaimed attorneys and, throughout the show, the viewers got the chance to encounter and become familiar with a great number of vocabulary used in the area of law and crime, which, otherwise, the participants would have never come across that terminology. In other words, taking advantage of different TV series with different genres may enable viewers to face and learn the common language in that area. Hence, it is highly recommended that future studies consider making use of different TV series belonging to different genres and areas, other than merely dramas, to figure out how successful and different L2 vocabulary learning might occur.

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### Appendix A

#### Sample Items on the Pretest

- The state police are ..... the killing.  
A) releasing                      B) investigating                      C) assaulting                      D) kidnapping
- Radical groups in the U.K. .... the return of capital punishment.  
A) advocate                      B) duplicate                      C) extradite                      D) cooperate
- They believed he had attempted to sexually ..... the woman.  
A) encounter                      B) consent                      C) assist                      D) assault
- She is so sophisticated and skilled, but also very friendly and.....  
A) arrogant                      B) down-to-earth                      C) cruel                      D) strict

### Appendix B

#### Sample Items on the Posttest

- After going on many trials, he was finally ..... from any blame.  
A) sued                      B) exonerated                      C) investigated                      D) sentenced
- She receives a good amount of ..... from her old firm. I guess she can easily manage her expenses with that.  
A) cooperation                      B) consideration                      C) pension                      D) attention
- Pitka claimed that these words were false and defamatory, and as a result she ..... the newspaper for libel.  
A) recalled                      B) advocated                      C) exonerated                      D) sued
- It was a ..... that three earthquakes happened across the world in one week.  
A) coincidence                      B) policy                      C) blessing                      D) gift

### Appendix C

#### Sample Items on the Postviewing Tasks

- Where did Saul use to work before he became a lawyer?  
A) in a restaurant                      B) in a bar                      C) in a mailroom                      D) in a beauty salon
- Who do you think Saul's best friend is?  
A) Kim                      B) Howard                      C) Chuck                      D) Tuco

3. What kind of disease did Chuck suffer from?  
A) cancer                      B) hyper sensitivity                      C) Alzheimer                      D) dementia
4. The judge was accused of taking ....  
A) assistance                      B) bribes                      C) services                      D) advice
5. The police forces are on their way because my brother was ..... shortly before he arrived home.  
A) informed                      B) shocked                      C) kidnapped                      D) investigated
6. Following the killings, the ..... are working hard to find the murderers.  
A) offenders                      B) counselors                      C) witnesses                      D) detectives