

## Retelling as a Formative Assessment Strategy: Enhancing EFL Learners' Reading Comprehension and Vocabulary Knowledge

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### Abstract

Iranian high school students confront various challenges in understanding reading passages and learning vocabulary since appropriate process-oriented assessment techniques with constructive and communicative feedback are not practiced to consolidate instruction and learning. The effect of formative assessment (FA) retelling strategy on vocabulary knowledge and understanding passages was investigated and scrutinized in this quasi-experimental study in the EFL context. Thus, a sample of 48 intermediate EFL students was selected and assigned to two intact groups. The retelling assessment was implemented for the experimental group (EG), while the product-oriented summative assessment was applied to the control group (CG). The pre-test scores were taken at the first phase of the study followed by the eight-week assessment process. Finally, the post-test scores were taken. For the purpose of the analysis, the Independent Samples T-test and the one-way ANCOVA were utilized to compare and contrast the mean scores. The findings were in favor of the retelling technique which developed the vocabulary command and text comprehension in the EG. Moreover, little or no significant impact was revealed for the product-oriented assessment in the CG. The findings can be pedagogically rewarding for learners, teachers and theoreticians and may cast light on SLA research in applying FA techniques.

**Keywords:** product-oriented assessment, process-oriented assessment, constructive feedback, scaffolding, summative assessment

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## 1. Introduction

Language learners' ability to read the passage, work on its information, construct meaning and remember what they have already read constitutes their reading comprehension skill. Mastery of this skill is of crucial importance for EFL students in order to interact with the text and with their teacher and other learners in a communicative sense. The students' vocabulary knowledge is similarly significant in improving their reading comprehension and mastery of other language skills (Dong et al., 2020; Srimanee et al., 2021).

Reading is a critical receptive skill for attaining English language proficiency. Additionally, it paves the way for the mastery of productive skills, speaking and writing when more time and practice is allocated to vocabulary learning and reading comprehension skill, or when they are assessed formatively in the process of instruction using different innovative and communicative process-oriented tools.

Frey and Fisher (2011) believed that process-oriented assessments, monitoring classroom activities and analyzing students' progress are considered as FA. It is implemented by English language practitioners to develop teaching techniques and assist learners by giving constructive feedback during the instruction process. Students' learning is regularly monitored and feedback is provided to them wherever and whenever needed (Mathew & Poehner, 2014). Additionally, they are encouraged in the learning process to achieve the desired goals. When teachers want to decide about the forthcoming instructional process, FA assists them in making appropriate decisions and in addition, it informs learners about their strengths and weaknesses to pave the way for their own progress and improve their learning (Lamberg et al., 2020; Widiastuti & Saukah, 2017). Students use different kinds of techniques, strategies and tools in order to make better sense of the passage they are engaged to read.

There exist various FA techniques, but one of the FA tools that may contribute to the solidification of reading comprehension and understanding passages is retelling. It informs practitioners to carefully identify learners' problems in comprehending passages, understanding text structure and retrieving main and supporting ideas in detail (Almutairi, 2018). According to Jennings, Caldwell and Lerner (2014), teachers can use the retelling technique to check the learners' oral skills and fluency by asking them to read the selected text aloud and likewise to check their comprehension and understanding through their silent reading. Teachers can read the passage for both purposes. They need to train students about how to retell or summarize the content of the passage and students, in return, should think that they have to report the story to individuals who have never viewed it. Rogoski and Flores (2021) also explained that dialogic reading for comprehension can be a useful strategy to establish and enhance storytelling skills among children.

Iranian EFL students face various challenges both in high schools and universities due to a lack of their ability to understand reading materials which demotivates them in foreign language learning since FA tools are scarcely utilized in this EFL language education context. On the one

hand, insufficient vocabulary knowledge plays a part in this regard as reading and vocabulary knowledge are closely interconnected, that is, mastery of one contributes to the other and vice versa. On the other hand, ignorance of appropriate interactive assessment tools and not providing constructive and communicative feedback in the reading process deteriorates EFL learners' performance in these two language areas. The problem mostly originates from a lack of constant and ongoing assessment which can stabilize instruction and guarantee learning and language use.

In addition, reading comprehension is not instructed communicatively and similarly it is rarely assessed in the classroom sphere in the Iranian EFL context. Students' reading skill is generally assessed by providing Persian translation, i.e. the assessment does not consolidate instruction which may lead to communication, language use and production or at least the assessment is summative, happening at the end of term or year with little connection with the previous reading passages that are read in the classroom. They also learn little or no reading strategies and skills, although the contributive function of reading strategies in text comprehension is stressed in research (Sun et al., 2021). Furthermore, some students who are not familiar with effective learning and assessment techniques generally encounter problems in understanding passages (Nor & Rashid, 2018).

Inability to activate learners' schematic knowledge also results in poor comprehension of reading material and failure in meaning construction (Nozen et al., 2017). To shed light on the importance of background knowledge, Smith, Snow, Serry and Hammond (2021) critically reviewed different studies about the role of background knowledge in reading comprehension and they concluded that background knowledge influences stronger and weaker readers differently depending on the nature of the text and the reader's belief about the text. Accordingly, in case EFL students are unable to make a connection between the new content and their background knowledge, cannot guess the contextual meaning of sentences and words or cannot activate their previous vocabulary knowledge for the new context may get into trouble in comprehending passages. According to Al-Jarrah and Ismail (2018), learners' comprehension is affected by the difficulty or complexity level of reading passages. In other words, the depth and breadth of comprehension can be deepened provided that students are fluent readers. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of applying the retelling FA technique to improve EFL learners' reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge.

## 2. Literature Review

### *2.1. Theoretical Background of the Study*

Teachers' understanding of innovative assessment tools and their assessment literacy is vital in accelerating the learning process in any educational setting. In line with teachers' assessment literacy and perspectives, some researchers stressed the importance of teachers' assessment literacy and their understanding of formative assessment in SLA research (Arrafi & Sumarni, 2018;

Bhandari, 2020; Lamberg et al., 2020). They emphasized the positive and contributive role of teachers' high assessment knowledge on learners' language achievement. In applying the retelling FA technique, the goal is not merely assessment, but it is assessment for the purpose of instruction. The teacher or students assist each other in the assessment process and this assistance theoretically can be justified in terms of Vygotsky's theory of scaffolding (Vygotsky, 1978). When teachers provide students with feedback, assistance and guidance, instruction moves from "delivery to discovery" (Fisher et al., 2014).

Ortlieb and Norris (2012) stressed that according to Vygotsky (1978) social interaction was important for the development of skills. In other words, when the selected FA tool is applied, interaction among learners and with the teacher is something inevitable. This may contribute to the improvement of reading skills and learning contextualized vocabulary. That is, in learning, someone with a higher level of skills, such as a teacher or knowledgeable peers, can assist students to reach a higher level of development or mastery in a subject than they could have done alone.

Utilizing the retelling FA tool theoretically matters to a great extent since it can be attributed to the input hypothesis (Krashen, 1985) concerning the level and comprehensibility of the input provided to the learners and it can be related to input enhancement (Sharwood Smith, 1993) and input flooding (Hernandez, 2018) regarding the amount of input not in terms of grammar and structural points but that of the salient content of the selected passage, since the expectation is that ample exposure to the same content information in the input will make it more salient, and in doing so, will draw learners' attention to depth of understanding and getting more information about the text by consciousness-raising.

## ***2.2. Related Empirical Studies***

An effective FA tool that can be used to assess reading comprehension is retelling which improves comprehension among learners (Jennings et al., 2014). In the retelling, a student reports the content of a text by his or her own verbal knowledge construction. In this sense, the retelling is regarded as an assessment tool in which readers are assisted to work on the reading passage to reconstruct and report it to other students. In the school setting, retelling as a popular technique is occasionally applied for both assessing and instructing learners' reading skill. This assessment tool positively changes language learners' opinions about reading passages, thus it improves their understanding ability (Rudiawan & Jupri, 2020). It broadens learners' text comprehension by retelling the information reviewed in the text (Cohen et al., 2009).

Regarding the problems mentioned in the introduction, the literature review unearths that there is, indeed, a growing body of empirical research available on retelling as an instructional technique in the EFL classroom context. Most of the previous studies (Al Manyrawi, 2013; Ebaugh, 2013; Hemmati & Kashi, 2013; Iravi & Malmir, 2023; Kamilah, 2014; Khisbulloh, 2012; Rohani & Ghoorchaei, 2014; Stoutz, 2011; Sylvia & Widiati, 2017) have considered the role of retelling as an

instruction tool on reading comprehension, but the problem is without in class or ongoing assessment, learning cannot be solidified and may not lead to language production and use. This study differently has focused on retelling as an assessment strategy and how it can affect EFL learners' comprehension and understanding of reading passages.

Among these studies, Rohani and Ghoorchaei (2014) conducted their research on the effect of retelling as an instructional technique on first-grade high school students' reading comprehension and confirmed its positive impact. Similarly, Hemmati and Kashi (2013) in the Iranian EFL context studied how retelling and summary writing can influence upper-intermediate students' reading ability. The results of this comparative study indicated the effectiveness of the retelling technique over summary writing and traditional reading comprehension instruction.

Likewise, Stoutz (2011) used retelling teaching technique to help learners to read a story and report it to others one by one. She implemented different retelling techniques to investigate the effect of retelling type on its quality. The results of the study revealed that each applied retelling method affected the retelling quality besides other contributive variables including learners' ability to remember, familiarity with this skill and self-confidence.

Different from what was conducted by Stoutz (2011), this one had a different focus and research method and practiced retelling in classroom assessment and the text types to retell was different, too. Moreover, the current study differs from both Rohani and Ghoorchaei (2014) and Hemmati and Kashi (2013) in the level of the student, the focus of the research, and research methods.

Above all, Ekaningrum (2017) reviewed different studies to see how influential oral and written retelling techniques were on students' text comprehension. The results were contradictory showing that the oral retelling tool was rewarding in some cases, while the results were in favor of written retelling in others. At last, Kucer (2011) carried out another research study in which students' retelling ability changed for the better with the genre and type of the text.

In contrast to the above studies, Chandran and Hashim (2021) compared the self-paced formative assessment with the past assessment methods in vocabulary instruction in the ESL context. They concluded that the self-paced FA technique helped learners acquire vocabulary more effectively. In the same line of research about FA, Estaji and Mirzaii (2018) conducted their research to investigate the impact of the FA on vocabulary learning and revealed the effectiveness of this assessment tool on learners' vocabulary knowledge.

Literature review shows that there is scant research regarding the impact of the assessment technique of retelling on understanding passages and vocabulary knowledge of intermediate-level high school students in an EFL context. The gap in the literature necessitates the current research to be conducted in this area to contribute to the assessment and teaching practice in the SLA context to eradicate some of the above-mentioned problems. Putting forward the problems, it can be stated that the goal of reading is to comprehend passages, but a number of learners confront problems in their ability to read fluently and they may also face up to make sense of passages. Furthermore, they

can't retrieve what they read to report or retell it to others communicatively. Learners with different levels of knowledge and age range generally face with serious challenges pertaining to these problems in reading comprehension. Paying attention to the importance of understanding passages and reading comprehension, the present study intended to find out how the FA technique of retelling affects EFL students' vocabulary knowledge and text comprehension. Accordingly, two research questions were formulated as follows:

1. Does the formative assessment retelling technique influence EFL learners' reading comprehension?
2. Does the formative assessment retelling technique influence EFL learners' vocabulary knowledge?

Some assessment linguists and researchers claimed that FA when applied appropriately can assist learners to have more comprehension and vocabulary mastery (Frey & Fisher, 2014; Greenstein, 2010; Marshal, 2011) and the close relationship between reading comprehension and oral language use, lead us to go with directional hypothesis: There is a relationship between using retelling, the FA tool and reading comprehension and vocabulary learning of EFL students. In other words, utilizing retelling may help them read and understand passages and use learned vocabulary effectively. It seems that the FA retelling technique can improve EFL learners' reading comprehension skill and vocabulary knowledge and deepen their understanding of the school textbooks.

Lack of active engagement of EFL students in a dynamic, ongoing and process-oriented assessment is a major predicament in reading and vocabulary assessment in Iranian public schools and the assessment is generally summative or there is no assessment at all and it doesn't lead to communication and proper language use. Therefore, the current study aimed to shed light on the application of the retelling technique to meet the gap in assessing reading comprehension and integrating it with vocabulary use through an ongoing, dynamic, joint, collaborative while class process, that is, FA.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1. Participants

The participants were intermediate high school students from Allameh Jafari High School of Marand. Their mother tongue was Turkish. Their age range was sixteen to nineteen. Forty-eight participants were selected from among 60 after administrating the revised Cambridge Preliminary English Test (PET) on the basis of their test scores. That is, twelve participants were excluded from this study because of their too low or too high performance in the revised PET. They were placed in two intact groups, including twenty-four male intermediate level students, by school authorities. These groups were randomly assigned according to the study purpose in the following ways:

1. The experimental group (EG) which was assessed using FA in the form of the Retelling technique.
2. The control group (CG) which was summatively and conventionally assessed at the end of the term.

The study was conducted to investigate whether the aforementioned FA technique could affect the participants' reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge or not.

### ***3.2. Instruments***

The instruments required for data collection are as follows: The revised PET which included 60 items (30 vocabulary tests, and 30 reading comprehension questions) was administered to check the proficiency level of the participants. The questions in this proficiency test were in the low intermediate or B1 level. The pre-test was used to be certain about the current level of students before the treatment. The pre-test consisted of 25 vocabulary tests, 15 reading comprehension tests and 10 cloze passage test items. The post-test which included 25 vocabulary tests, 15 reading comprehension tests and 10 cloze passage test items was utilized to check the participants' achievement in understanding passages and their mastery of the selected vocabulary sets after the instruction and assessment. The format and level of the pre-test and post-test exams were the same, but the questions or test items were different for each of them. The questions in pre and post-test exams were taken from the question bank of Konkur exam (the entrance exam of universities in Iran) since they are considered standard tests of English in Iran. Eight reading comprehension passages and eight vocabulary sets from the fourth grade of the high school textbook were assessed using the FA retelling technique for the EG and the SA technique for the CG in this study.

### ***3.3. Procedure***

As it was not possible for the researchers to assign the participants to two groups randomly, the quasi-experimental design was selected in this study (Dörnyei, 2007). The study was implemented by using a pre-test and post-test design and the quantitative data was collected to compare the EG and the CG. However, to create comparisons between these two groups the initial group differences needed to be taken into consideration (Dörnyei, 2007). All of the students in Allameh Jafari High School had taken a standardized test to enter and enroll on this school. This contributes to the homogeneity of the participants. The test had already been administered by the Ministry of Education and the National Organization for Development of Exceptional Talents (NODET) or (Sampad in Persian) in Iran. Similarly, the significance of the difference between the mean scores of the EG and the CG prior to treatment was checked using the 60-item revised PET.

All sixty students took part in the test and they answered the questions in 80 minutes. Forty-eight participants were chosen based on their proficiency test scores while twelve participants were removed from the study since their scores did not fall between the two standard deviations

(SD=4.34) above and below the mean ( $M=30.27$ ). The participants with too high and too low achievement were excluded from the study to minimize the group differences as much as possible and there were not any significant outliers within the obtained data.

The participants in each group were trained and instructed about the form of the assessment that was to be practiced with them, that is, the students became familiar with the assessment strategy in each group prior to the treatment. They were given a pre-test to ensure their comparability prior to the treatment, that is, before the instruction and assessment of reading comprehension passages and vocabulary sets. They were provided with 25 vocabulary tests, 15 reading comprehension tests, and 10 cloze passage tests as the pre-test.

The EG practiced the reading comprehension passages by applying the specific ongoing FA technique. In other words, students were assigned a passage to read silently and assessed using the retelling assessment tool. They were provided with 8 reading comprehension passages to be assessed in 8 sessions. The treatment that they received included 8 sessions of assessment, that is, two sessions in a week. The study took almost 3 months. Each session of assessment regarding the use of assessment strategies went on for 90 minutes. Both groups used the same course book, teaching hours, reading passages, vocabulary sets, activities, tasks, exercises and the same teaching methods, but the retelling as an FA tool was used in the EG. The CG, summative assessment group, was assessed by mid or final term exams and the activities, tasks and exercises provided in the textbook without providing any assistance or feedback in the form of retelling; therefore, the effectiveness of the treatment was investigated. In class, students met in either small or whole class groups for retelling. Students were continuously asked to retell what they had read to other students. In retelling FA technique, a reader uses his own words and sentences to report what he has previously read in the text to others. As the retelling moved around the classroom, every student could retell the selected passage and the teacher and students provided communicative and constructive feedback to each other to cover the whole content of the passage. As the activity built around the room, the interaction became in-depth with the opportunity for all students to learn new perspectives on the text.

During the assessment process, by using the FA technique, the production of the learners was continuously scored, that is, the retellings that were presented by the students and the utterances and sentences communicated, expressed or reported by the students. After 8 weeks of implementing the retelling FA tool for the EG and the CG (summative assessment), both groups were given a post-test, 25 vocabulary tests, 15 reading comprehension tests and 10 cloze passage tests to investigate the effect of this assessment tool on selected language areas, namely reading comprehension skill and vocabulary knowledge.

After the data collection procedure, the results of the pre-test –post-test mean scores of both groups in reading comprehension and vocabulary learning were compared and contrasted in SPSS software. The obtained scores could be analyzed using t-tests or ANOVA, but the ANCOVA was used to get more precise results by controlling the pre-test scores since it helps to reduce the initial

group differences in quasi-experimental studies (Dörnyei, 2007). The one-way ANCOVA was chosen to weigh the research questions up. Finally, the findings were discussed and reported embedded within the text and in separate tables.

## 4. Results

The univariate one-way ANCOVA was applied to the data analysis since the study had two groups with the pre-test and post-test design. When researchers choose to analyze their data using a one-way ANCOVA, part of the process involves checking to make sure that the data they want to analyze can actually be analyzed using a one-way ANCOVA. They need to do this because it is only appropriate to use a one-way ANCOVA if their data passes the important assumptions that are required for a one-way ANCOVA to give them a valid result. In the following subsections, five of the most important assumptions for the ANCOVA including linearity, scatterplots, homogeneity of regression slopes, normality test and Levene's homogeneity of variances are tested and then the main ANCOVA analysis are performed accordingly.

### 4.1. Checking Homogeneity and Normality of the Data as Assumptions of ANCOVA

The Shapiro-Wilk and Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests of normality were used to check the normality of the two sets of the pre-test scores obtained from two groups of the study, since normality of data is thought to be a necessary factor for parametric tests in statistics. As shown in Table 1, the results of these normality tests revealed that the scores in the pre-test of the two groups were normal ( $P > 0.05$ ) and there was no significant difference between the two groups confirming that there was no violation regarding this assumption.

**Table 1**

*Normality Tests*

	Groups	Kolmogorov-Smirnov			Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	Df	Sig.	Statistic	Df	Sig.
pre-test	RG	.1171	24	.068	.957	24	.389
	CG	.111	24	.200	.967	24	.604

*Note.* RG=Retelling Group; CG =Control Group

The Independent Samples T-test is used to analyze Levene's homogeneity of variances as another assumption for ANCOVA as the study is comprised of two groups. The results are shown in Table 2 revealing that the pre-test scores of the two groups were not significantly different ( $P = .838 > 0.05$ ) in Levene's homogeneity of variances. This assumption of ANCOVA was not consequently violated in this study.

**Table 2***Levene's Test for Homogeneity of Variances on Pre-tests of Two Groups*

Groups	Levene Statistic	df1	df 2	Sig.
Pre-tests of two groups	.042	1	46	.838

The results of the Independent Samples T-test analysis in Tables 3 and 4 on the pre-test scores with the mean scores of (M=30.12) for the EG and (M=30.20) for the CG revealed no significant difference ( $P=.915 > 0.05$ ) between the two groups prior to the treatment in the form of retelling assessment.

**Table 3***Descriptive Statistics: Independent Samples T-test on Pre-tests of Two Groups*

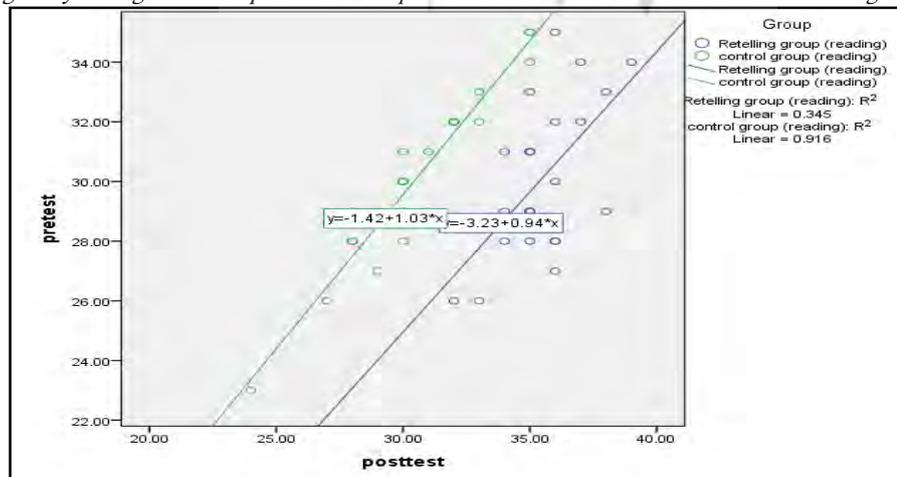
Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Retelling group	24	30.12	2.542	.519
Control group	24	30.20	2.843	.580

**Table 4***Independent Samples T-test on Pre-tests of Two Groups*

t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
-.107	46	.915	-.083	.779	-1.650	1.484
-.107	45.43	.915	-.083	.779	-1.651	1.484

#### 4.2. The Analysis Results for the Homogeneity of Regression Slopes, Scatterplots and Linearity of the ANCOVA Assumptions

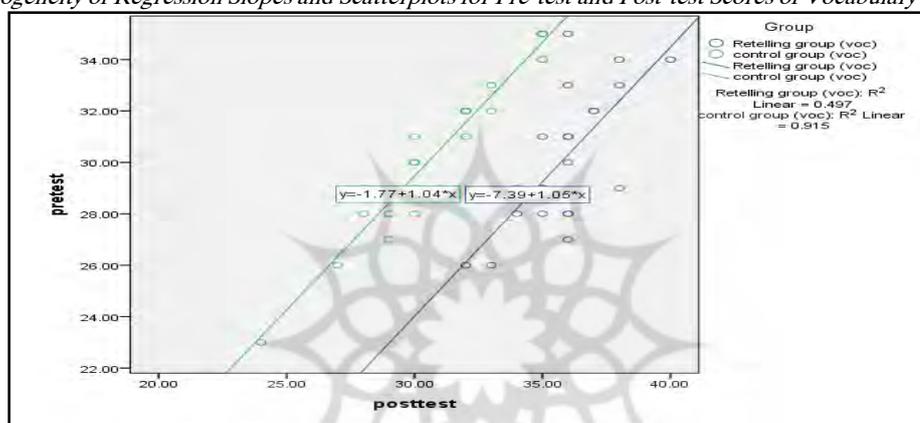
Two of the main required assumptions for the ANCOVA analysis are the scatterplots and the homogeneity of regression slopes. In SPSS Statistics, these assumptions can be tested by plotting grouped scatterplots of the covariate, the post-test scores of the dependent variable and the independent variable.

**Figure 1***Homogeneity of Regression Slopes and Scatterplots for Pre-test and Post-test Scores of Reading Comprehension*

The analysis for these two assumptions was utilized on the pre-test and post-tests scores are displayed for the reading comprehension in Figure 1 and for the vocabulary in Figure 2. The obtained data meets these assumptions and does not violate them in the one-way ANCOVA analysis. Mainly, it can be inferred from Figures 1 and 2 that the scores have been scattered around the regression lines with no outliers and there is almost perfect parallelism in the regression lines confirming that the assumptions required for the ANCOVA analysis have not been violated in the research data. In addition, the relationship between the pre-test and post-test scores is approximately linear and there is almost no outlier among the scores.

**Figure 2**

*Homogeneity of Regression Slopes and Scatterplots for Pre-test and Post-test Scores of Vocabulary*



As the analyzed data meets the necessary assumptions of the ANCOVA, the main one-way ANCOVA analysis for the effect of the treatment on reading comprehension and vocabulary learning of the two groups is implemented in the following subsections.

#### **4.3. The ANCOVA Analysis Results: The Effect of Retelling on Reading Comprehension**

The effect of the retelling FA technique on reading comprehension in the two groups was scrutinized to weigh the first research question up. The mean scores of these groups were compared using an ANCOVA test to check the impact of the retelling technique on the reading comprehension skill of the students in the EFL context. The analysis results of the post-test mean scores obtained from the EG and the CG were analyzed and then presented in different tables. Tables 5 and 6 compare the post-test mean scores of the treatment group and the comparison group in reading comprehension.

According to Table 5, the EG ( $M=35.50$ ,  $SD=1.588$ ) outperformed the CG ( $M=30.62$ ,  $SD=2.634$ ) in terms of using assessment techniques. The mean score for the retelling experimental group was higher than the one for the comparison group. In order to ascertain the group differences, an ANCOVA was carried out, the results of which are reported in Table 6.

**Table 5***Descriptive Statistics: One-Way ANCOVA on Post-tests of Reading Comprehension in Two Groups*

Groups	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Retelling Group (reading)	35.50	1.588	24
Control Group (reading)	30.62	2.634	24
Total	33.06	3.271	48

The one-way ANCOVA analysis on the post-test score results in Table 6 revealed that after adjusting the pre-test scores in reading comprehension of the two groups, there was a significant difference between them in the post-test mean scores [ $F(1, 45)=177.79$ ,  $P=.000<0.05$ , partial eta squared= $0.798$ ] of the EG ( $M=35.50$ ) and CG ( $M=30.62$ ). Since the P-value was less than 0.05, it demonstrates the superiority of the EG over the CG regarding the effect of the FA retelling technique in the assessment process. The partial eta squared value of 0.798 indicates the large effect size when compared with Cohen's guidelines. This value describes that almost 80 percent of the variance in reading comprehension as the dependent variable is explained by the retelling technique as the independent variable.

Furthermore, the existence of a significant pre-test effect [ $F(1, 45)=87.71$ , the partial eta squared= $0.661$ ,  $P=0.000<0.05$ ] in Table 6 indicates the increase of scores from the pre-test to the post-test for both groups. Therefore, it can be argued that the FA technique of retelling has improved EFL learners' reading comprehension. In other words, it can be understood that summative assessment had almost no significant effect on improving the text comprehension performance of the learners in the CG besides improving the mean score in the post-test, but the retelling technique was effective in improving the learners' reading comprehension skill.

**Table 6***One-Way ANCOVA on Post-tests of Reading Comprehension in Two Groups*

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects							
Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	
Corrected Model	429.024 <sup>a</sup>	2	214.512	130.821	.000	.853	
Intercept	64.739	1	64.739	39.262	.000	.466	
Reading com.(pre-test)	143.837	1	134.837	87.719	.000	.661	
Group	291.543	1	291.543	177.799	.000	.798	
Error	73.788	45	1.640				
Total	52973.000	48					
Corrected Total	502.812	47					

a. R Squared=.853 (Adjusted R Squared=.847)

#### **4.4. The ANCOVA Analysis Results: The Effect of the Retelling on Vocabulary Learning**

The effect of the FA technique of retelling on vocabulary learning was investigated as it was formulated in the second research question. An ANCOVA test was utilized for comparing the mean scores of both the EG and the CG and the analysis results of the post-tests of these groups were

presented in different tables. Tables 7 and 8 compare the post-test mean scores of the experimental group and the comparison group in vocabulary learning.

The descriptive statistics in Table 7 revealed the superiority of the EG ( $M=35.83$ ,  $SD=1.711$ ) over the CG ( $M=30.71$ ,  $SD=2.612$ ) regarding the post-test scores. As the descriptive statistics cannot tell the significant difference between the mean scores of the two groups, the one-way ANCOVA was run in Table 8.

**Table 7**

*Descriptive Statistics: One-Way ANCOVA on Post-tests of Vocabulary Learning in Two Groups*

Groups	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Retelling Group (Vocabulary)	35.83	1.711	24
Control Group (Vocabulary)	30.71	2.612	24
Total	33.27	3.388	48

The one-way ANCOVA analysis on the post-test mean scores in Table 8 revealed that the difference was significant [ $F(1,45)=238.966$ ,  $P=.000<0.05$ , partial eta squared= $0.842$ ] between the mean scores of the EG ( $M=35.83$ ) and the CG ( $M=30.71$ ) in vocabulary learning; therefore, it can be inferred that the FA technique of the retelling has improved EFL learners' vocabulary mastery. In other words, it can be understood that summative assessment had almost no significant effect on improving the learners' vocabulary knowledge in the CG despite improving the mean scores in the post-test; however, the retelling assessment was effective in improving the learners' vocabulary command. As the partial eta squared value of  $0.842$  revealed, there was also a strong relationship between the pre-test and post-test scores in vocabulary learning using the retelling FA technique.

**Table 8**

*One-Way ANCOVA on Post-tests of Vocabulary Learning in Two Groups*

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects						
Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	478.784 <sup>a</sup>	2	239.392	177.486	.000	.887
Intercept	54.100	1	54.100	40.110	.000	.471
Vocabulary Learning (pre-test)	163.596	1	163.596	121.291	.000	.729
Group	322.315	1	322.315	238.966	.000	.842
Error	60.696	45	1.349			
Total	53673.000	48				
Corrected Total	539.479	47				

a. R Squared = .887 (Adjusted R Squared = .882)

It indicates the large effect size when compared with Cohen's guidelines. This value describes that almost 84 percent of the variance in vocabulary learning as the dependent variable is explained by the retelling technique as the independent variable. Moreover, Table 8 reveals the significance of the pre-test effect [ $F(1, 45)=121.291$ , the partial eta squared =  $0.729$ ,  $P=0.000<0.05$ ] and the partial eta squared value of  $0.729$  indicates the strong effect size that increases the mean scores from the pre-test to the post-test for both groups in vocabulary learning.

## 5. Discussion

The study findings revealed that retelling as an FA technique was confirmed to be beneficial in enhancing EFL students' reading comprehension skill and vocabulary knowledge, as it engaged students in their learning process and helped them to develop an ability to realize what they learned and how they learned. To put it in a nutshell, this assessment technique improves both reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge in the same way. The findings also confirm the effectiveness of FA tools in language achievement in general. The students could make connections between different parts of the passage and assist each other in putting different pieces of information about the text together. The students monitor their learning with awareness and attention because they are continuously involved in the learning and assessment process. During this process, the learners get positive feedback from their peers and the teacher which consequently improves their language command in reading comprehension and vocabulary learning.

The findings of one-way ANCOVA showed no significant difference among pre-tests ( $p = .915 > 0.05$ ) of the two groups and their Proficiency level ( $p = .583 > 0.05$ ) prior to utilizing the retelling assessment technique. The findings also revealed that the two groups of the study did not have significant mean score differences before implementing the retelling FA technique and the scores in the pre-test of the EG and the CG were normal ( $p > 0.05$ ). The findings revealed significant differences ( $p < 0.05$ ) in the post-test mean scores between the two groups in learning vocabulary ( $p = .000 < 0.05$ ) and improving reading comprehension skill ( $p = .000 < 0.05$ ). That is, the retelling assessment group outperformed the control summative group in reading comprehension skill and vocabulary learning and the difference between the two groups of the study, namely the retelling and the control was significant. It can be understood that the retelling FA technique has improved vocabulary learning and reading comprehension skill of the learners in the EG in comparison with the CG.

The findings confirm the hypothesis regarding the first and second research questions that retelling influences EFL learners' reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge as it was hypothesized prior to the implementation of this study. The results also indicated that retelling has the same effect in enhancing EFL learners' reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge. The communicative feedback that was provided to the learners in the assessment process gave them the awareness to report and retell what they have read attentively. The students also learn from each other because of the process-oriented, ongoing and dynamic assessment technique since the information and content of the reading passage is continuously circulated and practiced among the students through the student-student or student-teacher or teacher-student interactions in the assessment process. The input flooding and adequacy of input about the reading passages for the learners and the use of learned vocabulary in a contextualized manner facilitate their understanding and consolidate vocabulary learning as well.

The findings closely correspond to some of the following studies mentioned in the literature (Al Manyrawi, 2013; Derakhshan & Malmir, 2017; Ebaugh, 2013; Kamilah, 2014; Kisbulloh, 2012; Rohani & Ghoorchaie, 2014; Rudiawan & Jupri, 2020; Stoutz, 2011; Sylvia & Widiati, 2017) about the positive effect of retelling as an instructional tool on reading comprehension, whereas this study focuses on its effect both in reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge and reveals the positive effect of retelling on them with different text type and genre and with students having different level of knowledge. The research method and focus in the current study are different from the previous studies. Additionally, the findings are in agreement with the studies conducted by Chandran and Hashim (2021) and Estaji and Mirzaii (2018) on practicing FA to enhance vocabulary learning.

The study findings agree with Cohen et al. (2009) and Hemmati and Kashi (2013) regarding reading comprehension, but they had other features such as fluency and summary writing as variables, respectively. Our tendency towards language learning was the integration of assessing reading comprehension skill with other language skills and language areas. The FA retelling technique is generally accompanied by reporting and speaking among the learners. As the interaction and communication in the classroom is in the form of speech, other researchers may illuminate the effect of retelling as an assessment tool on other language skills including speaking and listening in EFL or ESL context considering the fact that English language learners mostly practice spoken language to elaborate the passage and exchange the information about it.

In large measure, most of the studies emphasized the facilitative role of the FA in general on improving reading comprehension, but the current study focused on reading comprehension in an EFL context using a different and under-researched FA tool, retelling which was similarly helpful in improving reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge among EFL learners. In accordance with the theories of SLA, the retelling FA technique enhanced students' performance in reading comprehension and vocabulary command in the EFL context because of increased student involvement, provision of communicative feedback, input flooding, comprehensibility of the input and the assistance and scaffolding provided to the students in the learning process. Students adapt themselves to the new learning situation when their background knowledge is activated and more time and chance of assessment is given to them to self-assess, manipulate the input, construct the new information and finally retell or report it to others. This continuously happens in retelling and reporting the moves of the learners while applying this technique in assessing reading comprehension and vocabulary learning.

The findings underpin the theoretical base of this study including Vygotsky's theory of scaffolding and the socio-cultural perspective (Vygotsky, 1978) regarding the fact that the learners continually interact with each other about the passage. Retelling and reporting the information of the passage are all within the zone of proximal development of the learners, for the interaction is comprehensible enough for the learner to be understood due to the approximation to the learners' level of knowledge. This is in close correspondence with Krashen's input hypothesis (1985) since

the information that is exchanged among learners is crucially understandable and accessible owing to the resemblance of knowledge levels among learners. That is, the  $i+1$  input level is provided for the sake of mutual understanding among learners and teacher and students. In other words, the teacher makes the required connection and association between the learners' current level of knowledge and the higher level of knowledge (Ortlieb & Norris, 2012) when this FA tool is practiced among students to enable them retell and report the content of the passage using the contextualized vocabulary of the passage or retell the main information of the passage to others.

In this way, students improve their command of reading and consequently become interested in reading more. The interaction among learners occurs in the social and cultural setting of the classroom while retelling and reporting process in the classroom. Learners construct their knowledge through being actively involved in thinking and analyzing what they read and retell in their class. Salient and sufficient access to the information in the selected text by using the retelling FA tool goes in the same line with the theory of input enhancement (Sharwood Smith, 1993) and input flooding (Hernandez, 2018) and strengthens the application and implications of these theories of SLA in reading comprehension and vocabulary learning besides the structure and form of English language.

To sum up, the retelling FA technique improves EFL learners' reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge by involving them more in the learning process, increasing collaboration and interaction among learners, scaffolding and providing positive and communicative feedback, having ample exposure to the input and information about the text and providing continuous comprehensible input to the learners.

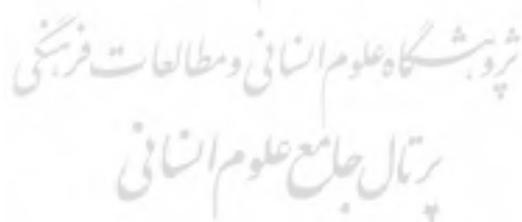
## 6. Conclusion and Implications

The findings displayed that all in all FA is more advantageous than SA in improving learners' language achievement when it is accompanied by appropriate teaching tools and techniques in coordination with different assessment strategies. In particular, the retelling FA technique might contribute to EFL learners' text comprehension and vocabulary learning because of the provision of assistance through constructive and communicative feedback and scaffolding, salient and ample exposure to the information and input communicated, students' involvement in interaction and communication, and comprehensibility and correspondence of input for the learners. Students' better performance in using vocabulary was due to the contextualization of selected vocabulary items in retelling and reporting the content of the passages.

Generally, the study findings are advantageous to practitioners and theoreticians in language teaching and learning. In specific, the result of this study may play a part in the SLA research by using suitable FA strategies in language teaching practice. Afterwards, the findings of this research may influence the performance of the EFL and ESL learners to achieve English language skills and sub-skills through implementing the dynamic and ongoing retelling FA technique. Moreover, the

result of the present study may empower teachers to make their practice efficient by utilizing appropriate FA techniques along with their teaching methods and techniques. They may enrich their teaching and learning process by using FA techniques which provide both teachers and students with constructive and communicative feedback. EFL language learners also may make use of the findings to understand reading passages and master vocabulary sets by being involved in the teaching and learning process through using FA techniques.

In summary, the current study findings will be pedagogically advantageous or may have implications for teachers, students, and curriculum designers. In addition, the findings of this study might be applied by material developers and policy makers in the publication and preparation of appropriate teaching materials and resources in order to develop an instructional curriculum and plan lessons. As there are many other different FA tools and techniques, researchers who are interested in the assessment and evaluation of the learners can conduct further research on how other ongoing classroom assessment techniques can be applied to improve different language areas including grammar, pronunciation and other language skills in SLA research and educational setting. This study contributed to the impact of retelling on understanding passages and vocabulary knowledge in high schools for intermediate-level learners; however, other researchers can replicate it for lower-level high school students and advanced university students.



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