



The Effects of Task Focus and Involvement Load on Idioms Recognition

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Abstract

This study investigated the effects of form-focused and meaning-focused tasks with different involvement load indices on EFL learners' recognition of L2 idioms. To this end, a sample of 180 EFL learners was selected and randomly assigned into six groups. Form-focused tasks with involvement load 2 (Multiple-choice), 3 (Sentence-completion), and 4 (Sentence-making) were used for three experimental groups, while meaning-focused tasks with involvement load 2 (Summary-writing), 3 (Writing with glossary), and 4 (Writing without glossary) were utilized for the other three groups. After the treatment, a 30-item test in multiple-choice format was administered to assess the participants' recognition of idioms. One two-way ANOVA and a series of independent-samples t-tests were run to process data. The results indicated that the tasks with higher levels of involvement were more effective on recognition of idioms. The results also showed that form-focused tasks were more efficient than meaning-focused tasks. Moreover, at involvement load of two, meaning-focused tasks were more beneficial than form-focused tasks, while form-focused tasks were more effective at higher involvement loads of three and four. The results of this study have theoretical and pedagogical implications for language teachers, curriculum designers, and researchers.

Keywords: Form-focused Tasks, Idioms, Involvement Load, Meaning-focused Tasks

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1. Introduction

Vocabulary is among the most important language components. Kırarak and Uygun Gökmen (2019) point out that learning a vast number of words has a facilitative role both in the comprehension and production of language. Knowledge of idioms, as part of vocabulary knowledge, is a critical component of language that helps foreign language learners to sound like natives. Idioms are one of the extensively used elements of every language that are used daily (Zarei, 2020).

It has been claimed that traditional methods of teaching idioms make students demotivated and bored (Moslehi & Rahimi, 2018). Since 1970s and 1980s, researchers and practitioners have been interested in Task-based approach (TBLT) for teaching various aspects of language including idioms. In TBLT, students learn language by doing tasks. Thus, tasks are considered as vehicles for language teaching (Ellis, 2003). Tasks can be either form-focused or meaning-focused. Form-focused tasks are those in which learners attend to specific forms of language by utilizing different strategies such as input enhancement, while in meaning-focused tasks learners pay attention mainly to meaning (Ellis, 2015).

Different tasks might affect learning differently. According to the Involvement Load Hypothesis (ILH) (Laufer & Hulstijn, 2001), vocabulary learning is affected by three task constructs: search, need and evaluation. The ILH suggests that the greater the demands of the learning task are on learners, the more easily they will learn words (Hulstijn & Laufer, 2001). The present study attempted to address the effects of the focus and involvement load of tasks on EFL learners' recognition of idioms by addressing the following questions:

1. Do focus and involvement load of tasks affect the recognition of L2 idioms?
2. Are form and meaning focused tasks with similar involvement loads differentially effective on EFL learners' recognition of L2 idioms?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Idioms

Idiomatic expressions are usually encountered in everyday language and acquired in the process of communication (Arnon & Snider, 2010). Haward (1998) defines idioms as a combination of two or more words that has a special meaning which is different from the meaning of its parts. The figurative meaning of an idiom cannot be easily understood from the literal meaning of the individual part (Cook et al., 2008). The main characteristics

of idioms are their non-compositionality, which refers to the fact that the meaning of idioms cannot be understood from the meaning of their parts; institutionalization, which refers to the usage of idioms in particular communities; and frozenness, which is related to the fixedness of idioms (Grant & Bauer, 2004; Simpson & Mendis, 2003).

As Liu (2003) states, since idioms have unpredictable meaning and extensive use, they deserve much more attention. Hence, given the importance of learning idioms, it has always been a considerable concern of researchers to find some effective tasks to help learners to conquer the challenges they encounter while learning L2 idioms and to aid teachers to teach them more effectively.

2.2. Tasks

Long (1985) proposed task as a viable way to identify learners' needs, organize opportunities for language acquisition, and measure students' achievement. There are various classifications of tasks. Regarding focus, tasks can be divided into form-focused or meaning-focused. Ellis (2003) refers to form-focused tasks as receptive or productive tasks that can be used to enforce learners to attend to particular linguistic forms. According to Schmidt's (1990) Noticing Hypothesis, attention is crucial for language learning. Prabhu (1987) refers to meaning-focused activities as activities in which learners are engaged in understanding, or transmitting meaning, and dealing with language forms occurs in that process. In meaning-focused tasks, there is no attempt to manipulate the design of the task to extract a specific linguistic feature (Golshan, 2015). According to Krashen's (1985) Input Hypothesis, exposure to input provides opportunities for learners to acquire language without consciousness. Such conditions can be met by applying meaning-focused tasks.

During the past few decades, a body of research has compared the impact of meaning- and form-focused tasks on vocabulary learning (Boers et al., 2017; Celik, 2019; Noroozi & Siyyari, 2019). For example, Zarei and Moftakhari Rezaei (2016) investigated the effects of type of tasks (meaning-focused versus form-focused) and orientation of tasks (input-oriented versus output-oriented) on lexical learning. With regard to task type, it turned out that meaning-focused tasks were more efficient than form-focused tasks. Furthermore, in line with Output Hypothesis (Swain, 2000), it was revealed that output-oriented tasks were more effective when they were meaning-focused, while input-oriented tasks were beneficial when they were form-focused.

Several studies (Laufer & Girsai, 2008; Lan & Wu, 2013; Pishghadam et al., 2011; Saeidi et al., 2012) have revealed that form-focused

tasks are more effective than meaning-focused ones. For instance, Pishghadam et al. (2011) compared the effect of meaning-focused and form-focused tasks on collocation development. The students in the form-focused group (FFI), performed dictogloss tasks and those in meaning-focused (MFI) group used discussion tasks. The results showed that the FFI group had a better performance. Moreover, Birjandi et al. (2015) and Boostan Saadi and Saeidi (2018) used textual enhancement as a kind of form-focused strategy and confirmed its effectiveness. Despite these, the main premise of the ILH (Laufer & Hulstijn, 2001) is that the only determining factor in task effectiveness is the degree that it involves learners, regardless of task focus or type.

2.3. Involvement Load Hypothesis

The ILH is based on the claim that retention of unfamiliar words of a second language is dependent on the involvement load of a task. This hypothesis has three major components including search, need and evaluation. A motivational non-cognitive dimension of involvement is need. When need is self-motivated (e.g., when a learner is willing to learn) it is strong (++), and it is moderate (+) when learners have to do the task by extrinsic factors (e.g., teachers). Two cognitive dimensions of involvement are search and evaluation. Search is the process of determining the meaning of unknown words maybe by using dictionaries or consulting another person (e.g., teachers). The search component may be either present or absent. Comparing new words with others and measuring their suitability in a given context is referred to as evaluation. Evaluation is considered strong (++) when learners need to combine newly learned words and known words in an original context (e.g., to create a new sentence or write a composition) and moderate (+) when they are only required to differentiate between the words available in context (e.g., make a decision about which meaning of the newly learned word is appropriate in the given context). The score is 0 if a component is absent (-), and it is 1 if the involvement is moderate (+) and 2 if it is strong (++). According to the ILH, words are learnt best when a task has the highest involvement index.

Several studies (Alavinia & Rahimi, 2019; Amini & Maftoon, 2017; Asadzadeh Maleki, 2012; Lee, 2019; Kaivanpanah et al., 2020; Kim, 2011; Rahimi et al., 2018; Soleimani & Rostami Abu Saeedi, 2016; Zou, 2017) have been conducted on the effectiveness of the ILH on vocabulary learning. One of the first studies related to ILH was Hulstijn and Laufer (2001), in which the evaluation component was different in tasks with the involvement load indices of 1, 2, and 3, respectively. The results revealed that the task with the highest involvement load significantly outperformed the other groups on the post-tests. More recently, researchers have looked into ILH from a variety of perspectives. In an empirical study, Sarbazi (2014) studied

the effects of involvement load on the retention of unfamiliar words across gender. The result was entirely consistent with the ILH. The task with the involvement index of 2 turned out to be more efficient than those with involvement indices of 1 and 0 in recalling the target words. Furthermore, no interaction was found between gender and task involvement load. Likewise, the results of Namaziandost et al.'s (2020) study showed the significant role of tasks with high involvement load in developing learners' vocabulary knowledge.

Although much of the previous research has been in favor of the ILH, some studies have not supported the hypothesis. For example, the results of the study conducted by Yaqubi et al. (2010) showed that higher involvement index tasks did not result in better performance. Additionally, the findings of the studies by Folse (2006) and Kang (2020) did not support Laufer and Hulstijn's (2001) claim that the only determining factor in vocabulary learning is the involvement load index of a task. Additionally, the results of some other studies (Naserpour et al., 2020; Tahmasbi & Farvardin, 2017) do not support the claim that tasks with similar involvement load must lead to similar lexical retention. For example, Hazrat (2015) investigated the effectiveness of different tasks with the same involvement of 3 on lexical learning. The findings revealed that the reading and writing tasks with identical involvement index were superior to the speaking task. Furthermore, Kıvrak and Gökmen (2019) investigated the effects of tasks with the identical involvement load and modality – written and audiovisual – on vocabulary learning. The results did not support the claim that tasks with the same load of involvement result in the same lexical achievement.

Although, many of the studies reviewed here have studied the effect of various types of tasks and involvement loads on learning vocabulary, they have mostly examined task orientation. There seems to be little research on how task focus may interact with involvement level in affecting idioms learning. Hence, to address this gap, this study compared the effect of meaning-focused and form-focused tasks with different loads of involvement on EFL learners' recognition of idioms.

3. Method

3.1. Participants

The participants of the present study were initially 211 male and female intermediate level students (according to their educational profile) in two language institutes of Shokouh and SafirGostar in Abhar, Iran, who were studying Top Notch books. The participants were selected through convenience sampling based on availability. In order to check their language ability, the reading and writing parts of a PET (Preliminary English Test)

were used before the study. Thirty-one students who scored more than one standard deviation above or below the mean were excluded from statistical analysis. Therefore, 180 participants (90 males and 90 females) remained. Their age range was 16 to 32. Some were high school students and some university students with various majors. The mother tongue of the participants was Persian or Turkish.

3.2. Materials and Instruments

The following instruments and materials were used in this study:

3.2.1. PET

A PET was used to homogenize the participants. PET is a standard test that is used to specify the level of language proficiency at intermediate level. For practical reasons, only the reading and writing parts of the PET were used in this study. The reading section included five parts which were composed of 35 multiple-choice items. The writing section consisted of three parts; part one included paraphrasing and the other two parts contained two productive writing tasks. Part one of reading included 5 texts, each followed by three multiple-choice items. In part two, the descriptions of some TV programs and people were provided. And, the learners were asked to decide on the suitability of each program for each person. Part three included true-false sentences based on a reading passage. Part four contained a reading passage followed by five multiple-choice items. Part five consisted of a cloze passage. Part one of the writing section included paraphrasing five sentences. Part two entailed the learners to write an e-mail and describe their weekend to their friends. In part three, the learners were allowed to choose one of the two topics and write about it using 100 words. 90 minutes were allocated to this test. In spite of the fact that PET has been used frequently in various EFL/ESL contexts, the *KR-21* formula was used to re-estimate the reliability of the sub-test in this study. Its reliability index turned out to be .78.

3.2.2. Pre-test

In order to see whether or not the students had any prior knowledge of the 135 target idioms selected for the treatment, a teacher-made pre-test was administered before starting the treatment sessions. It included 135 sentences, each containing one of the target idioms which were underlined and bold-faced. The participants were asked to supply the meaning of idioms in Persian. 85 minutes were allotted for this pre-test. The *KR-21* formula was used to estimate the reliability of this test. It turned out to be .80. The target idioms were chosen from *English Idioms in Use* book designed for intermediate level learners by Michael McCarthy and Felicity O'Dell (2017) from Cambridge University Press.

3.2.3. Teaching materials

For the purpose of the study, six idiom tasks were designed by the researchers. There were three form-focused tasks with the involvement indices of 2, 3, and 4, and three meaning-focused tasks with the involvement loads of 2, 3, and 4. It needs to be noted that the involvement loads of these tasks were assessed according to the ILH (Laufer & Hulstijn, 2001). The six groups received different tasks as follows.

Form-focused tasks. *Multiple-choice task:* Students in this group were provided with several complete, isolated sentences in which the idioms were bold faced. In other words, as a technique in form-focused instruction, input enhancement was used. Each sentence included one idiom. The idioms were glossed at the end of the sentences. The learners were expected to select the correct synonym or definition of the bold faced idioms from among four options which were provided in multiple-choice format. Then, the teacher wrote the correct answers on the board. This task had moderate need, the search was absent, and evaluation was moderate. The numerical involvement load of this task was 2 (1 + 0 + 1).

Sentence completion tasks. In these tasks, the participants received the same sentences as in group A while the idioms were omitted from the sentences and the participants had to fill the blanks with the correct idioms. One part of the target idioms and their whole Persian equivalents were given in bold face as cues in each blank to prevent the participants from providing idioms that might fill the blanks correctly without being the target idioms. In this task, search, need and evaluation were all moderate. Thus, the involvement index was 3 (1 + 1 + 1).

Sentence making tasks. The students in this group were provided with the same sentences in which the target idioms were emphasized by bold facing. The sentences were not glossed in this task. The learners were expected to read the sentences and then look up idioms in a dictionary. Next, they made new sentences using the target idioms. Then, the sentences were corrected by the teacher, and the best ones were written on the board. In this task, need was moderate, search was present, and evaluation was strong. So, its involvement load index of the task was 4 (1 + 1 + 2).

Meaning-focused tasks. *Summary writing tasks:* After reading a glossed text with the average length of 150 words, the participants in this group were required to summarize it and include the target idioms introduced in the text, in their summary. The Persian equivalents of the idioms were provided in parentheses next to each idiom within the text. The students were told that the use of all idioms was necessary for task completion. They received feedback from their teacher. The instructor corrected their idiomatic

errors. The involvement components of this task were no search, and moderate need evaluation. So, its involvement load was 2 (1 + 0 + 1).

Writing task with glossary. After reading the same text, the students were told to write a paragraph with an average length of 150 words and incorporate all the target idioms. The L1 translation of the idioms was provided next to them within the text. The idiomatic errors were corrected by the instructor. This task included no search, moderate need and strong evaluation. Hence, the involvement index was calculated as 3 (1 + 0 + 2).

Writing task without glossary. This task was similar to task E. Similarly, after reading the passage, the learners in this group were required to write a paragraph with an average length of 150 words. The only difference was that the text was not glossed in this task, and the learners had to find the meaning of the idioms using a dictionary. This task had moderate need, strong evaluation, and search was present. Hence, its involvement load index was 4 (1 + 1 + 2). The students were told not to copy the sentences from the reading passages when writing new paragraphs in groups E and F.

3.2.4. Post-test

A post-test was given in order to check the learners' recognition of idioms after completing the treatment. Fifty minutes were allocated for the post-test. It was constructed by the researchers and included 30 multiple-choice items in which the idioms were randomly selected from among the 135 instructed ones. The participants were required to choose the best alternative that described the meaning of the bolded idioms in each question. Because the researchers developed the post-test and some of the tasks, their contents were carefully checked by a panel of experts to ensure their content validity. Furthermore, to estimate the reliability of the post-test, the KR-21 formula was utilized. The reliability index of the test was .78.

3.3. Procedure

Initially, 211 male and female intermediate level participants were selected through convenience sampling based on availability in language institutes in Abhar and Hidaj, Iran. A sample of PET was administered to homogenize the participants. The listening and speaking parts were not used for practicality reasons. Those participants whose scores fell +/- 1SD from the mean were eliminated from all subsequent analyses. One-hundred eighty students were left. Next, the teacher-made idiom pre-test including 135 target idioms was administered to make sure that the learners had no knowledge of the intended idioms prior to the treatment. It included 135 sentences, each sentence including one target idiom which was underlined and bold-faced. The students were asked to supply the meaning of every idiom in Persian.

Those idioms that were known to more than five percent of the participants were not included in the post-test.

The experimental intervention included 17 sessions. The first two sessions were allotted to administering the PET and the idiom pre-test. The intervention began from the third session and lasted for fourteen sessions. The last session was devoted to the administration of the post-test. The course books of the participants in these institutes were Top Notch text books by Joan Saslow and Allen Ascher (2011) from Oxford Publication. The class time of both institutes for each session was around 90 minutes. The first half of each session was devoted to the experiment. The participants were randomly assigned to one of the six experimental conditions.

In three form-focused groups, the students received different types of form-focused tasks: Multiple-choice task (Task A); Sentence completion task (Task B); and Sentence making task (Task C) with different involvement loads of 2, 3, and 4, respectively. In these groups, isolated form-focused tasks were used and the idioms were presented in isolated sentences in order to draw the learners' attention to them (Spada & Lightbown, 2008). In other words, they were not contextualized. Moreover, the target idioms were bolded to draw the participants' attention to them (Ellis, 2003).

In the meaning-focused groups, each session, the learners were provided with a text of an average length of 150 words which contained an average of 10 target idioms. The texts were the same in the three groups, but the tasks differed. After reading the text, the learners were required to complete one of the tasks in each group: Summary writing (Task D), Writing with glossary (Task E); and Writing without glossary (Task F) with load indices of 2, 3, and 4. It should be mentioned that in these groups, the target idioms were not bolded; they were simply contextualized in the text.

During the treatment sessions, if the learners encountered any difficulty in the comprehension of the words or idioms while reading the sentences or the texts, the teachers offered help. The same amount of time (45 minutes) was devoted to six groups to finish their tasks. In task A, the students were asked to read the glossed sentences which included new idioms in bold face. They had to choose the best definition of the idioms from among four choices that were presented in multiple-choice format. In task B, the participants received the same sentences, but the idioms were omitted and only one part of each was left as a cue. Besides, the Persian equivalents of the idioms were included in the sentences to help the learners find the correct idioms and to fill in the blank. In task C, the learners were required to read the non-glossed sentences in which the target idioms were highlighted in bold face. They were told to use dictionaries and look up the idioms and then

generate new sentences using each idiom. In task D, which was meaning-focused, the participants received a glossed passage including the target idioms which were not bolded. The students were told to reading the passage and write a summary. In task E, after reading the same glossed texts, the learners had to use the idioms and write a new paragraph. Task F was similar to task E, but the text was not glossed and the learners were first asked to search for the meaning of the new idioms and then create a new paragraph. The components and the involvement load levels of the idiom tasks are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Idiom Tasks with Different Involvement Indices

	Form-focused groups			Meaning-focused groups		
	A	B	C	D	E	F
	MC task	Sentence completion task	Sentence making task	Summary writing task	Writing Task with glossary	Writing Task without glossary
Need	+	+	+	+	+	+
Search	-	+	+	-	-	+
Evaluation	+	+	++	+	++	++
Total ILL	2	3	4	2	3	4

3.4. Data Analysis

A two-way ANOVA procedure was used to answer the first research question, and three independent samples t-tests were used to answer the second question.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Results

Prior to doing the main statistical analyses, the results of the PET were analyzed to check the homogeneity of the participants. The boxplot of the scores was then checked, and there was no outlier or extreme score. In addition, the results of both Kolmogorov-Smirnov (*statistic* (180) = .065, *Sig.* = .39, $p > .05$) and Shapiro-Wilk tests (*statistic* (180) = .988, *Sig.* = .137, $p > .05$) showed that the scores were normally distributed.

The first research question was about the effects of meaning-focused form-focused and tasks at different levels of involvement on the recognition of L2 idioms. To do so, a two-way ANOVA procedure was used. Before that, the assumptions of two-way ANOVA were tested. The result of

Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistic ($KS(180) = .27, p > .05$) showed that the assumption of normality of scores was not violated. The results of Levene's test ($F(5,174) = .10, p > .05$) showed that the assumption of equal variances was met. After checking all the assumptions, descriptive statistics on the recognition test of L2 idioms were summarized in Table 2. The table shows that form-focused tasks are better than meaning-focused ones. The scores of the students in the form-focused and meaning-focused groups with different loads of involvement are also different. The form-focused task group with involvement index of 4 has the highest mean, followed by meaning-focused task group with the same involvement index. The form-focused task group with involvement load of 3 has a higher mean score compared to the meaning-focused task group with an identical involvement index. The participants of the form-focused and meaning-focused groups with the identical involvement index of 2 have the lowest mean scores, respectively. However, the meaning-focused group has a better performance than the form-focused one.

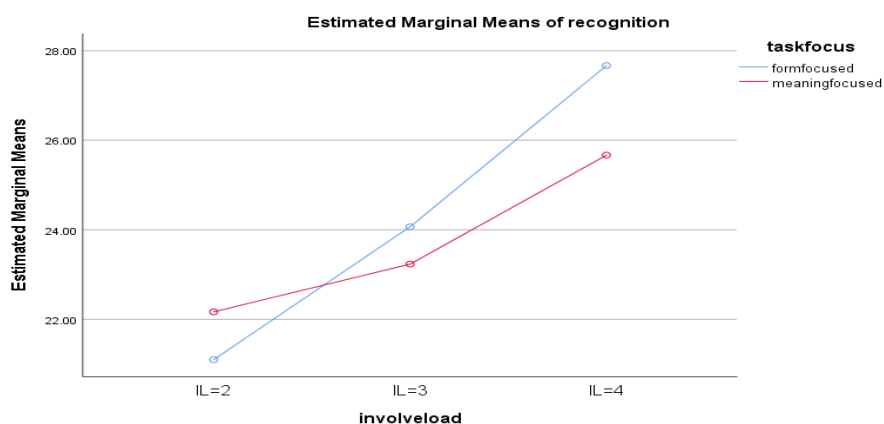
Table 2

Descriptive Statistics for the Recognition of Idioms

Task-focus	Involvement load	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Form-focused	IL=2	21.10	1.47	30
	IL=3	24.06	1.87	30
	IL=4	27.66	1.64	30
	Total	24.27	3.16	90
Meaning-focused	IL=2	22.16	1.51	30
	IL=3	23.23	1.94	30
	IL=4	25.66	2.60	30
	Total	23.68	2.52	90
Total	IL=2	21.63	1.57	60
	IL=3	23.65	1.93	60
	IL=4	26.66	2.38	60
	Total	23.98	2.86	180

The graphical representation of the differences among the groups is given in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Means Plot of Idioms Recognition Post-test

In order to see whether or not the observed differences between the means are statistically significant, the tests of between-subjects effects were used, which yielded the following results:

Table 3*Tests of Between-subjects Effects for Idioms Recognition*

	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	857.517 ^a	5	171.50	48.48	.000	.58
Intercept	103536.05	1	103536.0	29272.5	.000	.99
Task-focus	15.606	1	15.60	4.41	.037	.02
Involvement load	770.033	2	385.01	108.85	.000	.55
Task-focus * involvement load	71.878	2	35.93	10.16	.000	.10
Error	615.433	174	3.537			
Total	105009.00	180				
Corrected Total	1472.950	179				

Table 3 shows that the interaction effect between task focus and involvement load is significant, ($F(2, 174) = 10.16, p < .0005$), suggesting that the main effects are somewhat overshadowed. Put simply, the significant interaction effect implies that although meaning-focused tasks are generally less efficient than form-focused ones, the difference between the differently loaded tasks is far stronger in form-focused tasks. On the other hand, with regard to meaning-focused tasks, although tasks with higher involvement

load indices are still more beneficial on idiom recognition than lower loaded tasks, the differences among the differently loaded tasks are much less compared to form-focused ones. However, at involvement load index of two, meaning-focused tasks are more effective than form-focused ones.

Additionally, there is a statistically significant difference in the recognition test scores between form- and meaning-focused tasks ($F(1,174) = 4.41, p < .05$) in favour of form-focused tasks. There are also meaningful differences among three involvement indices ($F(2,174) = 108.85, p < .0005$). Furthermore, the value of partial eta squared for task focus was .02, which, according to Cohen (1988), shows small effect size, while the value of partial eta squared for involvement load was .55, which shows a large effect size. Post-hoc comparisons using Tukey HSD test was run to locate the differences among the levels of involvement load. Table 4 contains the results. It can be seen from Table 4 that there are significant differences among all the three involvement load indices. However, since there is a significant interaction between the two independent variables, the main effects are somehow washed away, and one cannot conclude with certainty that form-focused tasks are always more effective than meaning-focused tasks on idioms recognition. Neither can one conclude that tasks with higher involvement load indices are more effective than lower loaded tasks on idioms recognition regardless of task focus. As Figure 1 shows, at involvement load index of 2, meaning-focused tasks are more effective than form-focused tasks, whereas form-focused tasks with the involvement indices of 3 and 4 are more effective than meaning-focused tasks with the same involvement load. Therefore, to investigate the effectiveness of different types of tasks at different levels of involvement, the second question was formulated.

Table 4

Tukey HSD Test Results for the Effects of Involvement Loads on Idiom Recognition

(I) involvement load	(J) involvement load	Mean Difference (I-J)	Sig.
IL=2	IL=3	-2.0167*	.000
	IL=4	-5.0333*	.000
IL=3	IL=4	-3.0167*	.000

The second research question was intended to investigate the effects of form-focused and meaning-focused tasks on the recognition of idioms after controlling the involvement load. For this purpose, three t-tests were run and the scores on the idioms recognition test in form-focused and meaning-focused groups were compared at different levels of involvement. Table 5 contains the descriptive statistics.

Table 5*Descriptive Statistics for Form and Meaning-focused Tasks*

Involvement load		Task-focus	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
IL=2	recognition	Form-focused	30	21.10	1.47
		Meaning-focused	30	22.16	1.51
IL=3	recognition	Form-focused	30	24.23	1.79
		Meaning-focused	30	23.23	1.94
IL=4	recognition	Form-focused	30	27.66	1.64
		Meaning-focused	30	25.66	2.60

It can be seen from Table 5 that at involvement load indices of 4 and 3, the form-focused group outperformed the meaning-focused one. However, at involvement load of 2, the higher mean score belongs to the meaning-focused group. To check the statistical significance of the observed mean differences, three independent-samples t-tests were used (Table 6).

Table 6*The T-test Results for Form and Meaning-focused Tasks*

involvement load		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means			
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig.	Mean Dif.
IL=2	Eq. var. assumed	.000	.984	-2.77	58	.007	-1.06
	Eq. var. not assumed			-2.77	57.95	.007	-1.06
IL=3	Eq. var. assumed	.003	.957	2.07	58	.043	1.00
	Eq. var. not assumed			2.07	57.64	.043	1.00
IL=4	Eq. var. assumed	4.98	.029	3.55	58	.001	2.00
	Eq. var. not assumed			3.55	49.00	.001	2.00

In Table 6, the observed t-value and significance level for tasks with the involvement index of two ($t(1, 58) = -2.77, p < .05$) show a significant difference between meaning-focused and form-focused tasks in favour of the meaning-focused group. Regarding the two groups with the identical

involvement load of three, the results ($t(1, 58) = 2.07, p < .05$) show a significant difference as well. This time, however, the form-focused group outperformed the meaning-focused. Similar results were obtained for tasks with the involvement load index of four ($t(1, 58) = 3.55, p < .05$). Moreover, the index of the strength of association for involvement load indices of two, three and four turned out to be ($\eta^2 = .11$), ($\eta^2 = .68$), and ($\eta^2 = .17$), respectively, showing that 11, 68, and 17 percent of the total variability between the groups can be due to task focus.

4.2. Discussion

One of the findings of this study was that higher involvement load index of tasks resulted in better recognition of L2 idioms. This result is compatible with the findings of several previous studies (Alavinia & Rahimi, 2019; Amini & Maftoon, 2017; Kaivanpanah et al., 2020), which revealed that higher post-test scores belonged to tasks with higher involvement loads. Further support for this finding comes from Asadzadeh Maleki (2012), who reported that glossed listening texts plus sentence construction led to the best retention because of the high involvement load of 3 which was the highest compared to other tasks. Likewise, Soleimani and Rostami Abu Saeedi (2016) examined the effectiveness of ILH at two levels of proficiency. Two tasks which were used in their study were similar to the ones used in the present study, i.e., multiple-choice and sentence creation tasks. However, their study gave more weight to the evaluation constituent in investigating tasks efficacy. They reported that low proficient students showed better performance. Additionally, Lee (2019), Namaziandost et al. (2020) and Sarbazi (2014) reported that tasks with high loads of involvement were more beneficial than those with low involvement loads. However, unlike the present study, Sarbazi (2014) investigated the effect of involvement load on word retention across gender and found no interaction effect. Like this study, the same focus on form technique, i.e., bolding was used in that study and it turned out to be efficient.

In contrast, Folse (2006) provided evidence against the ILH and the finding of this study. The study showed that the task with the highest degree of involvement did not lead to the best performance in vocabulary retention. One way to explain this difference may be that the highest loaded task (sentence making) was compared with two other fill in the blank tasks. Regarding one of the fill-in tasks which turned out to be more effective, the learners were exposed more to the target words compared to the sentence creation task, suggesting that the depth of processing of the target words might be less important than the number of exposures to them.

The findings of the study by Yaqubi et al. (2010) were also in contrast with the finding of this study. They reported that the tasks with higher level of involvement did not result in better vocabulary learning. One possible reason for such a difference may be the different amount of cognitive processing required to complete each task. According to Hulstijn and Laufer (2001), paying enough attention to the features of words will make them more memorable. Moreover, the results of that study revealed that regarding two tasks with identical involvement index of 3, output task was more efficient than input task in improving vocabulary knowledge. This finding corroborates our finding in which task type was an influential factor in strengthening the students' idiomatic knowledge. Furthermore, similar to the form-focused tasks in which target words were bolded in this study, all the target words were bolded in their study as well. Moreover, in contrast with the findings of this study, Kang (2020) reported that the lowest performance was related to the task with the highest index of involvement. Furthermore, it was revealed that input-oriented task was more beneficial than output-oriented ones. The reason for this contrast may be the fact that there were only 29 participants in Kang's study, and unlike our study in which general idioms were used as the target, that study used academic vocabulary.

Another finding of this study was that the involvement load of a task is not the only factor determining task efficacy; task focus is also another influential factor in task effectiveness. Although, in general, form-focused tasks turned out to be more effective than meaning-focused ones, an interaction effect was also found. At higher involvement indices, form-focused tasks were more beneficial than meaning-focused tasks. However, at involvement level of 2, meaning-focused tasks were more effective.

The form-focused task with a load index of 2 was a multiple-choice task that required the participants to choose the synonym or definition of the target idioms from among four alternatives. The meaning-focused task with the identical load of involvement was summary writing. One possible reason for the superiority of meaning-focused tasks over form-focused ones with the identical involvement index of two may be that unlike the multiple-choice tasks which were input-oriented, the summary writing tasks were output-oriented. Based on Swain's (2000) Output Hypothesis, the output-oriented summary writing tasks might be more challenging than the input-oriented multiple-choice tasks.

Furthermore, the results of the study may be explained on the basis of Input Hypothesis, according to which Krashen (1985) claims that only comprehensible input is sufficient for learners to acquire a language and consciousness is not essential. In meaning-focused tasks, the learners were exposed to the target idioms in a more communicative context without consciousness. Moreover, meaning-focused tasks naturally engage learners in

deeper cognitive processing; as a result, they lead to deep vocabulary retention. They connect learners' prior knowledge to new information. This finding showed that this is more likely to occur at lower loaded tasks compared to those with higher involvement levels.

Conversely, regarding the tasks with involvement load indices of 3 and 4, the form-focused groups performed better. In form-focused tasks with involvement index of 3, the participants were asked to complete sentences in which one part of the target idioms as well as their Persian equivalents were provided in bold face, whereas in meaning-focused tasks, they had to write a new paragraph using unenhanced idioms. Regarding the tasks with a load index of four, the participants in the sentence making task (form-focused group) significantly outperformed those in the writing without glossary task (meaning-focused group). Similarly, Kivrak and Gökmen (2019), and Zou (2017) showed the positive effect of sentence creation task on vocabulary learning. However, Rahimi et al. (2018) reported that with the same involvement index of three, the creative sentence writing task was more effective than sentence writing and story writing tasks. The reason for this contrast may be that although both of the tasks were sentence writing, the creative one was more demanding.

The usefulness of form-focused tasks with higher involvement loads may substantiate Schmidt's (1990) viewpoint that noticing is one of the essential conditions for language learning, particularly for adults. In addition, as Ellis (2003) states, an input enhancement technique, in our case bolding, draws learners' attention on target forms and leads to better retention. Another possible reason for such a difference may be that higher loaded tasks need more cognitive effort, hence learners may not be able to focus simultaneously on the content of the texts in the meaning-focused tasks as well as the target idioms, whereas in the form-focused tasks, limited sentential contexts were used, and subsequently, the participants could focus more on the target idioms.

Similar to the finding of our study, Naserpour et al. (2020) reported that in addition to the involvement load a task, task type had a crucial role in enhancing the retention of collocations. This finding is incompatible with Laufer and Hulstijn's (2001) claim that the effectiveness of a task is dependent only on its involvement level. Likewise, Tahmasbi and Farvardin (2017) found that although using equally loaded tasks, there was a difference between the performances of the learners in terms of task type. In a similar vein, the findings of Hazrat (2015) and Kivrak and Gökmen (2019) corroborate the finding of this study. However, Kim (2011) reported no significant difference with regard to the performance of the participants who received different task types with the same involvement loads.

Additionally, the results of the present study showed that, in general, learning idioms through form-focused tasks would result in better recognition. A number of studies endorse the effectiveness of form-focused tasks in comparison with meaning-focused ones (Boers et al., 2017; Laufer&Girsai, 2008; Pishghadam et al., 2011; Saeidi et al., 2012). For example, the results of Lan and Wu (2013) confirmed the effectiveness of form-focused tasks on learners' pronunciation. The finding of Saeidi et al. (2012) also supports that of the present study. However, in contrast with this study, Zarei and MoftakhariRezaei (2016) and Noroozi and Siyyari (2019) concluded that meaning-focused tasks were more efficient than form-focused tasks in strengthening lexical knowledge. This finding of our study may be accounted for by the tenets of FFI, which emphasizes on drawing learners' attention to language forms (Ellis, 2001). Another reason to justify the superiority of form-focused over meaning-focused tasks may be using input enhancement, as a kind of form-focused strategy. Several studies provide evidence backing up this finding (Birjandi et al., 2015; Boostan Saadi & Saeidi, 2018).

5. Conclusion and Implications

From the findings of this study, it may be concluded that since using suitably loaded tasks leads to better idioms gain, they should be incorporated into classroom contexts, especially those which induce higher loads of involvement. In addition, based on the ILH, the integration of different learning tasks results in increasing the involvement load of tasks which, in turn, involves learners deeply in the learning process. Thus, it can be concluded that if suitable form-focused and meaning-focused tasks are utilized, idioms learning will be improved.

Based on the finding that form-focused tasks were superior to meaning-focused tasks in idioms recognition, it can be concluded that Schmidt's (1990) Noticing Hypothesis holds true in idioms learning. It may also be concluded that instructional programs should be designed carefully so that idioms are presented via appropriate tasks rather than haphazardly combined and used tasks. Another notable conclusion to be drawn from this finding is that although in EFL contexts instructors use different methods to draw learners' attention to forms; form-focused tasks, especially those including input enhancement techniques should receive much more attention.

Furthermore, another finding of this study was that lower loaded meaning-focused tasks were more effective than form-focused tasks with the same involvement load on idioms recognition. It may be concluded from this that teachers should utilize meaning-focused tasks, especially with lower loaded tasks, in order to boost learners' idiomatic knowledge.

This study may have the implications for teachers, researchers, as well as material developers. Based on the results, teachers can design meaning-focused tasks with lower involvement loads to help students learn idioms more effectively. Material developers can design form-focused tasks including input enhancement techniques to optimize idioms gain.

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