



**Effects of output task types on the acquisition of English phrasal verbs by  
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**Shaban Najafi Karimi**

**Assistant Professor, Islamic Azad University, Qaemshahr Branch**

**E-mail: najafibox@yahoo.com**

**Abstract**

Over the last few decades, output tasks and their potential effects on developing language skills and language components have drawn a lot of attention from language scholars. The present study investigated the effectiveness of two different types of output tasks in noticing and learning of English phrasal verbs with reference to their cognitive involvement load. Fifty Iranian intermediate EFL learners completed a cloze output task and an editing output task in individual and collaborative conditions. After the participants completed each task, a multiple-choice post-test including the target phrasal verbs practiced in each session of the treatment was delivered to answer. Results of one-way repeated measures ANOVA on the pre-tests and post-tests showed that the participants' scores on the post-tests were slightly higher after completing the editing output tasks than those after completing the cloze output tasks. Results of task completion analyses, however, revealed that the subjects performed significantly better on both cloze and editing tasks in collaborative condition than in individual condition. It has been concluded that in contrast to the presupposed effectiveness of output tasks on the acquisition of target forms, the present study showed marginal beneficial effects on learning English phrasal verbs as between the two output tasks, only editing output task showed more positive effects than cloze output task. After all, the results proved very effective in completing both cloze and editing tasks, leading the researcher to the conclusion that they can be effective tools to create negotiations among learners in L2 classroom activities.

**Keywords:** cloze task, editing task, output task, individual output task, collaborative output task



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### **Introduction**

Recent second language acquisition research has advocated classroom activities that involve a combination of both communicative interaction and attention to form (Doughty & Williams, 1998 ; Ellis, 2005; Williams, 2005). One way of encouraging such opportunities is through pedagogical tasks that may lead to negotiation of meaning, while at the same time providing opportunities for attention to form (Ellis, 2003; Yuan & Ellis, 2003). In this relation, classroom tasks that require collaborative work and produce output have received special attention from researchers (Lapkin & Swain, 2000; Swain, 2001, 2005).

Swain (1995, 2000, 2001, 2005), for instance, suggests that it is possible to design tasks that get learners to produce language and then reflect upon its form; that is to say, if the task is devised so that learners have to talk about the language they are producing, their talk may serve their awareness of language form. She contends that compared with input, there is more mental effort involved when learners are engaged in output processing, and, therefore, output is part of the learning process rather than the outcome of it.

### **Background**

A number studies have been conducted to document the effects of output tasks on language processing and language learning (Swain, 1995; Swain & Lapkin, 1995; Izumi, Bigelow, Fujiwara & Fearnow, 1999; Izumi, 2002; Yoshimura, 2006; Hanaoka, 2007; Reinders, 2009). For example, Izumi, Bigelow, Fujiwara & Fearnow (1999) investigated whether learners' output would promote the noticing of linguistic form when relevant input was subsequently provided and whether output would result in the acquisition of the form. Participants were exposed to short passages for the output-based reconstruction purpose and subsequently to a model text for the comparison purpose. The results proved the efficiency of output in both noticing and learning of target forms.



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Izumi (2002) compared the effects of visual input enhancement and output tasks on the acquisition of English relativization by ESL learners. He found a facilitative effect for the output task on promoting the noticing and acquisition of the target form but found a non-significant effect for the visual input enhancement task as far as the acquisition of the form was concerned. Also, Hanaoka (2007) researched into the noticing function of output and the effect of noticing on subsequent learning by Japanese university students in an EFL writing context. He implemented a four-stage writing task consisting of output, comparison, and two revisions. As the learners compared their output with models, they identified their problems and incorporated them in subsequent revisions.

Kowal and Swain (1994), Swain (1998) and Swain and Lapkin (1995, 2000, 2001) argue for the use of collaborative tasks in which learners work in pairs or small groups. Their claim is that through talk in collaborative tasks, learners notice linguistic problems; through their dialogue in those tasks learners engage in making meaning clearer by debating language form.

Foster (1998) also suggests the implementation of tasks that require students to negotiate the form of their output, in light of the results obtained in her classroom-based study. Foster observed the language produced by intermediate EFL students engaged in different types of tasks in both paired and small groups activities with regard to questions in the areas of language production, comprehensible input and modified output. Although the general results showed no clear overall effect for task type or grouping, in general “the dyad setting, coupled with the obligation to exchange information, was the ‘best’ for language production, negotiation and modified output” (Foster 1998, p.18).

Garcia Mayo (2002a) investigated dictogloss and text reconstruction tasks in terms of frequency of Language related Episodes and the focused attention of learners on form. The results showed



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text reconstruction task to be more effective than dictogloss. He concluded that different task types make learners pay attention to different aspects of language.

Reinders (2009) examined the effect of three kinds of output tasks (dictation, individual reconstruction, and a collaborative reconstructive task) on the acquisition and uptake of negative adverbs in English. No significant difference was found between the three activities on the acquisition of grammatical items.

### **Empirical studies on output tasks and L2 vocabulary acquisition**

A number of studies have investigated the impact of oral production task on vocabulary acquisition (Hwang, 2002; Jung, 2004; Luan, & Sappathy, 2011; Newton, 2001). Luan and Sappathy (2011) investigated the impact of negotiated interaction on L2 vocabulary acquisition. A total of 48 participants with the same first language at a primary school were divided into two groups. One group was engaged in an information-gap, two-way interactive task, and the other group was taught using traditional methods or a one-way input task. The comparison of the pre-test and post-test scores revealed that learners who engaged in two-way interaction task gained higher scores on the vocabulary test.

Hwang (2002) examined the impact of negotiated interaction on L2 vocabulary acquisition of Korean beginner learners, and found that the negotiated interaction group gained more vocabulary than the non-negotiated interaction group. Also, Newton (2001) investigated vocabulary learning through communication tasks. Learners were exposed to new words during interaction in a cooperative context. As a result of this treatment, not only was rich language use attained, but the meanings of most words were retained for a long period of time. Mackey, Gass and McDonough (2000) applied the stimulated recall method in their English class, and found that learners were more ready to notice and gain vocabulary feedback than syntactic or productive feedback.



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García Mayo (2002b) compared the effectiveness of a dictogloss with a text reconstruction task (a text that had certain grammatical words missing, such as articles, prepositions and function words, and the learners had to supply them). The participants were seven pairs of high intermediate to advanced EFL learners. The data were analysed both quantitatively in terms of the frequency of LREs and qualitatively in terms of learners' focused attention to forms. The results indicated that the text-reconstruction task generated more LREs than the dictogloss. The researcher concluded that the text-reconstruction task was an effective form-focused task in her study.

Nassaji & Tian (2010) compared the relative effectiveness of two types of output tasks (reconstruction cloze tasks and reconstruction editing tasks) for learning English phrasal verbs. Of interest was whether doing the tasks collaboratively led to greater gains of knowledge of the target verbs than doing them individually, and also whether the type of task made a difference. The effectiveness of the tasks was determined by how successfully learners completed the tasks and also by means of a vocabulary knowledge test administered before and after the treatment. The results showed that completing the tasks collaboratively (in pairs) led to a greater accuracy of task completion than completing them individually. However, collaborative tasks did not lead to significantly greater gains of vocabulary knowledge than individual tasks. The results, however, showed an effect of task type, with the editing tasks being more effective than the cloze tasks in promoting negotiation and learning.

One conclusion that may be drawn from the above studies is that collaborative pair work may facilitate learners' interaction and attention to the target forms, but it may not necessarily lead to superior learning in comparison to individual work. However, as Storch (2005, 2007), Kuiken and Vedder (2002), and Nassaji & Tian (2010) stressed, studies in this area are still very limited,



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and hence there is a need for further research in this area. More empirical research is required to examine not only the effects of individual versus pair work on language tasks but also the possible effects of task types. The purpose of the present study was to examine and compare the effectiveness of two types of classroom output tasks (reconstruction cloze and reconstruction editing tasks) in learning English phrasal verbs. Using a pretest/posttest classroom-based study, the study examined whether there was any significant difference between the effects of output tasks in learning English phrasal verbs, on the one hand, and the effects of two types of output tasks when the learners performed them collaboratively versus doing them individually, on the other.

### **Research questions**

The research questions were based on the consideration of the results of the prior theoretical and empirical research previously discussed. Accordingly, the following research questions have been examined in this study.

1. Does completing the cloze output task collaboratively have a better influence on learning phrasal verbs than doing the same task individually?
- 2: Does completing the editing output task collaboratively have a better influence on learning phrasal verbs than doing the same task individually?

### **Method**

#### **Participants**

A total of 50 sophomore students from two intact classes majoring at English translation took part in this study. All of them had been studying English at the Azad University for two years. All the participants from the intact classes took part in a proficiency test which was used to check the homogeneity of the group in terms of their proficiency level.



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### **Materials**

#### **Target phrasal verbs**

Phrasal verbs are two-word or three-word idiomatic expressions, consisting of a verb and a particle or a combination of a particle and a preposition (Lewis, 1993). The reason for focusing on phrasal verbs is that most of the previous studies of input and output tasks have dealt with different areas of grammar and some of them investigated English vocabulary, but very few of them have explored their effects on English phrasal verbs. These verbs are a subgroup of English vocabulary that are widely used by native speakers of English, but they have been found to be difficult for L2 learners to learn (Hulstijn & Marchena, 1989; Kao, 2001). The difficulty of learning phrasal verbs lies in the fact that they consist of different combinations of verbs and particles and often the meaning of the phrase is different from the meanings of its parts (Side, 1990).

The target phrasal verbs have been derived from the book “English phrasal verbs in use” by McCarthy & O’Dell (2004). After selecting the interviews and short descriptive texts for the treatment sessions, they were slightly modified so that each text included five of the target 70 phrasal verbs, ten of which were given to the participants in each version of the input and output.

#### **Proficiency test, pre-test, and post-tests**

Before the treatment session began, all the subjects took part in a paper-based TOEFL proficiency test from ETS administrated in 2004, which has been used to check the homogeneity of the group in terms of their proficiency level.

The 40-item, multiple-choice pre-test which was designed by the researcher included the 70 target phrasal verbs used in the individual close, individual editing, collaborative cloze and collaborative editing versions of the output tasks. The TOEFL proficiency test, which has



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extensively been used by ETS, was utilized as a criterion to estimate the validity of the pre-tests and post-tests developed by the researchers in this study. Furthermore, an internal-consistency method (Cronbach's Alpha) was used to calculate the reliability of the test. The reliability was estimated from the test scores in the pre-tests and the post-tests. The underlying reason was that there was little variability in the pre-tests and post-tests scores which might have decreased the reliability indices. The reliability measure for the pre-test and post-tests (0.76) was high enough to confirm the reliability of the test.

Each of the four ten-item, multiple-choice post-tests included ten items of the of the original 40-item pre-test. Each post-test was given to the participants at the end of each treatment session to check the subjects' knowledge gain after each type of treatment.

### **Output tasks**

The output tasks used in this study included cloze and editing tasks. Cloze tasks included completing a short descriptive text and a short interview with ten blanks to be completed with the given phrasal verbs. The editing task also included completing a short descriptive text and a short interview with ten erroneous sections related to the target phrasal verbs. The subjects were to spot the wrong sections of the texts and write the correct forms of the target phrasal verbs. The reason for choosing the above tasks was that recent classroom studies seem to advocate the use of both cloze and editing tasks (Storch, 1998, 2007; García Mayo, 2002a, 2002b). As noted above, García Mayo (2002a) found that tasks that required learners to fill in missing words in texts generated more attention to form than a dictogloss. Studies by Pica (2005) and Pica, Kang, & Sauro (2006) have also suggested that cloze tasks are useful information gap tasks that can provide effective contexts for pushed output and negotiation about language forms.

The output tasks used in this study were modified versions of cloze and text-editing tasks used in previous studies (Izumi & Bigelow, 2000; Izumi, Bigelow, Fujiwara, & Fearnow, 1999; Nassaji





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& Tian, 2010). In a typical output task (whether it is cloze, editing or dictogloss task), the researcher or the teacher reads the text twice for the learners while they take notes. Then they are asked to reconstruct the original text through gap-filling exercise (in cloze task), correcting some sections in the text (in editing task) or rewriting the text (in dictogloss). In this research, however, as we compared the effects of input tasks and output tasks, any form of exposure to oral or written input might have interfered with the results of the study. The learners, however, had access to a glossary of the target phrasal verbs to check the dictionary definitions of the unknown words. Different variations of output tasks have also been used in some of the previous studies in the same area of research (Thornbury, 1997; Qin, 2008; Jabbarpoor, & Tajeddin, 2013).

Several reasons underlie the decision to use cloze and editing output tasks. First, both cloze and editing task by very nature have the potential for promoting comparisons between the IL output and the TL input. They are essentially meaning-based pedagogical activities that allow learners to devote some attentional resources to form and that provide both the data and the incentive for the learners to make IL–TL comparisons (Thornbury, 1997; Nassaji & Tian, 2010).

Editing task, in a sense, is a unique “linguistic problem-solving task” (Brett, 1994: p. 332). These are important features of the tasks in light of the notions of focus on form, in which integration of form and meaning is emphasized. More specifically, one advantage of the editing task lies in its control over the content and form that learners produce. Maximizing the equivalence between the learners’ output and the target input should promote direct comparisons between their IL-output and the TL-input forms. Also, an output task that provides a second opportunity for exposure to the original input and for reconstruction permits the investigation of a shift of learners’ noticing from the first to second input exposures and their uptake of the form from the first to second outputs. Furthermore, as confirmed by earlier studies (Storch, 2007), editing tasks



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are frequently used in L2 classrooms, but few empirical studies have examined their effectiveness for L2 learning.

### **Research design**

The study was conducted during a regular 15-week semester at the Azad University, Qaemshahr Branch. The study was carried out in nine consecutive sessions in the middle of the semester. After taking the proficiency test, the subjects participated in the treatment sessions which were held in eight sessions. In the first session, the 70 target phrasal verbs were given to the subjects in the form of multiple-choice tests to answer. This was to test their prior knowledge of the target forms. Then, in the seven following sessions, the subjects were exposed to the target forms through completing two types of cloze and editing output tasks in individual and collaborative conditions. To minimize the task effects on the performances of the learners, they were randomly asked to do one form of output task. Also, to minimize the effect of text type, two different types of text – one short descriptive text and one short interview – were selected for each type of output. The materials were checked carefully and were balanced in terms of content and length. For all four types of treatments, the learners were given two short texts – one short descriptive text and one short interview – each of which contained five of the target phrasal verbs (ten phrasal verbs for each form of the treatment). Also, a glossary of the target forms was handed out in each session so that the students might use them as a source for the meaning of the target phrasal verbs. In previous studies on output tasks (Nassaji & Tian, 2010), a mini lesson on the target phrasal verbs was given to the participants before they completed the output tasks.

In the first session (individual cloze task), the subjects were given the glossary of the target phrasal verbs, a short descriptive text and the interview, each with five blanks relating to the target phrasal verbs. They were asked to complete the texts in 30 minutes (a time deemed appropriate in the pilot run of the study with a group of students with the same level of proficiency) using the target forms given at the top of each text (each including one extra word).



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As it was explained above in a typical output task the researcher or the teacher reads the text twice for the learners and they take notes, or they are exposed to the written form of the input. Then they try to complete the output tasks. In this research, however, instead of oral or written input, the participants were only given a glossary of the target phrasal verbs.

The same procedure was repeated in the second session of the treatment, in which the learners were asked to complete the collaborative close output task. In this session, however, they were asked to complete the task in small groups of three. Their interactions during the task were recorded by their own cell phones. Then they completed the second post-test including the ten phrasal verbs practiced in that session.

In the third session (individual editing task), the participants were given one short descriptive text and one short interview in which ten target phrasal verbs were used in the wrong way. The learners were asked to identify the erroneous parts and correct them. Then, the third post-test containing the ten phrasal verbs practiced in the same session was administered.

The same procedure was repeated in the fourth treatment session with the last group of phrasal verbs. The subjects, however, completed the editing task in groups of three, and their interactions during the task were recorded. After completing the collaborative editing task, the learners answered the last post-test including the ten target forms to which they were exposed in that session.

### **Results and discussion**

Four hypotheses were put forward above to compare the effects of four types of output tasks – cloze task and editing task– in individual and collaborative conditions, on the other. To test these hypotheses, the data collected from the performances of the participants on the pre-tests and the



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post-tests were analyzed using one-way repeated measures ANOVA. Further, Tukey’s Post Hoc analysis was utilized to make paired comparisons of the effects of the four types of output tasks.

### Results of performance on cloze and editing output tasks

In order to investigate how cloze and editing tasks in individual and collaborative conditions influence the learning of English phrasal verbs, the data collected from the four performances of the participants were analyzed using one-way ANOVA for pre- and post-tests. Descriptive statistics of the performances of the participants on the pre-tests are presented in Table 1. As it can be inferred from the table, there was no significant difference among the performances of the participants on the four ten-item pre-tests containing forty target phrasal verbs in the four sections, each of which corresponding to the target forms that were used in the four types of output tasks. This indicates that the subjects had similar performances on the four pre-tests, with the mean scores of 3.18, 3.17, 3.12 and 3.65 for the individual cloze task, individual editing task, collaborative cloze task and collaborative editing task, respectively.

**Table 1**

Mean scores and SDs of the participants’ performance on the pre-tests on output tasks

	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Indvcloze	50	3.18	1.55	0.00	7.00
Indvediting	50	3.17	1.44	0.00	6.00
Colcloze	50	3.12	1.202	1.00	6.00
Colediting	50	3.65	1.202	1.00	7.00

Also, one-way ANOVA was used to check if there was any significant difference on the participants’ performances on the four pre-tests (Table 2). As the p value (0.73) is higher than



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.05, there was no significant difference in this regard. Results of one-way ANOVA of the participants' performances on the four post-tests (Table 3) indicate that the p value (0.000) is lower than the critical value. Thus, we conclude that there was a significant difference in the scores of the participants on the three post-tests. Regarding the fact that the subjects had similar performances on the same tests (used as pre-tests), one can argue that the difference on the scores on the post-tests is attributed to the four different treatments, namely individual cloze task, individual editing task, collaborative cloze task and collaborative editing task.

**Table 2**

Results of one-way ANOVA for the pre-tests on output tasks

	df	Mean Sq.	F	Sig
Indivcloze, indvediting, Colcloze & colediting	3	4.333	2.344	0.73

**Table 3**

Results of one-way ANOVA for the post-tests on output tasks

	df	Mean Sq.	F	Sig
Indivcloze, indvediting, Colcloze & colcediting	3	13.26	4.250	0.006

Descriptive statistics of the performances of the participants on the four post-tests on the output tasks are shown in Table 4. The figures in the table indicate that the participants had the highest



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scores on the collaborative editing output task, with the mean score of 6.81, followed by collaborative cloze output task, with the mean score of 6.22. Then stands individual editing output task (mean score=6.10), followed by individual cloze output task, with the mean score of 5.77.

**Table 4**

Mean scores and SDs of the participants' performance on the post-tests on output tasks

	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Indvcloze	50	5.77	1.74	3.00	9.00
Indvediting	50	6.10	1.95	2.00	10.00
Colcloze	50	6.22	1.68	3.00	9.00
Coediting	50	6.81	1.66	3.00	10.00

Results of Tukey's Post Hoc analysis of the subjects' performances on the two output tasks in individual and collaborative conditions through one-way repeated measures ANOVA are shown in Table 5. Paired comparisons of the participants' performances on these tasks reveal that there was no significant difference between the participants' performance on the individual cloze task and the individual editing task as the p value (0.443) in table 10 suggests. Also, the difference between the learners' performance on the individual cloze task and the collaborative cloze task was not significant ( $P = 0.314$ ). As it can be understood from the figures in table 5, there was no statistically meaningful difference between the learners' performance on individual editing task and collaborative cloze task ( $p = 0.973$ ), nor between individual editing and collaborative editing ( $p = 0.81$ ). Moreover, the learners did not show any significant difference in learning the target phrasal verbs after doing the collaborative cloze task and collaborative editing task with reference to the P value (0.205) in table 5.



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The results in this regard seem to suggest that the type of output task, as studied in this research, does not show any significant difference in leading to learning English phrasal verbs. Thus, the null hypothesis 4 holding that “the subjects do not perform differently on learning phrasal verbs after completing close output task and editing output task” has been supported. Taking the same results for the cloze and editing tasks into account, the fifth null hypothesis above has also been supported, that is doing cloze output task collaboratively did not have a more positive influence on learning phrasal verbs than doing the same task individually. In the same way, the null hypothesis 6, which holds that “completing the editing output task collaboratively does not have a more positive effect on learning phrasal verbs than doing the same task individually” has been supported.

As table 5 shows, between the two types of tasks in the two different conditions, the only significant difference, after all, was found between the participants’ performance on the individual cloze task and collaborative editing task ( $p = 0.003$ ). In other words, the difference of performance on the post-test was only statistically significant between the collaborative editing task and individual cloze task with reference to the  $p$  value in table 10 ( $p=0.003$ ).

**Table 5**

Results of one-way repeated measures ANOVA for the post-tests on output tasks

	Mean D	SE	Sig
Indvcloze-indvediting	-.328	0.298	0.443
Indvcloze-colcloze	-.457	0.298	0.314
Indvcloze- coediting	-.298	0.298	0.003
Indvediting-colcloze	-.128	0.298	0.973



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Indvediting-coediting	-.714	0.298	0.81
Colcloze-coediting	-.585	0.298	0.205

### Task completion results

Task completion analyses first compared the learners' success in completing the two output tasks collaboratively and individually. To this end, learners' performance in each task was examined in terms of the accuracy of producing the target items when they completed the tasks. Learners' responses to the target items were scored as either accurate or inaccurate. A response was scored as accurate if the learners correctly supplied the target phrasal verb in the cloze tasks or if they both spotted and corrected the error in the editing tasks. Mean scores were calculated for the accurate responses on each task (editing vs. cloze) and each condition (collaborative vs. individual), and then were compared, using one-way repeated measures ANOVA.

Results of task completion on cloze and editing tasks in individual and collaborative conditions are depicted in table 6. The figures in the table indicate that the subjects had the best performance on completing collaborative editing task with 58.2 percent correct response, followed by collaborative cloze task with 51.8 percent correct response. Then stand individual editing task and individual cloze task with 44.2 and 40.1 percent correct responses, respectively.

**Table 6**

Results of task completion

N	No. of items	No. of correct responses	Percentage of correct responses
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Indvcloze	50	700	281	40.1
Colcloze	50	220	106	51.8
Indvediting	50	700	310	44.2
Colediting	50	220	117	58.2

Also, descriptive statistics of the performances of the participants on completing the cloze and editing output tasks in collaborative and individual conditions are shown in table 7. We understand from the figures in the table that the participants had the highest scores on completing the collaborative editing output task, with the mean score of 5.81, followed by collaborative cloze output task, with the mean score of 51.8. Then stands individual editing output task (mean score = 4.42), followed by individual cloze output task, with the mean score of 4.01.

**Table 7**

Mean scores and SDs of the participants' performance on output tasks completion

	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Indvcloze	50	40.1	2.01	1.00	9.00
Colcloze	50	51.8	1.25	3.00	8.00
Indvediting	50	44.2	1.75	1.00	9.00
Colediting	50	58.1	1.25	4.00	8.00

Also, one-way ANOVA was used to check if there was any significant difference on the participants' performances on completing the four tasks. As the p value (0.000) indicates, there was a significant difference in this regard.

**Table 8**

Results of one-way ANOVA for the output tasks completion



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	df	Mean Sq.	F	Sig
Indivcloze, indvediting, Colcloze & colcediting	3	22.18	6.989	0.000

Results of Tukey's Post Hoc analysis of the subjects' performances on completing the two output tasks in individual and collaborative conditions through one-way repeated measures ANOVA are shown in Table 8. Paired comparisons of the participants' performances on these tasks reveal that there was a statistically significant difference between the participants' performance on completing the collaborative cloze task and the individual cloze task as the p value (0.030) in table 9 suggests. Also, the difference between the learners' performance on completing the collaborative editing task and the individual editing task was statistically significant ( $P = 0.009$ ).

**Table 9**

Results of one-way repeated measures ANOVA for output tasks completion

	Mean D	SE	Sig
Indvcloze- colcloze	-121	0.435	0.030
Indvcozle- Indvediting	-.414	0.301	0.516
Indvcloze- colediting	-1.80	0.435	0.000
Colcloze-indvediting	-.798	0.435	0.261
Colcloze-colediting	-.590	0.537	0.690
Indvediting-colediting	-1.38	0.435	0.009



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The results showed that when learners carried out both cloze and editing output tasks collaboratively, they were more successful at completing the tasks than when they carried them out individually. However, the comparison of the learners' pre-test and post-test scores showed no significant difference between the editing task and cloze task in terms of their effects on learning the phrasal verbs. The editing task led to a slightly more improved knowledge of the phrasal verbs than the cloze task, but the difference was not statistically significant. Thus, although the learners completed the editing task more successfully than the close task, this during-task success did not lead to significantly greater gains of phrasal verb knowledge.

### **Discussion**

#### **Effects of output tasks types**

Between the two types of cloze and editing output tasks used in the present study, no significant difference has been found regarding their relative effectiveness on the learning of the target phrasal verbs. Some of the previous studies tried to find out whether the type of output task makes a difference on learning L2 target vocabulary and structure. Most of them, however, could not find any significant difference for the task effect (Isumi, 2002; Nassaji & Tian, 2010). Some other studies, however, concluded that those tasks that involve more cognitive load, in the sense used by Hulstijn & Laufer (2001), lead to a better learning of target forms. Maftoon and Sharifi (2012), for instance, found that the output-oriented task in their study with high involvement loads produced more effective and more durable effects on vocabulary learning. Maftoon & Sharifi's (2012) study indicated that that task type, i.e., input or output orientation of a word-focused task, may also be a determining factor.

Cloze task in previous studies also showed less effective in leading to learning L2 forms in comparison with other output tasks such as jigsaw in Garcia Mayo (2002a), dictogloss in Garcia Mayo (2002a) and reconstruction editing tasks in Garcia Mayo (2002b) and Nassaji and Tian (2010).



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### **Comparison of task completion**

Results of task completion analysis above revealed that the subjects had better performance on completing both collaborative editing task and collaborative cloze task in comparison with their performance on completing individual cloze and individual editing tasks.

The findings regarding the effects of group work are consistent with the results of some of the previous studies that have shown that engagement in joint activities may improve task performance in terms of the accurate production of the target forms (Kowal & Swain 1994; Lapkin & Swain 2000; Lapkin, Swain & Smith, 2002; Nabei, 1996; Nassaji & Tian, 2010; Swain 1998).

We understand from the figures in table 16 that the students scored higher on completing the editing tasks than on doing the cloze task both in individual and in collaborative conditions. This could have been perhaps due to the higher degree of negotiation and scaffolding generated by the editing tasks than the cloze task when learners completed them collaboratively. As noted earlier, an analysis of the transcriptions of the learners' interaction during collaboration showed that the editing tasks generated more instances of form-focused talk and peer feedback than the cloze tasks. Such negotiations in the editing task could have oriented the learners' attention to the phrasal verbs more effectively and hence could have resulted in deeper understanding of the target items. Similar results about more interaction in the case of editing tasks were also reported in studies by García Mayo (2002a) and Storch (2007). García Mayo (2002a), for example, found that the text-editing tasks she used in her study were better able to promote effective talk and attention to form during collaborative group work than other tasks, including multiple choice, text-reconstruction and even cloze tasks. These findings – along with the findings of the present study – point to the potential value of collaborative editing tasks for promoting language learning and focus on form. Therefore, they could be considered as useful form-focused tasks in L2 classrooms.



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The advantage of editing tasks over cloze tasks in promoting interaction may be related to their characteristics. In our study, for example, in the editing tasks, the target phrasal verbs were present in the text, but they were used incorrectly or in the wrong place. The fact that the target words were present in the task might have drawn the learners' attention to the target phrasal verbs more directly. This might have then triggered more interaction and negotiation about the target phrasal verbs. In the cloze tasks, however, the target verbs were absent in the context; therefore, there were no elements of the verbs in context that could have drawn learners' attention to the target form or triggered discussion and interaction. These reasons, however, are speculative and the possible differences between the two tasks and their effects need further investigation.

### **Conclusions and suggestions for further research**

The present study set out to investigate the relative effectiveness of two types of output tasks – close task and reconstruction task – in individual and collaborative conditions with regard to learning English phrasal verbs by Iranian EFL learners. To do so, a time series quasi-experimental study was carried out, in which 50 Iranian intermediate EFL learners participated in reading 10 different texts, containing 50 phrasal verbs, in doing two types of output tasks — close output task and reconstruction output task — in individual and collaborative conditions.

After the participants completed each output task, a post-test including the target phrasal verbs practiced in each section of the treatment was delivered to answer. Between the two output tasks, though no significant difference has been found between the effectiveness of close and editing tasks on learning target phrasal verbs, collaborative editing task showed more positive effects on learning the target forms than individual close task and unenhanced and enhanced input. All in all, the results indicate that collaborative editing task has the potentials to help L2 learners develop a better knowledge of phrasal verbs.



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Concerning the findings, limitations and delimitations of the present study, suggestions are made for future studies to discover different aspects of the issue at stake. First, replication studies are necessary to confirm the findings of the present work. More powerful studies with larger n-sizes would provide a clearer picture of the effects of lexical modification on learning English of phrasal verbs. Also, it is necessary to conduct studies with more than one occurrence of the target items to study the effects of multiple exposures to target forms. Also, longitudinal classroom research with more realistic reading materials and vocabulary items would expand the applicability of the findings to L2 teaching. The findings seem to be inspiring for future studies on idiomatic expressions and other formulaic expressions, which have been investigated in some recent studies (Sun & Wang, 2003; Wray, 2000).

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