The Effect of Using Input Enhancement on Iranian Intermediate EFL Learners of L2 Adjective Knowledge

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Abstract

The role of input is vital in the process of foreign language learning. This article intended to investigate the effect of using input enhancement on Iranian intermediate EFL learners' knowledge of L2 adjectives. The question of this study lied in the fact that whether using input enhancement in classroom has any effects on intermediate EFL learners' knowledge of L2 adjectives. This article considered some issues underlying input enhancement between two languages and their effect on L2 adjective knowledge. The participants were 60 intermediate EFL learners were homogenized by Oxford Placement Test and were divided in two groups, one of them was control group and the other was the experimental group. The next step, the pretest of adjectives knowledge was administered for both groups. Then treatment was administered in the way that input enhancement was used in one group and there wasn't any input enhancement in control group. After that the posttest was administered in both groups and at the end the data was analyzed by two way independent sample t-test and one-way ANCOVA. The result of study showed that the null hypothesis of the study was rejected.

   Keywords: Input Enhancement; Consciousness Raising; L2 adjectives knowledge; EFL Learners.

Introduction and Review of the Literature

The role of input is vital in the process of foreign language learning. Sharwood smith (1991, P. 118) defined Input Enhancement as "the process by which language input becomes salient to the learners". "Input is the language data which is made available, by chance or by design, to the language learner" (Sharwood Smith, 1993, p. 167). "Input can be identified as L2 data (meaning-based and form-based) that learners can receive in both formal and naturalistic setting. It is an essential component of second language acquisition, simply because learners use it in order to construct a mental representation of the grammar that they acquiring" (VanPatten, 1996, p. 13).

   According to Sharwood Smith (1981), instructional strategies which could draw the learners' attention to specific structural regularities of language, enhanced the rate of learning in comparison to natural acquisition. The enhancement of input planned focus on form that received the considerable attention recent SLA studies. The aim of increasing input was to induce target form noticing in the context of meaning-based activity (Ellis, 2001). Sharwood Smith (1981) believed that the term Input Enhancement was considered as Consciousness-Raising as a reaction

to Krashen's (1981) statement that formal language instruction served little or any in the target language teaching. After that he proposed the term of Input Enhancement instead of Consciousness-Raising and proposed that the difference between these two terms was related to input/intake dichotomy.

Krashen (1985) in Input Hypothesis claimed that humans acquired language in only one way, by receiving comprehensible input and moving from i (our current level) to i+1 (the next level happened by getting comprehensible input). According to Dykeyser (2007), in Krashen and Terrell's natural approach was seen only a minimal role for output practice and acquisition of competence was shown as a matter of comprehensible kind of input. Some activities were advocated by Krashen and Terrell (1983) as a means of providing meaningful and comprehensible input would certainly qualify as practice from our point of view in 1991. Sharwood Smith (1991) suggested "Input Enhancement" as a way of discussion on the role of the grammar in L2 teaching. "Input Enhancement" was a process by which language input becomes salient to learners. So in this study, comprehensible input about adjectives must be provided for learners in order to enhance the knowledge of L2 adjectives. Stern (1990, p, 45) proposed that Input Enhancement was following the blow principles:

- "Input Enhancement is learner directed.

- Input Enhancement is an inductive approach which does not present learners with rules.

- Input Enhancement observed the principle of the universal grammar.

- Input Enhancement rejects PPP (presentation, product, and practice) in order to promote activities that promote understanding grammar.

- Input Enhancement is process and not product oriented.

- Input Enhancement presents learners with data and invites learners to make conclusion based on the data.

- Input Enhancement is means to an end not an end in itself.

- Input Enhancement teaches learners how to learn."

As Sharwood Smith (1993) believed that for enhancement of input there were two types that are positive and negative. In the positive type the correct structure was bolded and in negative type the errors were highlighted or were bolded. These highlighted parts could draw learner's attention.

Input can be noticeable because of internal cognitive changes and the manner of exposure of input and enhancement of input is about the salience of a particular form in order to enhance of learners' attention. So this research have used this idea to highlight some differences of using adjectives in comparison of English and Persian, and make this differences noticeable to students in order to solve the students' errors in adjectives parts.

Sharwood Smith (1993) proposed that Input Enhancement could be divided in internally generated and externally generated that in the first one learning was base on principles features that they were not consciously dictated and in the second one the teacher manipulated the learners' environment to direct their attention to the specific structures. Input Enhancement proposed by the term Input Flooding which referred to artificially increasing the frequency of the target form of input. Target form was made salient by its frequent recurrence in context (Han et al, 2008). The assumption was that when a feature form appears more frequently in the input, it would be integrated to the interlanguage system which was enhanced (Schmit, 1990).

Consciousness Raising (C-R)

Consciousness Raising is raising learners' conscious awareness of particular linguistic structures, by input and then changing the input to intake. In other word, it is the process in L2 learning which is involved in converting input to intake. Intake is the potential to be internalized, it happens through exposure to input. According to Schmidt (1994, p. 65), "noticing and attention are vital for learning. Attention is that learners become consciously aware of how their interlanguage form differs from target forms and people learn about the things that they attend to and don't learn much about the things they do not attend to."

Schmidt (1994) mentioned that attention was a vital and sufficient condition for the changing of input to become intake for learning. Learners might consciously pay attention a target feature in the input, and if the input was noticed, it might become intake. According to Sharwood Smith (1991), noticing a L2 features in input was important factor, where L2 learners went through four general proceeding stages:

1. The first step was related to new forms which were presented to learners in the case of 'processed input', and they might be noticed, either unconsciously or consciously.

2. The second process involved with interlanguage, a comparison being made between the new input and a current form or existing linguistics knowledge.

3. The third stage was where new linguistics hypotheses were created on the basic of the difference between the new form or structure current form and the existing 'interlanguage'.

4. At the end, the new form was tested through learners who have received new input, which might be acquired, with its use being implemented in the production.

Input Enhancement Ways and Techniques

Input Enhancement techniques help to draw the attention of the learners are involved bolding, italicizing, and coloring the specific forms. According to white (2000), it helped to increase in the frequency of the target form. Sharwood Smith (1991, p. 199) provided some additional data concerning various Input Enhancement techniques in two degrees and both were vital to allow learners access grammatical input:

1. Degree of elaboration: depth and amount of time which was engaged in applying the enhancement technique. e. g. "the factual gesture".

2.   Degree of explicitness: was being highly or less explicit, highly explicit involved a rule explanation and less explicit might be in the form of seeing the target feature highlighted without giving further information.

Sharwood smith (1993) believed that typography enhancement such as underlined, enlarged and bolded could help to draw the students' attention and increased their consciousness. Enhancement via gestures and intonations could help learners to explicit and implicit error correction (Spada & Lightbown, 1993). According to Sharwood Smith (1981), instructional strategies attracted learners' attention to specific structure regularities of language which could enhance the rate of learning in comparison to natural acquisition of learning. Here the focus on the form was minimal. Consciousness Raising and Input Enhancement were related to learners' mental state which was modified by the input in order to change the input to intake. Other Input Enhancement techniques included non linguistic signals such as making funny faces on hearing an error and teachers' gasping (Spada &Lightbown, 1990). Rutherford and Sharwood Smith (1981) characterized input Enhancement as being highly variegated and not being limited to formal grammar instruction techniques such as metalinguistic explanations.

Sharwood Smith (1991, 1993) introduced many techniques which might be used in order to make input salient, such as pointing out and explaining construction with using metalinguistic terminology, grammatical English morphemes could be underlined or bolded, and intonation and gesture, stress, using error flags, color coding and bold facing. Using one or all of these ways could draw learners' attention to grammatical form of target language.

Input Based Instruction

Instruction is grammatical feature cannot be acquired through communicative task only and instructions can use different ways to increase the learning of grammar, and help speed up the process. According to Ellis (2012, p. 285), input based instruction involved manipulation of the input which learners were required to process and were exposed to. Input based instruction was involved different forms. One form for input based instruction was relating to manipulating the input in such a way that making some target features more noticeable to the learners. This form usually was based on the form of textual enhancement. Forms could be discussed as a form focused instruction with the aim that drawing learners' attention to features of the language (Long 1991). Another form of input based instruction was the form of VanPatten's model of input processing. In this form, learners were forced to process input by showing that they have understood the meaning of target feature by providing minimally verbal and non-verbal response. For example in the case that there were two pictures and listening relating to one of them (choosing between pictures while listening to the recording part) in order to provide comprehensible language input for learners or providing them linguistic data that they could understand. Language instruction should aim at providing learners with enough comprehensible input in order to work with and turning as much input into intake, and therefore building the developing system in L2 learners (Lee and VanPatten, 2003).

Methodology

The participants were 60 intermediate EFL learners were homogenized by Oxford Placement Test and were divided in two groups, one of them was control group and the other was the experimental group. The next step, the pretest of adjectives knowledge was administered for both groups. Then treatment was administered in the way that input enhancement was used in one

group and there wasn't any input enhancement in control group. After that the posttest was administered in both groups.

Data Analysis

One-way ANCOVA which was used for comparing the mounts of progress from pretest into posttest in each group, and independent sample t-test were two ways for analyzing data at the end collected data was analyzed through SPSS program.

Result and Discussion

The results were shown by tables as follows:

Independent Samples Test

			t	df
		t-test for Equality of Means		
Sig. (2-tailed) knowledgeofL2adjectives	Equal variances assumed	5.350	58	0.000
	Equal variances not assumed	5.350	55.404	0.000

The result of table showed that the observed t > bigger than the critical t, so It was included that the null hypothesis of the study is rejected.

ANCOVA results for the experimental group of the study

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	1916.745[a]	1	1916.745	12.688	.001
Intercept	3493.370	1	3493.370	23.124	.000
PreEX/PosEX	**1916.745**	**1**	**1916.745**	**12.688**	**.001**
Error	4230.055	28	151.073		
Total	106372.000	30			

The results of table revealed that the effect of the independent variable (using Input enhancement) on the dependent variable (L2 Adjectives) was significant.

ANCOVA results for the control group of the study

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	766.344[a]	1	766.344	6.720	.015
Intercept	753.895	1	753.895	6.611	.016
PreCON/PosCON	**766.344**	**1**	**766.344**	**6.720**	**.015**
Error	3193.023	28	114.037		
Total	50925.000	30			

The result in this Table indicated that the value of F was under the 0.05, $*p < .05$, thus there was the effect of the independent variable (without using Input enhancement) on the dependent variable (L2 Adjectives) too. But the amount of this effect was lower than the effect in experimental group. F-value in experimental group was upper than the F-value in control group. By the result of research study the null hypothesis was rejected and the result showed that the using input enhancement in classroom had more positive effect on Iranian intermediate EFL learner's knowledge of L2 adjectives.

Conclusion

In this article, a significant difference was existed between the two groups on knowledge of L2 adjectives. The effect in experimental group based on using input enhancement in classroom was stronger than the effect in control group without using input enhancement. Thus it could be said that the using input enhancement in classroom had more positive effect on Iranian intermediate EFL learner's knowledge of L2 adjectives.

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