The Effect of Output Tasks on the Noticing and Learning English Passive Structure

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Abstract

This study was an attempt to investigate whether output tasks, i.e., reconstruction and picture-cued writing tasks, promote learners' noticing of English passive structure compared to non-output tasks, i.e., reading comprehension and if so, which output task is more effective in enhancing learners' noticing. In addition, this study aimed to investigate whether output tasks facilitate learning of English passive structure better than non-output tasks and if so, which one is more effective. To this end, 45 pre-intermediate female students at Safir Language Academy in Iran were divided into three groups: reconstruction, picture-cued writing, and control. The results indicated that noticing across the three groups was equally improved, with the output tasks not leading to greater noticing in comparison with the non-output task. According to the results, all the three groups performed significantly better on post-production test but no improvement was found on post-recognition test.

Introduction

Since the advent of the communicative language teaching approach, systematic attention has been given to functional as well as structural aspects of language (Richards & Rodgers, 2001) and consequently, the focus of attention has moved from input enhancement to focus on form (Ellis et al., 2002) based on the assumption that drawing learners' attention to form during meaning-focused tasks makes them acquire form and meaning simultaneously. Among the tasks which have been proposed, the output tasks have received less attention and the studies to date on the effects of output tasks on noticing and learning target structures in comparison with non-output tasks have reported mixed results (Izumi et al, 1999; Izumi and Bigelow, 2002; Sung and Suh, 2008). Thus, the role of output tasks as an attention-drawing and learning device remains a controversial issue that needs to be explored further in SLA.

Noticing

Regarding different interpretations of attention and noticing, some scholars support the Noticing Hypothesis to various degrees (Iwanaka & Takatsuka, 2007; Sharwood Smith & Rutherford, 1985; Schmidt, 1990). For instance, Schmidt (1990) claimed that "subliminal language learning is impossible, and that noticing is the necessary and sufficient condition for converting input to intake" (p.129). On the other hand, Sharwood Smith and Rutherford (1985) emphasized the role of consciousness-raising in language acquisition as well claiming that consciousness-raising in language acquisition is irrelevant to spontaneous language learning but

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they did not claim that consciousness-raising is the only sufficient condition for acquisition to take place. On the contrary, Truscott (1998) argued against the Noticing Hypothesis and claimed that its foundation in cognitive psychology is not robust and that it is not based on any coherent theory of language. He argued that if the strong version of Noticing Hypothesis (i.e., noticing is helpful but not necessary for learning) changes to weak version (i.e., awareness of form is a necessary condition for learning), less adjustments are needed.

Output tasks

Swain specified four functions of output (1993) as follows: developing fluency in language use; hypothesis function; metalinguistic function; noticing and triggering function. The present study focuses on the noticing and triggering function of output. The noticing function of output indicates that while the learners are producing the target language, their attention may be drawn to what they could not convey (Swain & Lapkin, 1995) so they notice the linguistic form they need and if the input is available immediately, their attention will be drawn to it and process it more attentively which finally leads to learning a new form. Swain (1993) assumed that this function of output task might get learners to process language not only semantically during comprehension but also syntactically during production. Language production makes learners notice what they do not know or know only partly. This may cause the syntactic analysis of input or the analysis of existing linguistic knowledge to fill the knowledge gap.

In this vein, Ellis (1993) also claimed that learners do not always learn what they have been taught because the way they learn is different from the way they are taught. Therefore, he proposed 'intake facilitation' (p.91) including production tasks for developing implicit knowledge of second language. This is said to help learners notice specific structures in the input and the ones they use in the output.

Moreover, Izumi (2003) advocated the hypothesis that production makes the learner move from semantic processing in comprehension to more syntactic processing that is necessary for second language development, claiming that comprehension task cannot develop interlanguage unless learners are forced to notice form and meaning simultaneously during input processing.

In additions, not only the output tasks encourage the learners to notice the gap between what they know and what they need to know to perform them but also they can be used as a means of helping the learner test their interlanguage hypotheses and modifying these hypotheses as the interlanguage develops (Mackey et al., 2010). In other words, "Learner output contains a series of hypotheses representing the learner's best guess about the target language, and producing output is one way of testing a hypothesis about comprehensibility or linguistic well-formedness" (Shehadeh, 2003, p.165). In this vein, Ellis (1995) proposed 'cognitive comparison' (p. 90) arguing that when learners compares their output with the input, they realize how far their interlanguage is from the target language and this 'cognitive comparison' (p.90) functions as a device to confirm or disconfirm hypothesis.

Swain and Lapkin (1995) also supported the argument that learners may notice a linguistic problem while they are producing L2 and it can push them to modify their output; therefore, they

get involved in syntactic processing that can be rather more complex mental process in comparison to comprehension process and the process that takes place to change the original output to modified output is supposed to be part of second language learning (Swain and Lapkin, 1995). Through experimental study, Swain and Lapkin (1995) examined the cognitive process that changes the original output to modified output and he divided the cognitive process into three general categories in second language learning: generating alternatives, assessing those alternatives and applying the resulting knowledge. Thus, he proposed a theoretical model.

Swain and Lapkin (1995) proposed a theoretical model within which communicative need involves the learners in a cognitive process whereby they generate the original output, then assess it by getting internal or external feedback. If they cannot work out any solutions they turn to input but this time they analyze the input through simple inspection or complex thinking and finally they produce the modified output that is reprocessed form. In other words, communicative needs make learners move from semantic processing to syntactic processing with more focused attention that consequently results in internalization of new linguistic knowledge or consolidation of existing knowledge.

To establish the potential effects of production tasks on second language development, Swain and Lapkin (1995) put forward the comprehensible output hypothesis (COH) claiming that we acquire language when we fail to transmit a message and have to try again. Although output can be a facilitator for language acquisition, it is not the only one. The claim is that "sometimes, under some conditions, output facilitates second language learning in ways that are different form facilitation through input" (Swain and Lapkin, 1995, p. 371).

In the present study, two output tasks, i.e., reconstruction tasks and picture-cued writing tasks, were utilized. In the reconstruction task, learners use their available linguistic competence to reconstruct a text. In this type of output task, the text which is not graded has priority in order to elicit learners' general linguistic competence but in order to draw learners' attention to particular structure for form-focus syllabus, the specific structure is embedded in the graded text based on the assumption that the learners have at least superficial knowledge about it (Thornbury, 1997).

Picture-cued writing task is a kind of production task where learners are required to respond to a picture and compose a story (Lee, 1994). Lee indicated that pictures in this production task can be utilized as a contextual cue to prompt learners' thinking processes while they are writing and keep learners from being concerned about form and draw their attention to the content of the picture; furthermore, it provides a guided writing environment to enhance learning vocabulary and grammatical structure (Lee, 1994).

Studies on output tasks

Yoshimura (2006) reported that learners' knowledge of output tasks results in greater noticing of the form in the input and consequently it leads to acquisition of the form and the knowledge of output tasks also influences reading behavior. It was found that participants under these conditions notice the gap between what they want to say and what they are able to say and that this lead to greater attention to language form in the given text. In addition, the participants' interlanguage with reconstruction task was observed to be more native-like and that they paid more attention to language form in the input (Yoshimura, 2006).

Soleimani (2008) investigated the noticing function of output in acquisition of rhetorical structure of contrast paragraph of Iranian EFL university students. The results showed that the output fronted activities promote the learners' noticing of the target form and the output first. Also, input activities were more effective than preemptive input activities and he confirmed the essential role noticing in acquisition of rhetorical structure of contrast paragraph in English, a result which confirmed Schmidt's noticing hypothesis and Swain's Comprehensible Output Hypothesis.

Song & Suh (2008) explored the role of output and which types of output tasks (i.e., reconstruction task and picture-cued writing task) were more effective in noticing and learning the English past counterfactual conditional. Regarding the noticing function of output, the results showed that the participants with output task outperformed those in non-output task condition on the production post-test but both output tasks were equally effective in terms of acquisition.

Moreover, Izumi (2002) confirmed the attention-drawing function of output in a more controlled study. He attempted to explore whether and how output (i.e., reconstruction task), visual input enhancement, together or separately promote noticing and acquisition of English relativization. Results indicated that the participants with output-input activities outperformed those who only were exposed to the same input for comprehension. However, those who were exposed only to visual input enhancement showed greater noticing but no noticeable gain in learning English relativization. The study provided empirical evidence for the essential role of output without denying the significant role of input in L2 acquisition. The visual input enhancement (i.e., highlighting) was utilized to encourage sensory detection; however, it did not result in integrative processing. On the other hand, "the pushed output promotes not only detection of forms but also integrative processing to conceive a coherent structure among detected elements" (Izumi, 2002, p. 571).

Izumi and Bigelow (2000) and Izumi et al. (1999) focused on the English past hypothetical conditional and compared an experimental group that was given output and subsequent exposure to relevant input and a control group that was exposed to the same input first and then asked to answer comprehension questions on the input. The output tasks were a reconstruction task and an essay-writing task. Noticing was measured through underlining. The results of the two studies were mixed: In Izumi et al. (1999), both groups of +output and –output increased their noticing of the target structure on the second input and the experimental group did not show greater

noticing of the target structure than the control group; however, the experimental group would show partially greater improvement of the use of target structure. On the other hand, In Izumi and Bigelow (2000), the results did not confirm the beneficial effects of output tasks on noticing and improving the use of target structure and not all learners necessarily found their linguistic problem during production which resulted in noticing the grammatical structure in subsequent input.

In light of the contradictory findings reported in the literature, the current study was an attempt to investigate whether output tasks, i.e., reconstruction and picture-cued writing tasks, promote learners' noticing of English passive structure compared to non-output tasks, i.e., reading comprehension and if so, which output task is more effective in enhancing learners' noticing. In addition, this study aimed to investigate whether output tasks facilitate learning of English passive structure better than non-output tasks and if so, which one is more effective.

Research Questions

The present study addresses the following research questions:

1. Do output tasks (i.e., reconstruction task and pictured-cued writing task) promote learners' noticing better than non-output tasks. If so, which of the two output tasks (reconstruction task and pictured-cued writing task) is more effective on noticing the targeted structure (i.e., English passive)?
2. Do output tasks promote L2 learning of the target form better than non-output tasks? If so, which of the two output tasks (i.e., reconstruction task and pictured-cued writing task) is more effective in the learning of the targeted form?

Participants

Forty five pre-intermediate female English students at Safir Language Academy in Karaj, Iran, participated in the study. Since the aim was to investigate the enhancement of the learners' interlanguage in present and past passive structures, we needed the students who had superficial knowledge about the given structure. In Safir Language Academy, Interchange books (3rd edition) were taught and there were four pre-intermediate levels (201, 202, 203, 204) and all the participants were chosen from the level 204 because according to the table of contents, at this level they had been taught present and past passive structures for the first time and they had superficial knowledge in passive structure and they would not be taught during this level. The participants were divided into three experimental groups. Each group went under three different experiments. EG1 (Reconstruction output task), EG2 (Picture-cued writing output task), CG (Comparison group).

Materials

Pre- and post-test

Pre- and post-tests including recognition and production tests were administered to assess the learners` knowledge of English passive structure before and after the experiment. Since the pre-

test and post-test were parallel, the interval of a month was long enough to prevent the learners from remembering the questions.

Recognition test

The recognition test was administered to assess the learners` receptive knowledge of the present and past passive structure and it included 20 multiple choice items. 15 of the items were of the target form and 5 of the items were distracters. 10 out of those 15 items had the correct answers of the passive structure and 5 of those 15 items had the correct answers of the active structure.

Production test

The production test included two sets of contexts to elicit passive sentences from the students. In the first context, they were given 3 shop notices and they were required to write 3 present passive sentences. In the second section of the production test, they were given some pieces of historical information about 3 different inventions and they were required to use the information to make 3 past passive sentences. Since active and passive structures in these contexts were possible, they were instructed to write them in passive; however, the participants would decide whether to make the present or past passive sentences and they were scored for the correct choices.

Reading comprehension questions

The participants in the control group were required to answer 4 reading comprehension questions for each text and they were wh-questions and were designed to elicit the passive sentences from the participants.

Passages

After the administration of the pre-test, they were given two different texts in two different treatment sessions for reconstruction tasks. The texts were picked meticulously for the purpose of the reconstruction in this experiment. First of all, these texts had as equal features as possible. Approximately 50% of the sentences in these texts were present and past passive.

Pictures

In each reconstruction session for EG2, 4 pictures and few vocabulary prompts were presented on the board to lessen the memory load of the text content. The pictures were taken from the Internet and closely related to the text content and below each picture there were some vocabulary prompts derived from the text to elicit the targeted structure from the participants and conduct a partly guided writing task.

Procedure

An overview of the experimental procedure for this study can be seen in Fig.1. Before starting treatment sessions, they took the pre-test including a recognition test and production test. After that, they received three different treatments. The experiment included three sessions. The first session took place a week after the pre-test session and the second treatment session occurred after the second one. At the beginning of each treatment session, all the participants of three groups were informed of the task they were going to do.

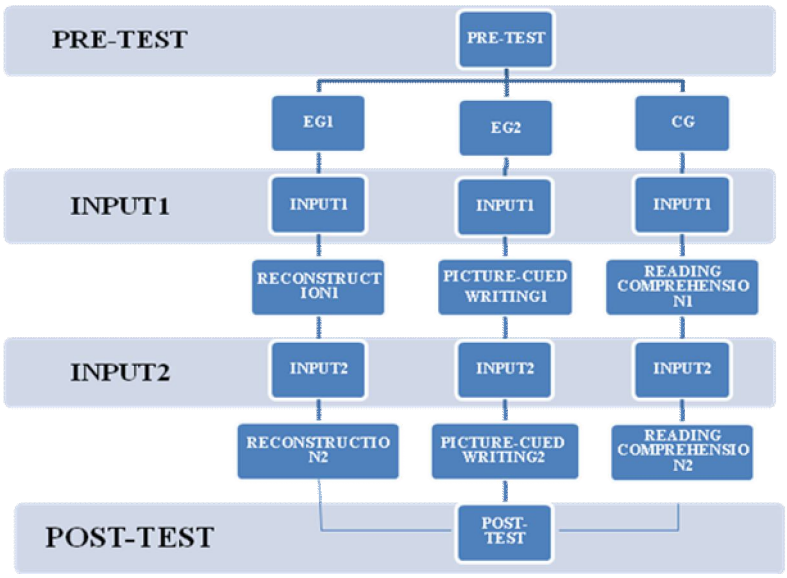

Figure1. Experimental procedures for EG1, EG2, and CG

First the participants were given a passage for the first input. They were asked to read the text in which about 50% of the sentences contained English passive structure. The participants were required to underline the words, the phrases or the sentences they thought they were necessary for the reconstruction task. After reading the given passage, EGI (the reconstruction group) were asked to reconstruct the input passage. They read the passage as accurately as possible on a sheet of paper. The participants in EG2 for the reconstruction task were presented with 4 pictures and a few vocabulary prompts on the board to lessen the memory load of the text content. The pictures were closely related to the text content and below each picture there were some vocabulary prompts derived from the text to elicit the targeted structure from the participants and conduct a partly guided writing task. The participants were encouraged to utilize the words below each picture to write a passive sentence; however, they were not necessarily obliged to use the pictures and vocabularies on the board. In CG (comparison or non-output group), the participants were asked to read the passage and answer 4 reading comprehension questions. Since the answers of reading comprehension questions were also scored in terms of grammar, the participants of CG were required to answer the comprehension question in full sentences. All the participants in three groups would not be allowed to look back at the text while they were carrying out their subsequent tasks.

Next all the participants in all of the three groups were given the second input with the same features of the first input. The same procedure of the previous experimental session was followed; EGI and EG2 reconstructed the second passage and CG answered other 4 reading comprehension questions after reading the second text. As the pre-test and post-test in the study were parallel, the post-test was administered after a one-month interval.

Through the two sessions, all participants were instructed orally in Persian to make sure they knew what they were going to do and also in order to control outside exposure to the target structure during the interval. Before starting the experiment the teachers were required not to teach the passive structure during this level and after taking the post-test, the students were asked

whether they had consulted with anyone or had studied about the target form. The data from those who reported having done this were all discarded and the data from those who were absent from any of the treatment sessions were also excluded.

Results

The effects of output tasks on noticing

Reconstruction Group

The underlines of three groups (EG1, EG2, and CG) as a measure of noticing were compared and repeated measures ANOVA was run. As displayed in Table1, the mean underlining score for the first input was 19.54 and for the second input it was 29.06. Therefore the participants in reconstruction group (EG1) from the first input to the second input made great improvement in noticing. According to the table 2, the significance level is .003<.05, so it proves the fact that the EG1 enhanced their noticing on the second input.

EG1/Noticing	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
INPUT1	19.5429	9.16798	14
INPUT2	29.0643	7.93450	14

Table1. The mean underlining scores for EG1

Effect		Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Noticing	Pillai's Trace	.517	13.930[a]	1.000	13.000	.003	.517
	Wilks' Lambda	.483	13.930[a]	1.000	13.000	.003	.517
	Hotelling's Trace	1.072	13.930[a]	1.000	13.000	.003	.517
	Roy's Largest Root	1.072	13.930[a]	1.000	13.000	.003	.517

Table2. Multivariate tests from the mean score of the first input to the second input for EG1

Picture-cued writing group

EG2/Noticing	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
INPUT1	20.7408	9.37514	12
INPUT2	27.9333	5.87883	12

Table3. The mean underlining scores for EG

Effect		Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Noticing	Pillai's Trace	.385	6.889[a]	1.000	11.000	.024	.385
	Wilks' Lambda	.615	6.889[a]	1.000	11.000	.024	.385
	Hotelling's Trace	.626	6.889[a]	1.000	11.000	.024	.385
	Roy's Largest Root	.626	6.889[a]	1.000	11.000	.024	.385

Table4. Multivariate Tests from the mean score of the first input to the mean score of the second input in EG2

As displayed in Table3, the mean underlining score for the first input was 20.74 and for the second input it was 27.93. Therefore the participants in picture-cued writing group (EG2) from the first input to the second input made great improvement in noticing as well. According to the Table, the significance level is .0024<.05, so it confirms the noticing enhancement in the second input.

Control Group

CG/Noticing	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
INPUT1	17.3786	6.30448	14
INPUT2	28.7429	7.74296	14

Table5. The mean underlining scores for CG

Effect		Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Noticing	Pillai's Trace	.716	32.845[a]	1.000	13.000	.000	.716
	Wilks' Lambda	.284	32.845[a]	1.000	13.000	.000	.716
	Hotelling's Trace	2.527	32.845[a]	1.000	13.000	.000	.716
	Roy's Largest Root	2.527	32.845[a]	1.000	13.000	.000	.716

Table6. Multivariate Tests from the first input to the second input for CG

As displayed in Table5, the mean underlining score for the first input was 17.37 and for the second input it was 28.74. Therefore the participants in control group (CG) from the first input to the second input made great improvement in noticing as well. According to the table 6, the significance level is .000<.05, so the control group enhanced their noticing in the second input as well as EG1 and EG2.

Thus, the noticing of three groups equally enhanced and there were not any significant differences between the mean scores of the three groups on the second noticing test. Therefore, the output task conditions did not lead to greater noticing than non-output task conditions. Moreover, regarding the research question as to which output task is more effective to enhance noticing, no significant difference was found in the relative effectiveness of the two output tasks.

The effects of output tasks on learning English passive structure

Reconstruction Group

Reconstruction Group	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Pre-recognition	55.3571	15.74610	14
Pre-Production	79.3143	17.09012	14
Post-recognition	56.7857	13.24432	14
Post-production	86.4464	11.02610	14

Table7. Descriptive Statistics for recognition and production sections of pre-/post-test of reconstruction group (EG1)

Effect	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Pillai's Trace	.236	4.006[a]	1.000	13.000	.067	.236
Wilks' Lambda	.764	4.006[a]	1.000	13.000	.067	.236
Hotelling's Trace	.308	4.006[a]	1.000	13.000	.067	.236
Roy's Largest Root	.308	4.006[a]	1.000	13.000	.067	.236

Table8. Multivariate tests from the pre-test to the post-test for EG1

Reconstruction Group	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Pre-Total score	67.3357	15.45776	14
Post-Total score	71.6161	10.74799	14

Table9. From the mean total score of the pre-test to the mean total score of the post-test for EG1

Effect	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Pillai's Trace	.236	4.006[a]	1.000	13.000	.067	.236
Wilks' Lambda	.764	4.006[a]	1.000	13.000	.067	.236
Hotelling's Trace	.308	4.006[a]	1.000	13.000	.067	.236
Roy's Largest Root	.308	4.006[a]	1.000	13.000	.067	.236

Table 10. Multivariate Tests from the total score of pre-test to the total score of post-test

Table 7 shows recognition and production scores of pre- and post-tests. Based on the results, the mean score on pre-recognition test of reconstruction group is 55.35 and the mean score on post-recognition test of reconstruction group is 56.78. It means that the participants in EG1 did not make great improvement on their recognition ability in English passive structure. And the significance level in multivariate test from the pre- to the post-test in table.8 is .067>.05 and it proves that the improvement was not significant. Table 7 also indicated that pre-production score of reconstruction group is 79.31 and post-production score of reconstruction group is 86.44.It means that they made somewhat great improvement on their production ability in English Passive structure.

As displayed in Tabl.9, the total score of pre-test in reconstruction group is 67.33 and the total score of the post-test is 71.61. And the significance level in Table.10 is.067>.05 so it confirms that reconstruction group did not make significant improvement in learning English passive structure.

Picture-cued writing group

Picture-cued writing group	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Pre-Recognition	51.2500	15.82935	12
Pre-Production	75.4167	22.16114	12
Post-Recognition	52.9167	13.56103	12
Post-Production	76.5750	22.78158	12

Table11. Descriptive Statistics for recognition and production sections of pre-/post-test of picture-cued writing group (EG2)

Table12. **Multivariate test from pre-test to post test in EG2**

Picture-cued writing group	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Pre-Total score	63.3333	15.49342	12
Post-Total	64.7458	15.38127	12

Table13. From the mean total score of the pre-test to the mean total score of the post-test

Effect		Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
pretoposttotal	Pillai's Trace	.016	.179[a]	1.000	11.000	.680	.016
	Wilks' Lambda	.984	.179[a]	1.000	11.000	.680	.016
	Hotelling's Trace	.016	.179[a]	1.000	11.000	.680	.016
	Roy's Largest Root	.016	.179[a]	1.000	11.000	.680	.016

Table14. Multivariate tests from the total score of the pre-test to the total score of the post-test

Table 11 shows recognition and production scores of pre- and post-tests. Based on the results, the mean score on pre-recognition test of picture-cued writing group (EG2) is 51.25 and the mean score on post-recognition test of EG2 is 52.91. It means that the participants in EG2 did not make great improvement on their recognition ability in English passive structure. And the significance level in multivariate test form the pre- to the post-test in table12 is .068>.05 and it proves that the improvement was not significant. Table 11 also indicates that pre-production score of reconstruction group is 75.41 and post-production score of picture-cued writing group is 76.57.It means that they did not make such great improvement on their production ability in English Passive structure. As displayed in Tabl.13, the total score of pre-test in picture-cued writing group is 67.33 and the total score of the post-test is 71.61. And the significance level in multivariate test from the pre- to post-test inTable.14 is.067>.05 so it confirms that EG2 did not make significant improvement in learning English passive structure.

Control Group

Control Group	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Pre-Recognition	55.3571	15.74610	14
Pre-Production	79.3143	17.09012	14
Post-Recognition	56.7857	13.24432	14
Post-Production	86.4464	11.02610	14

Table15. Descriptive Statistics for recognition and production sections of pre-/post-test of control group (CG)

Effect	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Pillai's Trace	.906	1.251E2[a]	1.000	13.000	.000	.906
Wilks' Lambda	.094	1.251E2[a]	1.000	13.000	.000	.906
Hotelling's Trace	9.625	1.251E2[a]	1.000	13.000	.000	.906
Roy's Largest Root	9.625	1.251E2[a]	1.000	13.000	.000	.906

Table16. **Multivariate test from pre-test to post test for CG**

Control Group	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Pre-Total score	67.3357	15.45776	14
Post-Total score	71.6161	10.74799	14

Table17. From the mean total score of the pre-test to the mean total score of the post-test for CG

Effect	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Pillai's Trace	.236	4.006[a]	1.000	13.000	.067	.236
Wilks' Lambda	.764	4.006[a]	1.000	13.000	.067	.236
Hotelling's Trace	.308	4.006[a]	1.000	13.000	.067	.236

	Roy's Largest Root	.308	4.006[a]	1.000	13.000	.067	.236

Table18. Multivariate tests from total score of pre-test to the total score of the post-test

Table 15 shows recognition and production scores of pre- and post-tests. Based on the results, the mean score on pre-recognition test of control group (CG) is 55.35 and the mean score on post-recognition test of control group is 56.78. It means that the participants in CG did not make great improvement on their recognition ability in English passive structure. And the significance level in multivariate test form the pre- to the post-test in table16 is .067>.05 and it proves that the improvement was not significant. Table 15 also indicates that pre-production score of control group is 79.31 and post-production score of control group is 86.44.It means that they made somewhat great improvement on their production ability in English Passive structure.
As displayed in Table17, the total score of pre-test in control group is 67.33 and the total score of the post-test is 71.61. And the significance level in Table18 is.067>.05 so it confirms that control group did not make significant improvement in learning English passive structure.

In sum, it was concluded that all three groups did not make great improvement on their recognition ability in English passive structure but they could somewhat enhance their production ability in English passive structure except for picture-cued writing group which their enhancement was not remarkable.

gain scores	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	69.087	2	34.543	.408	.668
Within Groups	3134.136	37	84.706		
Total	3203.223	39			

Table 19. One-way ANOVA

A one-way ANOVA was run to see if the gain scores of three groups are significantly different. As seen in table19, the significant level is .66> .05. It means the there was no significant difference among the gain scores of three groups.

Discussion

The analysis of the data indicated the noticing of the learners in output task groups (reconstruction and picture-cued writing task) and non-output task group significantly enhanced from the first input to the second input and significance level for all three groups were <.05; therefore, no difference was found between output task groups and control group and no significant difference was found between the relative efficacy of two output tasks on noticing. The results of this study were similar to the findings of Izumi et al (1999). They focused on the

English past hypothetical conditional and the results indicated that both groups of +output and –output increased their noticing of target structure on the second input and EG groups did not show greater noticing of the target structure than CG. Moreover,, Izumi and Bigelow (2000) conducted the same research and they did not confirm the beneficial effects of output tasks on noticing. In contrast with the findings of the present study,Song & Suh (2008) explored the role of output tasks to see which types of output tasks (reconstruction task and picture-cued writing task) were more effective on noticing and learning the English past counterfactual conditional. The results showed that the participants with output task outperformed those in non-output task condition on the post-production test but both output tasks were equally effective in terms of acquisition. Moreover, Soleimani (2008) investigated the noticing function of output in acquisition of rhetorical structure of contrast paragraph of Iranian EFL university students. The results showed that the output fronted activities promote the learners' noticing the target form and the output first then input activities were more effective than preemptive input activities and he confirmed the essential role of noticing in acquisition of rhetorical structure of contrast paragraph in English and he confirmed Schmidt's Noticing hypothesis and Swain's Comprehensible Output Hypothesis.

The present study was also an attempted to investigate whether reconstruction task and picture-cued writing task can promote learning English passive structure and if so, which one is more effective. To this end, repeated measures ANOVA, one-way ANOVA were run. The analysis of the data indicated that reconstruction task group and control group made somewhat great improvement in post-production test in comparison with post-recognition test but the enhancement in picture-cued writing was not remarkable. In sum,none of the tasks led to greater acquisition. And no difference was found in the relative efficacy of two output tasks. In terms of acquisition, the findings of the present study are similar to Izumi et al. (1999)'s. They concluded that the improvement on the use of the target structure (English past hypothetical conditional) was not significantly better. Izumi and Bigelow (2000) also did not confirm the beneficial effects of output task on improving the use of target structure. Moreover, Song &Suh (2008) found that output task group outperformed non-output task group on only post-production test but totally no significant difference was found in the relative efficacy of two output tasks. In contrast with the findings of this study, Izumi (2002) emphasized the effective role of output task in L2 acquisition, although he did not deny the significant role of input. Furthermore, Soleimani (2008) confirmed the essential role of output task in acquisition of rhetorical structure of contrast paragraph in English.

Implications

Since grammar has an essential role in foreign language learning and most EFL students complain that they know the grammar but they can use them accurately in writing and speaking, teachers try to find the most effective tasks to facilitate acquisition of target language structure and draw learners' attention to target form. The findings of the present study have some pedagogical implication and provide language teacher with some guidance. The results of this

study indicated that reconstruction task and to some degree picture-cued writing task and reading comprehension questions can activate the learners' receptive knowledge they have already had about English passive structure and promote its internalization and it results in more target-like production; however, they cannot increase their receptive knowledge. Therefore, language teachers can utilize not only these output tasks but also reading comprehension questions in grammar teaching to facilitate the learners' language production.

Based on the findings of this study, reconstruction task, picture-cued writing task and reading comprehension questions can equally enhanced students' noticing on a particular structure and they can be added in teachers' lesson plans to draw the learners' attention to specific structure.

Suggestions for further research

This study focused on reconstruction task and picture-cued writing task; therefore, the future studies can be focused on other output tasks. This study investigated the effect of output tasks on noticing and learning English passive structure, so the further research can be conducted to examine the effects of output tasks on noticing and learning other grammatical forms or vocabularies. In additions, this study was limited to pre-intermediate learners in an English institute, other studies can be conducted in other contexts such as universities with learners with different proficiency level. Furthermore, in this study age was not taken into account and learners at different ages might be different in terms of noticing and learning; therefore, future studies can be conducted with language learners of different ages. Moreover, further research can be conducted with a larger number of participants. As a final word, the present study was carried out in EFL context, future studies can be conducted in ESL context.

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