

Effects of Textually-Enhanced Reading Tasks and Strategic Pre-Task Planning on Learning English Passive Voice

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Abstract

In the realm of second language acquisition (SLA), task-based language teaching (TBLT) and input enhancement (IE) have been the focus of a great number of studies. However, the idea of investigating the effects of focus on form instruction through input-enhanced tasks along with pre-task planning time as one of the features of task-based language teaching has been rarely explored in the field of SLA. Therefore, the current research set out to examine the impacts of focus on form instruction via textually-enhanced reading tasks along with strategic pre-task planning on L2 learners' grammatical development in terms of learning English passive voice. For the purpose of the study, 60 intermediate learners of English were selected and divided into two groups of thirty namely as enhanced and unenhanced. Then, each group was divided into two sub-groups of fifteen as +planning and -planning. The participants were provided with a pretest prior to the treatment, then, they were instructed via the materials chosen for the purpose of the study for ten sessions and at the end they were provided with the posttest of the study. Their performance on the pretest and posttest were analyzed to find out the possible effects of the instruction provided throughout the treatment phase. The results revealed that learners who were exposed to enhanced reading tasks along with strategic pre-task planning time outperformed the other learners. The findings of the present study can be of use for language teachers, syllabus designers, and task designers.

Keywords: Focus on form, input enhancement, strategic planning time, task-based language teaching, textual enhancement

Introduction

The role that conscious and unconscious processes play in the acquisition/learning of second language has been one of the mostly debated topics in the realm of applied linguistics, especially second language acquisition. Schmidt (1990) points out that the notion of consciousness is helpful and somewhat necessary in the acquisition and learning of a second language. He argues that conscious processes are of significance in learning a second language. Also, as Schmidt (1990) puts it, the role of unconscious processes should not be ignored in language comprehension and production.

Moreover, according to Gascoine (2001), some theorists favor the systematic attention to linguistic forms of the language through drills, rules, etc. However, there are some other researchers who support the acquisition of the grammatical forms of the second or foreign language via natural exposure to the language. These theorists and researchers argue for the acquisition of grammar of second/foreign language like the acquisition of the first language. As Gascoine (2001) argues, the teachers of the second language (SL), like the researchers in the field of SLA, are divided into two separate groups regarding their view to the acquisition of linguistic forms of second language. The first group asserts that second language learners can develop their grammatical competence through their exposure to comprehensible and appropriate input. The second group involves the teachers who believe that explicit discussion of the target structure of

the second language can be helpful in developing the grammatical competence of second/foreign language learners.

Schmidt (1994) proposed noticing hypothesis and stated that in learning/acquisition process of SL, noticing is the necessary and sufficient requirement for converting input into intake. Noticing, as Schmidt (1994) puts it, is “the process of bringing some stimulus into focal attention, i.e. registering its simple occurrence, whether voluntarily or involuntarily” (p. 17). This emphasis on drawing learners’ attention to forms in an implicit way resulted in the emergence of the notion of focus-on-form (FoF) or form-focused instruction (FFI) in SLA by scholars like Long (1991). It has been argued by some researchers in the field of SLA that because form-focused instruction facilitates second language development, it seems necessary to pay particular attention to focus on form in language learning and teaching process (Ellis, 2001, 2008; Long, 1996; Nassaji, 2009; Schmidt, 1994).

According to Sheen (2003), a key feature of FoF approach is that the tasks used in the classroom must be chosen on the basis of communicative ideas toward tasks. Besides, as Sheen (2003) asserts, there is a common assumption between FoF and FoFs approaches. The common assumption is that communicative activity is superior to other types of activities in the classroom. It is argued that form-focused approach to instruction offers a skill-learning approach with three stages for learning a second/foreign language (Ellis, 2008). Besides, Sheen (2002) argued that FoF derives from a degree of similarity between L1 and L2 acquisition/learning positing that both processes are based upon the exposure to comprehensible input arising from natural interaction. Moreover, Long (1983) stated that “FoF actually draws learner’s attention to linguistic elements, as they arise incidentally in lessons whose overwriting focus is on meaning or communication” (p.456).

Before introducing input enhancement, consciousness-raising (CR) was presented by Sharwood Smith (1993) as an effort to alleviate the problems of teaching and learning SL/FL appeared in focus on forms (FoFs) instruction. In CR the language teacher makes efforts to increase the learners’ consciousness of the form targeted in the process of instruction. Later, Sharwood Smith (1993) exchanged CR with input-enhancement (IE) which can be controlled by the teachers. As he puts it, the goal of IE is making some SL/FL forms more salient so as to draw SL/FL learners’ attention to them.

Literature Review

Focus on form (FoF), task-based language teaching (TBLT), and input-enhancement (IE) have been among highly attended areas of research in the literature of second language acquisition (SLA). There have been a great number of studies on focus of form instruction (Alavinia, Shafaei, & Salimi, 2018; Ellis, 2001, 2008, 2009; Gass, Mackey, & Pica, 1998; Long, 1996; Nassaji, 2009), task-based language teaching (Huang, 2016; Kuhl, Salimi, & Shafaei, 2012; Shafaei, 2012; Shafaei, Salimi, & Talebi, 2013; Skehan & Foster, 1999; Tavakoli & Skehan, 2005; Yuan & Ellis, 2003) as well as input-enhancement (Ellis, N., 1993, 1995; Sharwood Smith, 1981). Such great amount of attention paid to the above mentioned topics highlights their importance in the realm of SLA.

According to Mohamed (2004), there has been a debate among the researchers and teachers of second language over the idea of teaching or not teaching of grammar. In this regard, some scholars, like Krashen (1982), believe that grammar can be acquired through the natural exposure of the learners to the input that is adequate and comprehensible. However, other researchers, like White (1987), have an opposite view and state that formal instruction of grammar must be included in the process of teaching and learning of grammar of a second

language. White (1987) alleges that some grammatical features of a second language cannot be learned only by mere exposure. Furthermore, other scholars, like Larsen-Freeman (1995), call for a combination of natural exposure and formal instruction in the process of acquiring a second language. She asserts that even if grammatical features of a second language are acquired through natural exposure, it does not mean that they don't need to be taught. As Larsen-Freeman (1995) points out, instruction can improve the acquisition of the grammatical features of a second language.

Besides, from a pedagogical point of view, there has been a dispute over how second language learners' attention should be drawn to the target forms (Mohamed, 2004). In this vein, some practitioners, like Sheen (1992), favor a deductive approach, in which the rules of particular features of the target language should be explicitly presented and explained to second or foreign language learners, and suggest that it is the most influential way of teaching grammar to second language learners. However, other researchers, such as Bourke (1996), support an inductive approach, in which learners are provided with the input in the target language to discover and formulate the grammatical rules of the second language for themselves, and state that it is more successful than the deductive approach.

As Sharwood Smith (1981) states, target structures and meaning can be internalized by increasing input quality through IE strategies like boldfacing and highlighting. It is argued that this technique brings the forms into focal attention, and according to Schmidt (2001), some L2 components are so subtle and abstract that they cannot be attended to; therefore, one of the significant tasks in teaching SL/FL is bringing these linguistic aspects to the focal attention of SL/FL learners. According to Sharwood Smith (1981), there are two kinds of IE strategies namely as positive and negative. Positive type of IE emphasizes highlighting correct forms in the input and negative IE deals with highlighting incorrect structures. In accordance with N. Ellis (1995), IE includes three major parts. The first involves interpretation. As N. Ellis (1995) states, it basically deals with comprehending new target structures. The second refers to integration. This part is obtained when the completion of the 3 parts results in the knowledge that is integrated into the implicit system. The third is production. This phase, as N. Ellis (1995) asserts, refers to using of the new forms automatically.

Task-based language teaching, according to Ellis (2012), involves a strong version of communicative language teaching (CLT). As Willis and Willis (2001) state, one of the significant features of task-based language teaching and learning is that learners can select the forms which they wish to convey the meaning and achieve the outcome of the task. TBLT, as Ellis (2003) puts it, is a teaching strategy which views language as a communication. In TBLT, tasks play a central role in planning teaching and learning strategies since they provide a better context for learning and acquisition of a second/foreign language. (Ellis, 2012).

As Long and Crookes (1992) state, task-based language teaching provides learners with a more appropriate condition to develop their L2. According to Ellis (2012), TBLT is an approach for SL/FL teaching which based on a set of general principles and engages learners in authentic language use through involving them in performing tasks. It intends, as Ellis (2012) states, to help L2 learners acquire the system of their target language and to make use of their current knowledge. Throughout the history of second/foreign language acquisition/learning, many researchers have studied different aspects of task-based language teaching and learning (Alavinia, Shafaei, & Salimi, 2018; Ellis, 2005; Foster & Skehan, 1999; Salimi, Kuhl, & Shafaei 2012; Shafaei, Salimi, & Talebi, 2013; Tavakoli & Foster, 2008). The plethora of studies conducted on task and their different aspects and features prove that task-based language teaching is a significant area of research in SLA.

As Newell & Simon (1972) argued, planning is a goal-oriented mental activity in which people get involved so as to attain a special goal. In accordance with Ellis (2005), there are two main kinds of planning in TBLT namely as pre-task and within-task planning. As the name shows, the former is referred to as planning which occurs prior to the main performance of the task. The latter, as Ellis (2005) puts it, deals with the planning occurring in the process of task performance. According to Ellis (2005), there are two sub-categories of pre-task planning. The first sub-category is rehearsal in which learners get the chance to rehearse or practice the intended task prior to its performance. The second sub-category, which is called strategic planning, refers to the learners are provided with the actual task materials prior to the main performance.

Several studies have been conducted in the areas related to the topic of the current research. The followings are just a few examples of the great number of the studies done in the areas of relevance to the subject of this research. Leowen (2003) examined the effectiveness of incidental FoF in promoting second language development and found that the learners were able to recall the targeted linguistic information after the FoF instruction. Also, Rashtchi and Khosroabadi (2009) investigated the effects explicit focus on form and dictogloss tasks on helping beginning EFL learners learn English tenses. The results of their study revealed no significant difference between the two groups. Rahimpour, Salimi, and Farrokhi (2012a) explored the impact of intensive and extensive FoF on EFL learners' written accuracy and found that there were significant differences between the performances of the two groups in terms of accuracy. Karbalaee, Pourzargham, and Kazemi (2013) investigated the impact of FoF instruction on vocabulary learning through the medium of visually-enhanced reading texts and reported positive effects of visual enhancement of forms on learning vocabulary and grammar. Ahour and Gorbani Shemshadsara (2015) conducted a study to investigate the impact of focused and unfocused tasks on university students' grammatical achievement. They found that the performance of the students using focused task outweighed the students who were exposed to unfocused task. Alavinia, Shafaei, and Salimi (2018) investigated the effects of focused/unfocused audio-appended reading tasks on intermediate female EFL learners' written accuracy and reported that learners instructed by focused audio-appended reading tasks showed better performance than the learners instructed via unfocused audio-appended reading tasks. Dehghan and Tabatabaei (2018) examined the effects of form-focused, meaning-focused, and forms-focused instruction on Iranian intermediate EFL learners' development of collocations and found that the learners who were exposed to focus on meaning instruction outperformed the learners of the other two groups.

Having reviewed the studies pertained to the topic of the current research study, it was found that many studies have been conducted on FoF instruction, IE techniques, as well as TBLT and pre-task planning time. However, there was a gap in the literature of SLA with regard to the possible effects of focus on form instruction and input-enhancement strategies along with different types of pre-task planning time on second/foreign language learners' task performance and grammatical development. Therefore, the present research was an attempt to investigate the effects textually-enhanced reading tasks and strategic pre-task planning time on learning English passive voice. This research was an effort to fill the existing gap on the topic of the study and explore the possible impacts of focus on form instruction through textually-enhanced reading tasks along with strategic pre-task planning time as a feature of task-based language teaching on learning English passive voice by EFL learners.

Methodology

Research question

RQ₁: Are textually-enhanced reading tasks and strategic pre-task planning effective in learning English passive voice?

Participants

In order to conduct this study, the researcher worked with four groups. The age range of the participants was between 16 and 23, and in terms of number of participants, 60 students (each group composed of 15) were involved. The participants of the present study were both male and female learners of English. It must be noted that they were selected on the basis of their performance on Oxford Proficiency Test (OPT). In order to choose the participants, 115 English language learners took Oxford Proficiency Test and 60 learners who were at intermediate level of English language proficiency in accordance with the scoring criteria of OPT were chosen as the learners participating in the current study.

Instructional Materials

The reading tasks to be used in the treatment phase were taken from Active 3 (Anderson, 2008), Cause and Effect (Ackert & Lee, 2006), Read This 3 (Savage, 2013) all of which are among the highly used reading books in English classes. The texts were picked on the basis of involving at least five instances of the target structure, i.e. passive voice. The texts chosen were manipulated, i.e. re-typed and highlighted, to fit the goal of the study. Ten texts which contained at least five cases of passive voice were selected for the treatment phase of the current study.

These books are commonly used in language institutes as the reading sources in their courses. They were chosen from among many books since the texts involved in these books contained an ample amount of the targeted structure, i.e. passive voice. It must be noted that the texts chosen for the treatment phase of the study included at least five cases of English passive voice. From these three books, ten texts which contained at least five instances of passive voice were selected for the treatment phase of the current study. Then, for each text, some exercises in the format of reading comprehension questions and true or false items were designed by the researcher himself. These post-reading exercises required the participants of all groups to provide complete answers to each reading comprehension question. For true/false items, the students were required to provide the sentence that led them to the true or false answer. All of these exercises included the target grammatical feature of the study, i.e. passive voice, and, in this way, the learners could get more practice on these structures and their understanding and mastery of the target features could be evaluated at the end of each session.

Data Collection Instruments

Two cloze tests were employed as the pretest and posttest of the study to measure the learners' grammatical mastery of the targeted structure before and after the treatment phase and to collect the data needed for the purpose of the current research. The cloze tests for pretest and posttest were prepared from the two texts taken from the books North Star 4 (2014) and World English 2 (2012). These books are widely used in English courses held in language institutes. These texts were manipulated to fit the objectives of the study.

The pretest of the study was a text containing five instances of passive voice. To turn it into a cloze test, the passive voice forms were removed from the text and for each of them four choices were provided so that the learners could choose the correct form among them.

The posttest cloze test was an exercise taken from North Star 4 (2014). It was in the form of fill in the blanks with verbs and the tense to be used inside parentheses which required the learners to utilize the passive voice of the verbs given in the tenses provided inside the

parentheses. To fit the goal of the study, the verbs and the tenses provided for each item were deleted from the text and, instead of them, four choices were provided for each item and the learners were required to choose the correct answer from among them.

Procedure

At the first phase of the study, to homogenize the participants, a proficiency test, i.e. Oxford Proficiency Test (OPT) was utilized. Then, the participants of all groups were given the pretest in order to measure their knowledge of passive voice prior to the treatment.

After homogenizing the participants via the proficiency test, i.e. Oxford Proficiency Test (OPT), the learners chosen as the participants of the study were randomly divided into four groups (enhanced+planning, enhanced-planning, unenhanced+planning, and unenhanced-planning). Then, the participants of all groups were given the pretest of the study in order to measure their grammatical abilities prior to the treatment. It also needs to be mentioned that in groups named as “+planning”, the learners were provided with five minutes of planning time prior to pretest in order to plan the way they would perform the tasks given. However, no planning time was given to the learners who were assigned to “-planning” groups before the administration of the pretest. After implementing the pretest, the learners of each group received the treatment based on the group in which they were involved.

In enhanced groups, the learners were provided with enhanced reading texts in which the target structure, i.e. passive voice, was highlighted. As the learners were listening to the audio file of the reading text, they were exposed to the enhanced texts provided to them. After listening for two times, the teacher himself read the text to the learners. While reading the text, he made efforts in drawing the learners’ attention to the target structure, i.e. passive voice, through raising his intonation and repeating the highlighted forms. After that, some of the learners were asked to read the text, while raising their intonation when they got to the highlighted structure, so that the other learners’ attention was drawn to the target structures emphasized in the text. It is worth noting that at the end of each session, the learners were provided with exercises which required them to use the grammatical structure highlighted in the provided texts.

In unenhanced groups, the learners were provided with unenhanced reading texts. In these texts, the target structure, i.e. passive voice, was not highlighted. The participants of these groups were provided with the unenhanced texts. After listening for the first time, the audio file was replayed for them and in both cases they had the unenhanced reading text in front of them. After listening to the audio file, the teacher himself read the text. However, in these groups, no emphasis on the target structure, i.e. passive voice, was added by the teacher. Then, the teacher asked some of the learners to read the text out loud for the class. Since these groups were to receive unenhanced instruction on the target structure, the learners read the text normally without any changes in their intonations. Having read the texts, the students were given some exercises on the grammatical structures employed in the text to check their understanding of the structure used in the text.

At the end of the treatment, the participants of all groups were provided with the posttest akin to the pretest of the study, i.e. cloze test passages. Like the pretest, the learners of “+planning” groups were given five minutes as strategic planning time so as to make plans on how they would the task before providing them with the main task, i.e. the posttest. The participants of “-planning” groups, however, were not provided with pre-task planning time prior to the performance of posttest. Their performance on the pre-and-posttest was quantified and analyzed in order to find the possible effects of the instructional strategies administered in the treatment phase.

Data Analysis and Results

In order to answer and examine the research questions and hypothesis, the data collected for the goal of the study were analyzed. The results of data analysis are provided in the following sections.

In order to check the reliability and validity of the pretest and posttest employed in this study, they were measured by means of SPSS. The results of the analysis of reliability and validity are provided in the following sections.

To measure the reliability of the pretest, reliability analysis was run and the results of the analysis are provided in the following table.

Table 1. *The results of reliability analysis for pretest*

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
0.78	0.78	5

According to the data presented in table 1, the value of Cronbach's Alpha for pretest is 0.78. This means that the pretest utilized in the present study was a reliable test since the value of Cronbach's Alpha is higher than 0.7.

Also, SPSS was used to check the validity of the pretest. Table 2 shows the results of the analysis for validity of pretest.

Table 2. *The results of validity analysis for pretest*

		q1	q2	q3	q4	q5
q1	Pearson Correlation	1	0.39**	0.65**	0.32*	0.44**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.002	0.00	0.01	0.00
	N	60	60	60	60	60
q2	Pearson Correlation	0.39**	1	0.23	0.32*	0.43**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.00		0.07	0.01	0.00
	N	60	60	60	60	60
q3	Pearson Correlation	0.65**	0.23	1	0.30*	0.53**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.00	0.07		0.01	0.00
	N	60	60	60	60	60
q4	Pearson Correlation	0.32*	0.32*	0.30*	1	0.42**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.01	0.01	0.01		0.00
	N	60	60	60	60	60
q5	Pearson Correlation	0.44**	0.43**	0.53**	0.42**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	
	N	60	60	60	60	60

In accordance with table 2, there was significant correlation between the five questions involved in the pretest of the current study. Such significant correlation indicates that the pretest employed in the present study was a valid test.

Table 3. *The results of reliability analysis for posttest*

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
0.80	0.80	5

As the data provided in table 3 shows, the posttest employed in this research study had a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.80. That is, the posttest used in this research was a reliable test for the value of its Cronbach's Alpha was more than 0.7.

Table 4. *The results of validity analysis for posttest*

		q1	q2	q3	q4	q5
q1	Pearson Correlation	1	0.42**	0.67**	0.36**	0.50**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	N	60	60	60	60	60
q2	Pearson Correlation	0.42**	1	0.27*	0.37**	0.51**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.00		0.03	0.00	0.00
	N	60	60	60	60	60
q3	Pearson Correlation	0.67**	0.27*	1	0.34**	0.59**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.00	0.03		0.00	0.00
	N	60	60	60	60	60
q4	Pearson Correlation	0.36**	0.37**	0.34**	1	0.49**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.00	.003	.006		0.00
	N	60	60	60	60	60
q5	Pearson Correlation	0.50**	0.51**	0.59**	0.49**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	
	N	60	60	60	60	60

The data presented in the table above show the results of the statistical analysis for measuring the validity of the posttest used in the current study. According to table 4, there was a significant value of correlation between the questions included in the posttest. Therefore, it can be claimed that the posttest of the current research was a valid test.

Table 5 shows the results of applying One-Way ANOVA to compare the pretest scores of the participants.

Table 5. *The results of One-Way ANOVA for pretest scores*

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	28.62	5	5.72	1.6	0.16
Within Groups	297.60	84	3.54		
Total	326.22	89			

As table 5 shows, there was no significant difference between the performance of the learners chosen as the participants of the current study in pretest. That is, the participants' grammatical knowledge in terms of passive voice as the targeted form was not significantly different from each other.

Also, the following table involves the results of One-way ANOVA for the comparison of the learners' performance in the posttest.

Table 6. *The results of One-Way ANOVA for pretest scores*

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	256.98	3	85.66	19.69	0.00
Within Groups	243.60	56	4.35		
Total	500.58	59			

In accordance with the data presented in table 6, there were significant differences between the performance of the participants in the posttest. This means that the instructions provided in the treatment phase of the study have caused some significant differences in learners' grammatical knowledge in terms of passive voice.

LSD post hoc test was also run so as to find the precise differences between the groups of the participants. The results are provided in the following table.

Table 7. *LSD Post Hoc test for comparing learners' scores in posttest*

(I) Method	(J) Method	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Enhanced +Planning	Enhanced Planning	- 4.40*	0.76	0.00	2.87	5.93
	Unenhanced +Planning	1.53*	0.76	0.04	0.01	3.06
	Unenhanced Planning	- 5.06*	0.76	0.00	3.54	6.59
Unenhanced +Planning	Enhanced Planning	- 2.86*	0.76	0.00	1.34	4.39
	Unenhanced Planning	- 3.53*	0.76	0.00	2.01	5.06
	Enhanced +Planning	-1.53*	0.76	0.04	-3.06	-0.01

According to the table above, there were significant differences between the learners performance in the posttest. As the data presented in table 7 shows, learners who received enhanced task along with strategic pre-task planning time indicated the best performance in the posttest. Also, as it can be seen in the table, the participants who were provided with unenhanced tasks and an opportunity for strategic pre-task planning time outperformed the learners of other groups except those involved in enhanced+planning group.

Discussion

The results of data analysis of the performance of the learners participating in this study in cloze posttest indicated that there were significant differences between the performance of participants in terms of their written task accuracy in the cloze posttest. According to the results of the study, the learners who received enhanced task with strategic pre-task planning time outperformed those who were exposed to unenhanced tasks without pre-task planning time in terms of their accuracy in passive voice.

The results of this study are in line with the findings of the following studies. Leowen (2003) examined the effectiveness of incidental focus on form in promoting SL development and found that L2 learners were able to recall the targeted linguistic information after receiving form-focused instruction. Rahimpour, Salimi, and Farrokhi (2012a) investigated the effect of intensive and extensive focus on form on EFL learners' written accuracy and reported that form-focused instruction significantly affected the performances of the participants in terms of written task accuracy. Zohrabi and Rezaei (2012) explored the role of form-focused feedback on developing students' writing skill. The result of their research revealed that writing skill of those students who received form-focused feedback improved considerably. Karbalaei, Pourzargham, and Kazemi (2013) investigated the impact of focus on form instruction on vocabulary learning through the medium of visually enhanced reading texts. The results revealed positive effects of visual enhancement of forms on learning vocabulary and grammar. Salimi, Bonyadi, and Asghari (2014) carried out a study to investigate the effect of focus on form on EFL learners' written task accuracy across different proficiency levels and found that form-focused instruction had a significant effect on the accuracy of high proficient learners. Alavinia, Shafaei, and Salimi (2018) investigated the effects of focused/unfocused audio-appended reading tasks on intermediate female EFL learners' written accuracy and reported that learners instructed by focused audio-appended reading tasks showed better performance than the learners instructed via unfocused audio-appended reading tasks.

However, the findings of the present research were at odds with the following studies. Dekeyser (1995) reported upon the effects of implicit and explicit focus on form to see which type of corrective feedback is more effective. The results of the studies showed that explicit focus on form instruction led to more beneficial effects than did implicit learning. Rashtchi and Khosroabadi (2009) investigated the effects of two output-oriented focus on form types of instruction namely explicit focus on form (EFF) and dictogloss (DG) tasks on helping beginning EFL learners learn English tenses. The results of their study showed that the difference between the two groups was not statistically significant. Rahimpour, Salimi, and Farrokhi (2012b) studied the effects of intensive and extensive form-focused instruction on L2 learners' oral task performance in terms of accuracy. The results of the study revealed no differences between the performances of two groups in terms of the accuracy in oral narrative task.

The findings of this study in terms of the effects of textually-enhanced reading tasks along with strategic pre-task planning time on intermediate L2 learners' grammatical knowledge in terms of learning and using passive voice can be justified in terms of noticing hypothesis, input

enhancement, and the ideas of focus on form (FOF) instruction. Schmidt (1990) asserted that noticing is the necessary and sufficient condition for converting input into intake. Moreover, Schmidt (2001) pointed out that noticing and noticing-the-gap are two essential processes of second language acquisition. Schmidt offered two versions of noticing hypothesis. According to Schmidt's ideas, second or foreign language learning process can be facilitated by drawing learners' attention to the forms of the target language. Based on the ideas put forward by Schmidt (2001), it can be claimed that the differences observed in participants' written task performance can be attributed to the highlighted target forms which made the learners pay more attention to the targeted structure, i.e. passive voice, and therefore improve their grammatical knowledge. The improvement caused by drawing learners' attention via enhanced reading tasks enhanced learners written task accuracy.

In addition, as Sharwood Smith (1993) states, IE is a strategy for making some SL/FL forms more noticeable so as to draw the language learners' attention. Besides, according to Sharwood Smith (1981), internalization of the second/foreign language structures and meaning takes place by enhancing input through IE strategies. It is argued that this technique brings the forms into focal attention, and according to Schmidt (2001), some L2 components are so subtle that L2 learners cannot notice them; therefore, one of the main roles of a foreign/second language teacher is helping L2 learners focus their attention on the linguistic aspects. The findings of this study in terms of the effects of focused and unfocused reading tasks along with strategic pre-task planning time on intermediate L2 learners' written task accuracy can be attributed to the ideas of input-enhancement (IE) in that the highlighting and oral repetition techniques employed in the implementation phase were among the techniques introduced as external input enhancement techniques. These strategies were utilized in the current study and resulted in a boost in the learners' written accuracy. Highlighting and changing intonation techniques were effective IE techniques since the learners who were exposed to enhanced reading tasks during the treatment phase outperformed those who did not receive such tasks throughout the treatment phase.

Furthermore, the findings of this study can be related to the ideas of focus on form instruction in which implicit drawing of second language learners' attention to the target forms can enhance their learning/acquisition of the second language (Ellis, 2012; Long, 1991). They can also be explained in lights of strategies of planned focus on form. Ellis (2001) classified form-focused instruction into three types of planned, incidental, and focus-on-forms. As Ellis (2001) puts it, in planned FoF a target structure is selected prior to a lesson or treatment and one or more target structures are focused on intensively. Besides, as Ellis, Basturkmen, and Loewen (2002) state, planned focus on form is intensive, focusing frequently on the same linguistic structure. In this study, focus on form was implemented by means of input-enhancement strategies. That is, planned focus on form was operationalized via highlighting passive voice in the reading texts in order to make the learners attend to them. The differences spotted in the learners' written task accuracy can be attributed to form-focused instruction, especially planned FoF, in that the learners who were instructed by means of enhanced/focused reading tasks outperformed the learners were exposed to unenhanced/unfocused tasks. Form-focused instruction helped the learners to pay more or especial attention to the forms targeted in this study and thus improve their performance in terms of their written task accuracy.

The results of this study can be explained and justified through the notion of pre-task planning time. In according with Kawauchi (2005), planning helps learners allocate conscious attention to second language forms and thus helps them improve their accuracy in using second language. Besides, as Bygate and Samuda (2005) state, planning affects language learners' task performance in terms of the production elements of accuracy, fluency, and complexity. The

strategic pre-task planning time opportunity provided for the learners participating in this study along with the enhanced reading tasks helped learners pay more attention to the form targeted in the current study and hence improved their accuracy.

Conclusion

The aim of the current research study was to examine the impact of textually-enhanced reading tasks and strategic pre-task planning on learning English passive voice. The findings of the study indicated that there were significant differences between the performance of the participants of the study in terms of their accuracy in using passive voice in the posttest when they were provided with textually-enhanced reading tasks along with an opportunity for strategic pre-task planning time.

The significant differences observed in the results of the study can be imputed to the idea that when L2 learners were provided with form-focused instruction by means of textually-enhanced reading tasks including highlighted target forms along with intonation changes in the treatment phase, their attention was implicitly drawn to the highlighted forms and subconsciously acquired them. The repetition of the input-enhancement strategies and the post-task exercises which required the participants to provide complete answers for questions and exercises using the targeted form contributed to their acquisition process.

The findings of the present study lent more support to using form-focused instruction strategies as well as input enhancement techniques in teaching second and foreign languages, especially grammatical forms. The results of this research showed that drawing foreign language learners' attention to target forms through implicit strategies like the ones introduced in FoF instruction and input-enhancement can enhance the possibility of learners' acquisition. Also, the present study and its findings were contributions to the line of research which focuses on and favors the use of form-focused instruction since its results provided evidence for the utility of FoF and IE strategies in teaching and learning of foreign and second languages.

This study and its findings can be of use for the researchers who work in the realm of SLA, in that they can fill part of the gap which exists in the literature of second language acquisition relevant to the topic of this study. The results of the current research lent support to the effectiveness of focus on form instruction through input-enhancement techniques in improving the accuracy of language learners' task performance. The current study and its findings can be helpful for the researchers who work in the field of second language acquisition, in that they can fill part of the gap existing in the literature relevant to the topic of this study. Besides, syllabus and task designers may benefit from this study. They can employ the findings of this study in designing reading tasks which are accompanied by audio files and are in line with the principles of form-focused instruction. They can employ some strategies of form-focused instruction like highlighting some grammatical points in their texts, so that the learners' attention is drawn to these structures and the teachers can use texts to familiarize their learners with grammatical points of English while they are involved in reading the texts. Through this, syllabus and task designers can also promote the use of form-focused instruction in foreign and second language learning/acquisition classes. Moreover, the results of this thesis may have some implications for language teachers. They can employ the strategies of form-focused instruction along with different tasks like focused and unfocused reading tasks appended with audio files. Through using focused audio-appended texts in language learning classes, the teachers may improve both their students' reading abilities and teach the grammatical points of the language to them in an implicit manner and enhance their grammatical knowledge. In addition, language test developers can make use of the results of the current study to design and prepare tests which are

in line with the ideas of form-focused instruction and can be used to test learners' grammatical performance in terms of accuracy.

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