



The Efficacy of Audio Input Flooding Tasks on Learning Grammar: Uptake of Present Tense

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Abstract

This study sought to probe the role of input flooding through listening tasks on the uptake of simple present tense and the present progressive tense among pre-intermediate English as Foreign Language (EFL) learners. To comply with the objective, an experimental design was adopted. 55 pre-intermediate learners participated in the study. They were randomly divided into one control group, non-flooding group (NFG, N= 17), and two experimental groups including pre-task input flooding group (pre-IFG, N= 18) and post input flooding group (post-IFG, N=20). Pre-IFG received pre-task flooding while post-IFG received a post-task input flooding. To probe their improvement, the researchers administered a posttest on grammar to all three groups. A one-way ANOVA was run and the findings revealed that the three groups were homogeneous at the onset of the intervention. The results demonstrated that both pre-IFG and post-IFG were equally effective on the uptake of the target grammatical forms and that the two groups outperformed NFG. The findings have implications for EFL teachers and materials developers.

Keywords: Audio input flooding, Grammar, Noticing, Pre task, Post task, Uptake

INTRODUCTION

Grammar is one of the most prominent elements, which an English as Foreign Language Learner (EFL) has to acquire. That is because the grammar component is considered a sub-skill contributing to all other main skills. Grammatically accurate writing and speaking skills have unique role in professional-level communication (Brown, 2007). Notwithstanding the eminent role

of grammar instruction in EFL, a majority of L2 learners persist to be challenged by it during the periods of intensive study as well as long after they have scored a high point on proficiency test. Far-reaching examination of those learning EFL implies that grammatical problems are mainly obvious in learners' abilities to produce written or spoken forms that are linguistically accurate. Even after English as Second Language Learners (ESL) learn to create a form that is rather substantive, well organized and cohesive, many still

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attempt to free themselves from the linguistic level that distinguishes them from their native-speakers (Nassaji & Fotos, 2011).

Though sporadically imprecise or in a better word inaccurate forms may only be a frustration, they often hinders the reader's or listener's knack to understand what is written and or told. Moreover, they may even influence the audience's opinion about the writer or speaker's language skill (Nassaji & Fotos, 2011). With these vital contextual issues in mind, this research study offers a short argument for the role of input flooding via listening tasks in the acquisition of targeted grammatical forms among the EFL learners.

Some literature around the topic

There have been a number of studies focusing on the role input provided through listening on improving linguistic skills. For example, Mihara (2015) conducted a research to examine the effects of phonological input on students' vocabulary learning. Mihara's study also discussed how various pre-listening activities affect students' second language listening comprehension. The participants included first-year students studying at a Japanese university. There were two experimental groups, each given a different type of lexical support prior to the listening test. One group was assigned an activity with phonological input, and the other group, an activity without phonological input. Then, the respective groups took different types of vocabulary test. There was also a control group that received no pre-testing preparation. All of the participants took the same listening tests. The results indicated that phonological input did not play a significant role in either vocabulary test or listening comprehension test performance; however, pre-listening activities did positively affect listening comprehension test performance regardless of the type of activity.

Sharwood and Smith (1993) conducted a study determining the degree to which input enhancement and input flood could affect Iranian EFL learners' long-term retention of conditional structures. They concluded that the learners' knowledge of conditionals was almost at the

same level. It was also found that the class exposed to a combination of input flood and input enhancement outperformed the other two classes. The findings suggested that teachers combine both input enhancement and input flooding by implementing them together in order to help their students to learn and recall difficult structures effectively-without drills and repetition.

Similarly, Mahvelat and Mukundan (2012) explored possible differences between field-dependent and field-independent learners with regard to the role of input flood treatment as an implicit method of collocation instruction. Two intact classes comprising sixty-four upper-intermediate learners with roughly the same level of language proficiency participated in this study. The findings revealed that input flood treatment improved the performance of the experimental group at post-test stage. A deeper analysis concerning the differences between field-dependent/independent learners indicated input flooding was more beneficial for field-independent learners in both short and long term. Moreover, the results of within-field-dependent/independent group showed that while input flood treatment did not have long-term effect on improving the field-dependent's knowledge of the target collocations, it had durable effect on the field-independent's collocation development.

Therefore, there have been a number of studies concerning input flooding task on fostering learners' grammatical and lexical knowledge. However, a few studies have been conducted on EFL learners' grammatical knowledge through listening skill. More precisely, this study examined the effect of input flooding through selected listening excerpts on the grammar learning of the EFL learners. To this end, an experimental design is devised to probe the corresponding effects on the uptake of the simple present and present progressive forms in an instructed EFL situation. Hence, the following research questions were formulated:

1. Is there a significant difference between NIFG and IFG in terms of learning sim-

- ple present and progressive tense on the immediate posttest?
2. Is there a significant difference between NIFG and IFG in terms of learning simple present and progressive tense on the delayed posttest?

METHODS

Participants

The participants of the study included 55 elementary learners of English at an English institute in Babol, Iran. The participants were both male and female teenage learners whose ages ranged from 11-15. The class met twice a week for about two hours. A convenience sampling procedure was conducted for selecting the subject. They were then randomly grouped into NIFG (N=17) as a control group and two experimental groups with different intervention, Pre-IFG (N=18) and post-IFG (N= 20).

Instruments

To comply with the objective of the present study the following instruments were employed:

Oxford Placement Test

Before the treatment session began, all the participants took part in a paper-based placement test, Oxford Placement Test (OPT) that is used to check the homogeneity of the groups in terms of their proficiency levels. This test has 60 multiple-choice items in three sections including vocabulary, grammar, and reading passages. Learners had 60 minutes to take the test under serious testing condition. According to the guidelines of the test, those learners score 28-36 are considered as pre-intermediate learners and those who score 37-47 as upper-intermediate ones.

Grammar Test

A multiple-choice test, which was designed and piloted by the researchers, was used to measure the grammar knowledge of the learners. The same tests were used as immediate posttest as well as delayed posttest to check the knowledge of the participants. This test contained 42 items

designed by the researchers based on the achievement tests provided in the Assessment Package of Top Notch 1A. Fifteen multiple-choice items were checking simple present and present progressive tenses and hence considered to be a recognition type; in addition, the other 27 items were in cloze format and hence considered to be comprehension-production type (Farhady, Jafarpour, & Birjandi, 1994). To test the reliability of the test, it was piloted to a group of male elementary learners (n=14) in the same institute and the obtained scores were used for calculating the reliability index through KR21, which was .73.

Procedure of the study

The following steps were taken for the procedure of this study. Firstly, a placement test was administered. To select a group of learners whose proficiency level match the criterion of the study, pre-intermediate level, OPT was administered in the first session in order to homogenize the sample participants. Secondly, the participants randomly assigned to three groups: one control group, NFG, and two experimental groups randomly assigned as pre-IFG and post-IFG.

A test of grammar developed by Farhady et al. (1994) was constructed. It aimed to trace the effect of input flooding of simple present and present progressive tense. Next, a pilot study was conducted in a similar group to check the reliability of the teacher made test. The test enjoyed the reliability of .73.

Grammar lessons comprised of present progressive tense and simple present tense utilized for the classroom. The grammar lessons were based on Top Notch 1A presented in the first three units. The researchers utilized a supplementary material for both pre-IFG and post-IFG. More precisely, some listening scripts were taken from Tactics for listening, Basic Level, developed by Richards (2012). The scripts were selected based on their coverage of the target tenses. The difference between the experimental groups was just the timing of presenting listening material.

More specifically, in pre-IFG, noticing listen-

ing tasks were employed. Next, the relevant questions gear to the content and tenses were asked the target participants. Then, the grammatical points were highlighted in the sentences extracted from the scripts, which have been already covered via listening skill. The teacher bolded the structures and asked the student to describe/support their answers by using metalinguistic description to the best of their knowledge. This, in turn, the participants them notice and pick up the target structures embedded in the audio input. In the Post-IFG, the grammatical point was discussed and then, the listening comprehension tasks were employed. The listening comprehension questions were asked according to the content of the listening task and the target tenses. Moreover, the learners were asked to identify the

sentences, which contain the target tenses and discuss the meanings. Finally the grammar exercises of the textbooks were covered in the class.

The learners in each group, then, took part in a posttest after the course, which was considered as a part of their final achievement score. To conduct the delayed posttest, the researchers repeated the test after a two-week interval. Then the scores were analyzed for further interpretation.

RESULTS

To ensure the homogeneity of the participants in terms of the gender, an OPT was administered to the participants of the study. The results are presented in Table 1 below:

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics for OPT

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
OPT	NFG	17	12.52	1.86	10	15
	Pre-IFG	18	12.05	1.30	11	15
	Post-IFG	20	12.95	1.76	10	14

Table 1 reveals that the observed mean and standard deviation for the NFG are 12.52, 1.52 and in the Pre-IFG are 12.05, 1.86 respectively.

Finally, the mean and standard deviation for Post-IFG are 12.95 and 1.76. In order to check the homogeneity of the groups, a one-way ANOVA was run.

Table 2
One-way ANOVA for the OPT scores

OPT	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	7.579	2	3.790	1.697	.193
Within Groups	116.130	52	2.233		
Total	123.709	54			

As indicated in Table 2, the observed F score is 1.69 and the observed significance level is .19, which is higher than the accepted range of $p < .05$. Thus, it can be argued that there is no

significant difference between the groups of learners in terms of their performance on OPT. In other words, these three groups are similar in terms of their proficiency level.

Table 3
Test of normality for immediate posttest

	Group	Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	df	Sig.
Immediate Posttest	NFG	.925	17	.182
	Pre-IFG	.894	18	.046
	Post-IFG	.923	20	.112

Table 3 indicates that the observed results for immediate posttest scores for NFG ($Z = .92$, $p = .18$), Pre-IFG ($Z = .89$, $p = .04$) and Post-IFG ($Z = .92$, $p = .11$) show that the distribution of the data is normal for NFG and Post-IFG since the

observed p is above .05. In contrast, the observed results for Pre-IFG show that the distribution of the data is not normal since the observed p is below .05. Based on these results parametric test can be used for the analysis of data and testing the null hypotheses.

Table 4
Test of normality for delayed posttest

	Group	Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	df	Sig.
Immediate Posttest	NFG	.928	17	.166
	Pre-IFG	.931	18	.141
	Post-IFG	.920	20	.126

According to table 4, the observed results for immediate posttest scores for NFG ($Z = .92$, $p = .16$), Pre-IFG ($Z = .93$, $p = .14$) and Post-IFG ($Z = .92$, $p = .12$) show that the distribution of the data is normal for all three groups. Based on these results parametric test can be used for the analysis of data and testing the null hypotheses.

The first research question

To answer the first research question, which examined any significant difference between NIFG and IFG in terms of learning simple present and progressive tense on the immediate posttest, one way ANOVA was run.

Table 4 shows the descriptive statistics of the scores obtained from grammar posttest administered to the three groups.

Table 5
Descriptive statistics for immediate grammar posttest

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
OPT	NFG	17	17.76	1.48	15	20
	Pre-IFG	18	21.05	2.60	17	25
	Post-IFG	20	22.95	1.55	20	25

As indicated in Table 5, the observed mean and standard deviation for the NFG are 17.76 and 1.48 respectively. Moreover, the observed mean and standard deviation for the Pre-IFG are 21.05

and 2.60 respectively. Finally, the mean and standard deviation for Post-IFG are 22.95 and 1.55. In order to determine the probable difference among the groups, a one-way ANOVA was run.

Table 6
One-way ANOVA for immediate grammar posttest

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	249.426	2	124.713	33.101	.000
Within Groups	195.920	52	3.768		
Total	445.345	54			

According to table 6, the observed F score is 33.10 and the observed significance level is .00, which is lower than the accepted range of $p < .05$. Thus, it can be argued that there is a significant among the groups of learners in terms of their performance on immediate grammar posttest.

In other words, these three groups are not similar in terms of their learning simple and progressive simple form of English verbs.

To clarify the difference among the groups a Scheffe post hoc test was run. The results are shown below:

Table 7
Scheffe test for immediate grammar posttest

Group	N	Subset for alpha = 0.05	
		1	2
NFG	17	17.7647	
Pre-IFG	18		21.7778
Post-IFG	20		22.7500
Sig.		1.000	.326

Table 7, shows that there is a significant similarity between the Pre-IFG and Post-IFG in terms of their achievement on immediate grammar posttest; however, there is a significant difference between the NFG and other two groups regarding their immediate posttest scores. It can be concluded that both the Pre-IGF and Post-IFG outperformed the control group, NFG. Moreover, both groups were statistically similar in terms of mastering the target grammatical forms, simple

and progressive present tenses.

The second research question

To answer the second research question, which tested the difference between NIFG and IFG in terms of learning simple present and progressive tense on the delayed posttest, a one way ANOVA was conducted. Table 8 indicates the descriptive statistics of the scores the learners had on delayed grammar posttest.

Table 8
Descriptive statistics for delayed grammar posttest

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
OPT	NFG	17	16.33	1.61	13	19
	Pre-IFG	18	19.62	1.88	16	24
	Post-IFG	20	20.66	2.45	18	25

Table 8 indicates that the observed mean and standard deviation for the NFG is 16.33 and 1.61. However, the corresponding result for the Pre-IFG is 19.62 and 1.88 respectively. In addition,

the mean and standard deviation for Post-IFG are 20.66 and 2.45. In order to examine the difference among the groups, a one-way ANOVA was run.

Table 9
One-way ANOVA for delayed grammar posttest

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	266.666	2	153.312	34.021	.011
Within Groups	384.944	52	3.744		
Total	401.801	54			

As Table 9 indicates the observed F score is 34.02 and the observed significance level is .01, which is lower than the accepted range of $p < .05$. Thus, there is a significant difference among the groups of learners in terms of their scores on delayed grammar posttest. In other words, these

three groups are not similar in terms of their learning simple and progressive simple form of English verbs. In order to investigate the difference among the groups a Scheffe post hoc test was run. The results are shown below.

Table 10
Scheffe test for delayed grammar posttest

Group	N	Subset for alpha = 0.05	
		1	2
NFG	17	16.3324	
Pre-IFG	18		19.6271
Post-IFG	20		20.6666
Sig.		1.000	.326

Table 10 reveals that Pre-IFG and Post-IFG are identical in terms of their achievement on delayed grammar posttest. However, there exists a significant difference between the NFG and other two groups regarding their delayed posttest performance. Put it differently, both the Pre-IGF and Post-IFG outperformed the control group, NFG. Moreover, both groups were statistically similar in terms of mastering the target grammatical forms, simple and progressive present tenses after a while.

DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSION

Teaching grammar has always been a hot topic in second language acquisition. A number of researchers (e.g. Al-Mekhlafi & Nagaratnam, 2011; Rao, 2002; Trahey & White, 1993; Trahey & White, 2008) argued that the instruction of grammar has always been a controversial issue in terms of the language of instruction, the deductive-inductive orientations, applying some modern approaches like task-based instruction.

Moreover, some researchers such as Morelli (2003) pointed out that students need to be taught grammar through various methodologies and approaches to cater to their individual styles of learning.

To enrich the existing knowledge in the L2 professional literature, this research investigated the role of input flooding through listening tasks on the uptake of the target grammatical forms, simple present tense and the simple progressive tense among pre-intermediate learners of English as a foreign language. The findings revealed that both post-IFG and pre-IFG input flooding were equally effective on the uptake of the target grammatical forms and far more efficient than the traditional procedures commonly taken in EFL classes.

From the theoretical perspective, the findings of the study were supported by the input hypothesis put forward by Krashen (1985) and the comprehensible input hypothesis as the basic theory of input flooding. Since the input flooding tech-

nique undertaken in this study was an attempt to provide the learners with the abundant comprehensible input on the grammar tenses the learners had to learn. Moreover, input flooding went beyond just providing the learners with comprehensible input in that, this technique helped the learners to modify the input into intake through their active role in identifying the sentences with the target forms or repeating and rehearsing the sentences which involved the target forms.

Moreover, the findings of the study echoed Schmidt's (1994) noticing hypothesis. As mentioned by Krashen (1985), the mere comprehensible input is not sufficient for the promotion or quickening the process of second or foreign language learning. Accordingly, the main challenge is to turn these instances of input into a digestible unit for the learner. This is embodied in the notion of $i+1$, which stand for the input, which is one step beyond the current position, and level of the learner. It seems that the results of this study imply that input flooding is effective in case it is integrated with the grammar teaching right from the elementary level of language teaching since it can significantly promote the grammar acquisition of the EFL learners. Moreover, the lack of significant difference between pre-IFG and post-IFG shows that the stage at which the flooding of input occurs is not of a significant issue.

From the practical point of view recent studies on input flooding have also shown that its results on the learners' acquisition of the target forms. The findings of this research is in line with the study conducted by Rikhtegar and Gholami (2015) who investigated the possible effects of pre-versus post-presentation input flooding via reading on simple past tense acquisition among young Iranian EFL learners. In addition, the results of this study support the findings of Asadi, Amirabad, Biria and Sedaghat (2014) who conducted a research to determine the degree to which input enhancement and input flood can affect Iranian EFL learners' long-term retention of conditional structures. Finally, the findings of this study support Seyedtajaddini's (2014) study,

which explored the use of audio input enhancement in grammar learning among Iranian EFL learners. Similarly, the findings are in line with Loewen, Erlam, and Ellis (2009) study in that input flooding is an effective technique regarding improving the L2 learners' acquisition of different grammatical forms.

What links the theoretical and practical aspects of the study may be best traced in Widdowson's (1990), Larsen-Freeman's (2002) and Morelli's (2003) idea that grammar instruction is best met in the context where teaches the EFL learners to use grammar not as a restrictive tool but as an instrument for communicating meaning in a well-formed utterance serving the expression of the initial idea meant to be conveyed in a specific communicative context. To this end, input flooding provides a basis for linking the structure the learners are going to master and the communicative use the target structure serves in given speech events. This technique-provided either after or before the explicit instruction of the target forms-gives the learner a chance to grasp the communicative function of the target structure and goes beyond the mere drilling of the target form in that the EFL learners have a chance to compare the structures with the complementing grammatical elements and gradually discover not only how a specific form is used but what each complementary structural elements serve in a given communicative situation.

A straightforward conclusion for this study is that input flooding could be effective on grammar acquisition independent from the medium in which the target forms are presented. More precisely, both pre-IFG and post-IFG were equally effective on the uptake of the target grammatical forms. In a simple word, input flooding help students develop on the uptake of the target grammatical structures, namely, simple present tense and progressive present tense. The learners may benefit the results of this study in that they should be aware of the role of input in terms of its contribution to their achievement in language learning. According to the findings of this study as well as those of the previous ones in Iran, the

EFL learners in Iranian context can benefit from enriched input provided in different educational material in different online and offline sources in that it helps them to improve their learning outcome.

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