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The Effect of Structured Input, Meaningful Output and Traditional Instruction on EFL Learners' Productive Use of Passive Voice

Horye Seyednejad
Department of ELT, Kermanshah Branch, Islamic Azad University, Kermanshah, Iran

Hamid Gholami
Department of ELT, Kermanshah Branch, Islamic Azad University, Kermanshah, Iran

***Abstract*—This study aimed at investigating the effect of structured input, meaningful output and traditional instruction on EFL learners' productive use of passive voice. To achieve this purpose 60 intermediate female EFL learners were selected from Fahim institute in Kermanshah. They were assigned into three experimental groups (structured input, meaningful output and traditional instruction group). To analyze the collected data of three experimental groups, ANOVA and a post hoc Scheffe was run. The results showed the superiority of structured input technique over the other two techniques. All in all, the findings of the present study confirms the use of structured input technique for the purpose of developing productive use of linguistic items. This study has implications for EFL teachers, teacher educators, and material developers.**

***Index Terms*—meaningful output, processing input, structured input activity, traditional instruction**

I. Introduction

For many second or foreign language learners, speaking skill in English is a main concern. Therefore language learning success and productivity of English course are assessed based on learner's improvement in spoken language proficiency (Richards, 2006). In the same line Nunan (2001) claimed functioning in another language is generally characterized by the ability to speak that language. Similarly, Luoma (2004) stated that speaking skills are an important object of assessment because of its significance in language teaching.

The development of speaking ability is measured in terms of progresses made in "complexity", "accuracy", and "fluency". (Skehan, 1998). Nobuyoshi and Ellis (1993) believed that improving performance instantly and gaining in accuracy over time are the result of pushing learners to improve the accuracy of their production. In order to achieve higher level of accuracy in L2, Form-focused instruction is effective when it is used in meaningful communicative contexts (Ellis, 2001; Long, 1991).

VanPatten (1996, 2002a, 2004a) developed and reviewed a pedagogical task, Processing Instruction (PI), as an explicit Form-Focused Instruction (FFI). VanPatten (2004a) believes that in PI, in contrast to traditional approaches, explicit information about processing strategy and the correct target language strategy as well as focus on form activities, called Structured Input activities are given to the students that somewhat guide them away from production.

VanPatten (2000) defined Traditional grammar Instruction (TI) as another type of explicit FFI that move learners from mechanical to communicative drills. TI includes explanation plus output practice of a grammatical point and pays attentions to the handling of learner output to influence change in the developing system. Meaningful output is the other type of FFL and its role has been highlighted by a number of SLA researchers (e.g., Izumi, 2003, Izumi & Izumi, 2004). Swain (1985, 1995) suggested that moving learners from semantic processing prevailing in comprehension to syntactic processing crucial for production may be inspired by output. Indeed, by being 'pushed' to produce language, in order to produce precise, proper language learners are necessitated to emphasis on syntactic and morphological features of the language. The output tasks, which attempt to fix focus on form, were employed by several researchers. Dictogloss and text reconstruction task as well-researched cooperative output tasks provide a meaning-focused context to raise learners' consciousness of the use of the target linguistic feature. But they may not direct learners' attention to the preset target linguistic forms.

Focus on Form require to be a part of a wider L2 learning instruction that should provide meaningful and form-focused instruction and a variety of prospects for L2 input, output, interaction, and practice (Fotos & Nassaji, 2007). Regarding the varied consequences stated up to now, more research studies are necessitated to define the effect of input-based and output-based FonF approaches on grammar acquisition and productive use of language. Therefore, the present study investigated the impact of three instrumental methods, namely processing instruction and meaningful output instruction and traditional instruction on EFL learner's productive use of passive voice.

II. Review of the Related Literature

"Processing instruction" (PI) is an applied application of the model. It push the learners to use the processing strategies that help them derive richer intake from input by having them engaged in structured input activities. The first step in PI is to examine learners' errors in order to identify their flawed processing strategies. Once identified, instructors can help their students by providing them correct input processing strategies and motivating them to abandon their faulty strategies by using structured input tasks and activities.

According to VanPatten (2002a), the rationale behind processing instruction (PI) is that: (1) input is needed for acquisition by learners, (2) a main difficulty in acquisition might be the way in which input is processed by learners, and (3) we might be able to create effective input enhancement or focus on form to help acquisition of formal features of language if we can realize how learners process input. Since Structured input remove lexical redundancies in the input and simplify the input by the targeted structure, it's an input enhancement procedure. It also raises the communicative value of a linguistic form.

Advocates for production practice (Swain, 1985; DeKeyser, 2007) claim that input alone may not be sufficient for upholding the more complex, form-based processing that is supposed to be advantageous for acquisition, and that learners may need production practice to improve effective production skills because of the highly skill-specific nature of automatized knowledge.

Swain (1995) states that Output would seem to have a noteworthy role in the development of syntax and morphology and it may motivate learners to move to the whole grammatical processing required for precise production.

Swain (1985, 1995, 2000, 2005) shows that output has a significant role in L2 knowledge improvement like input. Swain (1985) claims that output drew students' attention to the meaning via syntactic processing rather than the semantic processing required for understanding input. One important role of output is alerting learners to the gap which exist between their first language and the target language system. (Swain, 1995, 2005)

Grammar teaching and its role in acquiring second language has become the focus of most current studies whereas recent researches have demonstrated the necessity for formal instruction for students to accomplish high levels of accuracy. A number of studies have been done on the effectiveness of input-based as compare to output –based instructions.

Meanwhile VanPatten and his colleague's studies regarding the impact of PI on the learning of grammar have displayed desirable findings (Cadierno, 1995; VanPatten & Cadierno, 1993a), a number of other studies have been conducted with mixed findings. Some have presented evidence supporting the advantage of PI over traditional output-based grammar instruction, whereas others have not reported similar results (Allen, 2000; Benati, 2005).

III. Objectives of the Study

Discovering the effectiveness of structured input, meaningful output and traditional instruction can provide a rationale for both teachers and learners with the aim of improving speaking skill. If a significant impact of these techniques is found, this vision can help the improvement of EFL learners' speaking.

The findings of the present study may help EFL teachers to select the best and the most effective techniques to get across the target grammatical features of the second language. This study probably shows that the rate of EFL learning is facilitated by focusing learners' attention on the formal features of the target structures.

Besides it can also be beneficial for the learners to be acquainted with using strategies appropriate for their success in improving their productive use of passive voice. Moreover the results of the present study can be served as an additional validation for EFL teacher so as to select one of these focus on form activities instead of traditional one.

The present study built on the previous research to examine effect of structured input, meaningful output and traditional instruction on EFL learners' productive use of passive voice. Accordingly, the following research questions were addressed:

1. Does structured input as compared with meaningful output improve Iranian intermediate EFL learners' productive use of passive voice?

2 Does structured input as compared with traditional instruction improve Iranian intermediate EFL learners' productive use of passive voice?

3. Does meaningful output as compared with traditional instruction improve Iranian intermediate EFL learners' productive use of passive voice?

IV. Methodology

A. Participants

The participants of the present study consisted of 68 intermediate Iranian EFL learners who were female at the age range of 16 and 22 from Fahim institute in Kermanshah, Iran. They were studying Four Corners level four which is considered to be intermediate. Besides they were selected randomly. Three intact classes were used. All of the classes were considered as experimental groups. Each class included twenty to twenty four students.

The lack of knowledge was measured by a pretest, attended all the training, treatment and assessment sessions and completed all the assessment measures to meet the selection criteria and the participants, eight learners, who failed to meet the selection criteria were discarded from the study.

B. Instrumentation

In the pretest and the post test, the participants were given the same Picture cue test. These picture cue tests had been selected from Cambridge- English grammar in use and Oxford Grammar Practice book by John Eastwood (1999), however, some tests were teacher made. A copy of the materials used for them is enclosed in the Appendix. It consisted of 20 pictorial items constructed on the basis of target grammatical points. Each item was scored 1 mark and the most concentration was on using the correct form of passive verb in describing each item. The participants had about 30 minutes to describe pictures regarding using passive voice. To ensure the reliability of the test, it was given to ten learners with the same level of proficiency. The reliability of the test was calculated using Chronbach Alpha and it was proved to be.73 which is considered acceptable. The content validity and face validity of the test was proved through expert judgment, asking two PhD. holders in the field.

The treatment phase involved three different tasks. The first task involved structured input activities that challenged the processing instruction group. Participants in the input processing group received structured input activities which were of two main types: referential and affective. Referential activities are on the base of right or wrong answer and learner must depend on the targeted grammatical forms in order to attain the meaning. Learners can be requested text-based true/false questions or multiple choice questions in order to direct learner's attention toward the functions of target structures for the purpose of helping them comprehend the meaning easily. Sample 1 demonstrates referential activities used in this study.

Sample 1: Structured Input Tasks: Referential Activities

Read the following sentences carefully. Select "true" (T) if it is true about you, but mark "false" (F) if it is not.

1. The Shard, Pompidou and Lioyds building were designed by Piano
   T F
2. The Shard is known as an earth quack-proof tower
   T F

Affective activities didn't have any right or wrong answer, necessitating learners to provide their agreements or opinions about a set of events. They were aimed at providing more examples of the target forms in the input by engaging learners in processing information about the real world. Learners can be requested true/false questions and some sentences which they provide their agreements about them. Sample 2 exemplifies affective activities:

Sample 2: Structured Input Tasks: Affective activities

Read the following sentences carefully. Select "true" (T) if it is true about you, but mark "false" (F) if it is not.

1. The shard is one of the tallest building in UK which was designed by piano
   T F
2. The south wark was replaced by the shard
   U F

The second task was a production task that required the learners in output group to reconstruct the texts as accurately as possible through a controlled reconstruction cloze activity. Participants in the Meaningful Output group received reconstruction cloze task. The design of the reconstruction cloze task in this study consisted of a range of four to nine sentences left with a number of blanks to be filled with both grammatically accurate and meaningfully appropriate passive voice. The treatment group were instructed to take notes of every word that they thought was significant to comprehend or reproduce the text.to prevent the possibility of direct copying, time of exposure was also controlled. Sample 3 represents a text reconstruction cloze task. This task is selected from the internet.

Sample 3: Text Reconstruction Cloze Task

Fill in the blanks with the most appropriate phrase or clause according to the text you just read.

Laura is writing to a friend. This is part of her letter.

Someone broke into our house at the weekend. The burglar took some jewelry. But luckily he didn't do any damage.

Now complete the passive sentences in this conversation. Use a phrase with *by* only if it adds information.

Laura: Our house (►) *was broken into at the weekend* Melanie: Oh no!

Laura: Some jewelry (1)..... But luckily no damage (2).....

The third task was Traditional instruction. In TI the learners received some explicit information about where and when the target structures are used rather than any strategies or notifications to be familiar with the problems they may encounter while recognition of tenses. After the demonstration of explicit information on the target forms, TI group was involved in traditional activities. All in all mechanical drill and communicative task were designed for each tense.

In mechanical drills the participants didn't necessitate to pay attention to the meaning of statements and they must change the verbs in the parentheses into the target form mechanically. In communicative tasks the participants were supposed to use the targeted tense in their responses on the base of their experiences, thoughts, or beliefs and the content of the answers were up to them.

Sample 4: Traditional Instruction Tasks

Fill in the blanks with the appropriate form of the passive verbs in the parenthesis

1. The newspaper ……..(deliver)before 6:00 A.M. everyday
2. I was planning to clean the coffee today but I see that it……already……(do).
   Did you clean it?

Rewrite these sentences. Write a passive sentence.

1. They invited twenty people to the party……..
2. A surgeon is examining the patient right now. ……

C. Data Analysis

The present study followed a pretest-treatment-posttest design involving three treatment groups. The data collection procedure lasted 5 complete 60 minute teaching sessions, one for the pretest and homogeneity purposes, three for the treatment, and one for the posttest. The scores of the three groups before and after the instruction were compared by using ANOVA and a post hoc Scheffe test.

D. Results

Pre-test Results Analysis

The content of the pretest included four kinds of grammatical structures. The mean scores of the three groups were subjected to one way ANOVA test to show whether there was a difference among three groups or not. The results clearly showed that there wasn't significant difference among three groups.

TABLE 1
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR EACH GROUPS' PERFORMANCE ON THE PRE-TEST

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Meaningful Output	20	8.8	1.691153
Traditional Instruction	20	8.85	1.85135
Structured Input	20	8.5	1.532971
Total	20	8.72	1.691825

As it was obviously defined in Table 1, the mean scores of all groups were approximately the same and there weren't significant differences between the pretest scores of all groups. Therefore, in order to make these descriptive findings more meaningful, ANOVA was used

TABLE 2
ANOVA RESULTS REGARDING THE PRE-TEST FROM THREE GROUPS.

Sources of variance	SS	Df	Ms	F	Sig

According to table 2 the sig value (.790) was bigger than P value (.05), (.790>05), so there isn't a significant difference among the mean scores on the independent variable (pre- test scores) for three groups. Having received a statistically trivial difference, no post-hoc test was needed.

Post- Test Results Analysis

The content of the posttest included four kinds of grammatical structures taught inductively but follow by different techniques(structured input, meaningful output , traditional instruction).The mean scores of the three groups were subjected to one way ANOVA test to show whether there was a difference between the effect of three groups after the treatment or not, or, in other words, to comprehend whether the difference between the mean scores of the three groups was large enough to be assigned to the effect of independent variable or not. The one way ANOVA was conducted on the mean score test and the results clearly showed the significant difference of the effect of one group in comparison to the other groups.

TABLE 3
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR EACH GROUPS' PERFORMANCE ON THE POST-TEST

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Meaningful Output	20	15.05	.35923
Traditional Instruction	20	14.95	1.14455
Structured Input	20	17.45	.973396
Total	20	18.81667	1.203392

As it is obviously showed in Table 3, the mean scores demonstrate that there are significant differences between the posttest scores of all groups.

TABLE 4
ANOVA RESULTS REGARDING THE POSTTEST FROM THREE GROUPS

Sources of variance	SS	Df	Ms	F	Sig
Between Groups	80.133	2	40.067	25.704	.000
Within groups	88.850	57	1.559	-	-
Total	168.983	59	-	-	-

To make these descriptive findings more meaningful, ANOVA was used. Table 4 showed that The sig value (.000) is smaller than P value (.05), (.000<05). Since we have received a statistically significant difference among the mean scores on the independent variable (post- test scores) for three groups, we use post-hoc tests provided in Table 5.

TABLE 5.
MULTIPLE COMPARISON IN POST-HOC TEST FOR IMMEDIATE POST-TEST.

(I) VAR00002	(J) VAR00002	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
MO	TI	.10000	.39481	.968	-..8924	1.0924
	SI	-2.40000	.39481	.000	-3.3924	-1.4076
TI	MO	-.10000	.39481	.968	-1.0924	.8924
	SI	-2.50000	.39481	.000	-3.4924	-1.5076
SI	MO	-2.40000	.39481	.000	1.4076	3.3924
	TI	2.50000	.39481	.000	1.5076	3.4924

As indicated in the table above, structured input group had a significant mean difference with meaningful output and traditional instruction groups, but the mean difference of meaningful output and traditional instruction was not notable.

So, addressing the first research question, the first null hypothesis was rejected and structured input had better effect than meaningful output. Addressing the second research question, the second null hypothesis was rejected and structured input as compared to traditional instruction led to better productive use of passive voice and addressing the third research question, the third null hypothesis was accepted and no significant difference was found between the groups

V. DISCUSSION

With respect to the first research question, the results demonstrated that SI has a significant effect on Iranian intermediate EFL learners' productive use of passive voice meanwhile structured input group outperformed the other groups and the first research hypothesis which stated that structured input as compared with meaningful output doesn't improve Iranian intermediate EFL learners' productive use of passive voice, was rejected. Reviewing the SLA literature reveals that the findings of the present study were in contrast to the findings of (Morgan-Short & Bowden, 2006; Keating and Farley, 2008; Farley and Aslan, 2012). The findings of studies by Benati (2005) and Farley (2004a, 2004b) were not supported by the results of the present study as these studies indicated that processing instruction was superior to meaning-based output instruction in the interpretation task, but resulted in similar performance to the meaning-based output instruction in the production task.

The results of the second research question reveal that the answer to the second research question is positive and the second research hypothesis, which stated that structured input as compared with traditional instruction doesn't improve Iranian intermediate EFL learners' productive use of passive voice was rejected. The results provided further empirical support for the findings of the previous studies by VanPatten and Wong (2004), VanPatten and Cadierno (1993) as well as Leeser and DeMil (2013). The findings of the current study were in contrast to the findings of (Benati, 2001, 2005) and Collentine's (1998b).They found that both PI and traditional instruction groups performed similarly for the acquisition of complex Spanish grammar for both the production and interpretation tasks.

With respect to the third research question, the results indicated that the answer to the third research question is positive and the second research hypothesis, which stated that. Meaningful output as compared with traditional instruction doesn't improve Iranian intermediate EFL learners' productive use of passive voice is accepted.

The findings of the present research were in line with the findings of Benati (2005), who studied the effects of PI, TI, and MOI on the acquisition of the English past simple tense. They found that processing instruction was superior to the traditional instruction and meaning-based output instruction groups in the interpretation task and the three groups made equal achievements in the production task. Moreover, in Kara Morgan-Short and Harriet Wood Bowdens' study, all groups performed similarly in the production task

In sum, almost all the previous studies are in accordance with this study in which both TI and MO groups made equal gains in the production task but meaningful output activity was little more effective.

VI. CONCLUSION

The present study aimed at comparing three fellow-up grammar activities including structured input, meaningful output and traditional instruction. The results taken from the three experimental groups showed clearly the superiority of structured input group over two other groups.

The scores of the participants' in third group that is structured input were notably different from the scores of two other groups. The scores of meaningful output were better than traditional instruction group although the difference was not notable based on this study. Since structured input has been found effective, it is advisable that it is implicated in

future class material at least as an addition to the output-based materials. So, according to this thesis input-based instruction can be helpful in second language teaching.

We thus conclude that, linguistic development and making form-meaning connections are the results of using SI. Pedagogically, according to our study using structured input-based practice in the L2 classroom environment as a means for building fluency and accuracy in the oral speech is supported.

APPENDIX

The present continuous passive

Look at the pictures and say what is happening. Use these subjects: *the car, dinner, a flag, some houses, the seals.* Use these verbs: *build, feed, raise, repair, serve.*

The bread is being baked

The present passive

Complete the sentences with a present passive. Use the followings verbs.

ship pick take dry sort

Growing and preparing coffee

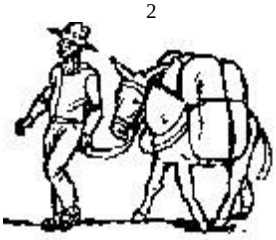
The soil.*is. prepared*

The seeds *are planted*

1

The berries……..…by hand.

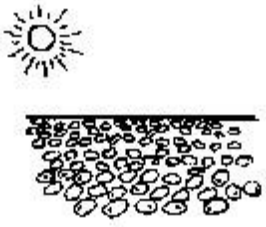
2



They…… to a factory.

3

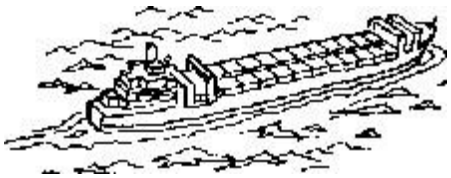
4



They…….. in the sun

They ……by hand.

5



They……...all over the world.

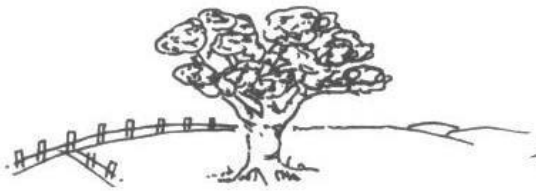
The present perfect passive

put the verb in the present perfect tense , passive.

1

(the bottle/open) The bottle has been opened

2

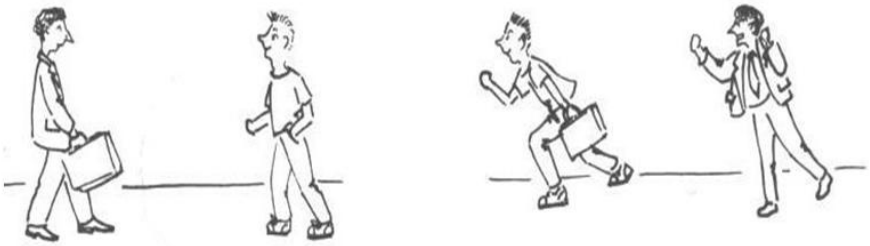


(the tree / cut down) The tree has been cut down.

3

..... (he / sting)

4

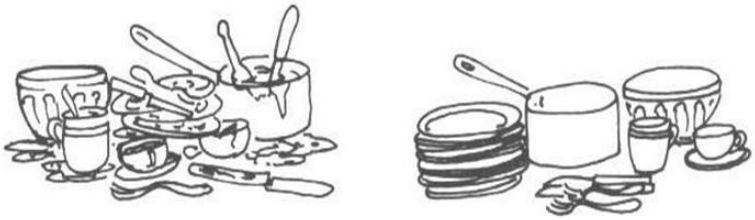


..... (the businessman / rob)

5

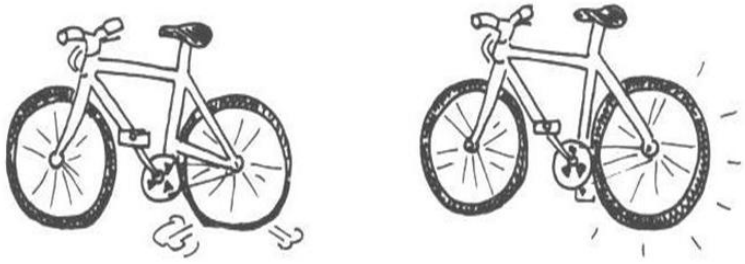
..... (she / ask out)

6



..... (the dishes / wash)

7

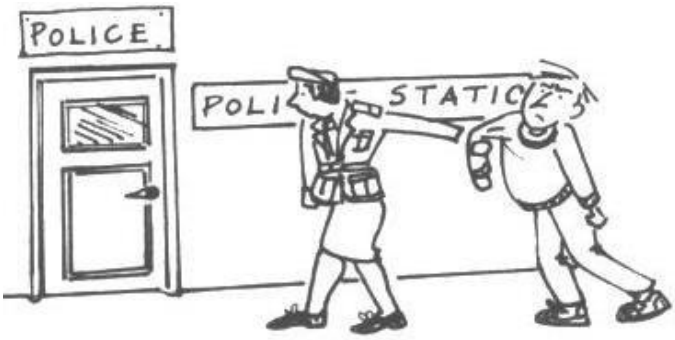


..... (the puncture / mend)

NOW

The past passive
Complete the sentences with a past passive

……..(their exams/pass)



……..(he/arrest)

……(Jane Jones/elect)

……..(coffee/drink)

……..(coffee/sell)

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Horye Seyednejad is an M.A. graduate student in TEFL from Kermanshah Branch of Islamic Azad University. She has recently finished her M.A. studies at the above mentioned university.

She has been teaching English for many years in qualified English institutes in Kermanshah, Iran.

Hamid Gholami is the head of language Department in Islamic Azad University Kermanshah branch. He is a Professor in TEFL and a faculty member at Islamic Azad University.