

# The Impact of Teachers' Aural Input Enhancement vs. Textual Enhancement in Learners' Awareness of Ungrammatical Forms

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## Abstract

Explicit teaching of grammar for the first time became prevalent in Grammar Translation Method. This method was mainly used for teaching the classical languages of Greek and Latin. Attention plays a fundamental role in all areas of L2 learning. This research focused on raising learners' awareness through input enhancement. It attempted to compare the effects of visual enhancement and aural enhancement on the learning of new grammar forms. The research question was whether there was any statistically significant difference between visual and aural enhancement on the learning of new grammar points. To answer this research question, the researcher selected sixty learners from a language institute. Having been homogenized, each intact group which included thirty learners received the treatment. One group was taught through visual enhancement and another through aural input enhancement. The data collected through tests was analyzed through an independent t-test. The result indicated that visual enhancement was more useful than an aural enhancement.

**Keywords:** aural enhancement, textual enhancement, grammatical forms

## 1. Introduction

Explicit teaching of grammar for the first time became prevalent in Grammar Translation Method. This method is a traditional method that dates back to a late 19th century and early 20th century. It was mainly used for teaching the classical languages of Greek and Latin. They were based on the belief that grammar could be learned through direct teaching and by using a method that use repetitive tasks and assignments to teach grammars (Richards, 2006). According to Larsen-Freeman (2003), the learners learned the grammar rules deductively, memorized them, and applied them to other examples. Gaining conscious awareness of rules was given a priority. According to Richards and Rogers (2014), there was an attempt to teach grammar in an organized and systematic way (Richards, 2014).

This approach to teaching grammar changed in the Direct Method in which learners worked out the rules from examples. This method completely disregarded the translation and put emphasis on pronunciation, spontaneous utilization of the language and direct engagement of the students in speaking task. Larsen-Freeman (2013) asserts that the teacher in this method was not expected to explain rules. As a result, the teacher provided learners with lots of examples (Larsen Freeman, 2013). And the learners expected to infer the rules from the numerous examples. But they were not instructed by explicit grammatical rules during the teaching process. This method views language learning as the interaction between the learner and language user. After direct method, The Audio-lingual Method was widely used after World War II. This method is similar to the direct method in some aspects. Both methods put emphasis just on using the target language and mother tongue of the learners is not used in the classroom. The audio-lingual method aims to teach the structural patterns through daily conversations. This method focuses on repetition of the more frequently used phrases and patterns of the target language. This feature is considered as a drawback of this method. That's because it ignores the context of an important issue in second and foreign language acquisition. This method was based on the behaviorism school of thought as a psychological school of thought.

Another important language teaching approach was communicative Language teaching (CLT). The Communicative approach focuses on the ability to communicate meaningful messages, instead of focusing just on grammar or pronunciation. The competency in second language acquisition is considered as acquiring and enhancing the communicative abilities and competencies by the learners. The communicative competence has

built the touchstone of this approach. CLT was challenged by critics for its various shortcomings. One of its major grounds which were severely criticized by opponents was the narrow definition of the communicative competence in this approach. A Huge amount of criticism targeted communicative competence narrow interpretation in this approach. Some other critics argued that the high pressure in this approach to make the approach communicative may negatively affect the learner's achievement. Higgs and Clifford argued that premature immersion of a learner without enough linguistic competence into unplanned conversational setting will incur certain losses to the language learners.

The shortcoming in CLT was compensated in Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT), which adopted a new approach to teaching grammar forms. This approach was derived from applied linguistic during the second half of the 20 century. It was highly appreciated in many countries. The National educational system of some countries like Vietnam and New Zealand adopted TBLT as their national approach to foreign language teaching. The supporters of this approach believed that people learn the real and practical language very easier than artificial un-natural linguistic items. They proposed to use authentic materials and authentic language in the classroom. They try to create situations similar to the real situations and practice language within these situations. The early supporters of TBLT wanted to reverse the basic pedagogic model. They argued that language learners should be exposed to the meaningful sentences from the very early stages of language learning. They found the language acquisition in the classroom invariably different from the mother language acquisition by children. They said that language input that is presented to language learners in the classroom is unnatural and artificial. They mainly don't teach students how native speakers use the structures out of classrooms. Teachers want students to produce grammatically and semantically correct sentences from early stages of learning, while in real life situation, a child learns the language in an extensive period of time and he makes lots of mistake during language acquisition. These errors are very helpful in mother tongue language acquisition. So they suggested that a language learner should try to make communication by their limited vocabulary base (Van den Branden, 2016). So they introduced the TBLT as a communicative and interactive approach which is interesting and very helpful. In form-focused instruction, learners' attention is drawn while they are trying to communicate in L2 (Ellis, 2012). It is an approach which is based on incidental learning in pedagogy.

Some other teaching methods were developed during 1970 which were known as humanistic approaches in teachings. These approaches include Suggestopedia, Total Physical Response (TPR) and silent way.

Suggestopedia method is based on the idea that human mind has a very high capacity to learn and storage new information, the human mind can retain information by the power of suggestion (Madsen & Wilson, 2012).

Total Physical Response (TPR), this method was developed by James Ashe. It is based on the principles of how a baby goes on to learn his mother tongue and how he or she develops his native language.

Silent way method is based on the idea that teacher should be silent in the classroom. The teacher should not play the main and central role in the classroom; he should be somehow passive in the class. He just should solve the problems of the students where it is necessary; students should cooperate with each other. In this approach, the native language of the students is not used. The focus is on the target language. And everything conversation is communicated in the target language (Talbot, 2003).

A unique feature of focus on form is attention. According to Schmidt (2001), attention plays a fundamental role in all areas of L2 learning. Furthermore, as many scholars believe, attention to input is seen as essential for storage and a necessary precursor to hypothesis formation and testing". It is claimed that in all areas of language learning (phonology, grammar, semantics, vocabulary, discourse structuring), attending to and noticing any variation which matters is of crucial importance. According to Schmidt (2001), unattended stimuli do not leave the short-term memory, and attention leads to long-term memory storage (Schmidt, 2001).

The idea behind input enhancement is noticing. When a typographical change is made in the text, this causes a learner to notice a certain grammatical point. Wong (2005) claims that this modification may help learners notice a mismatch which is not possible in a normal text. The logic behind input enhancement is to raise the possibility of noticing the target structures (Wong, 2005).

Ellis (1995) maintains that input enhancement includes three main elements. The first element concerns interpretation which involves comprehension of the new language structures. At this stage, the learner compares his use of the new form with the correct use of these forms. The second component is called integration where knowledge is integrated into the implicit system. The last one concerns production when the new target forms are used automatically (Ellis, 1995).

Studies on input enhancement are done into two main areas. First, the input is manipulated in such a way that the

language learners are exposed to one of the input enhancement techniques. Second, learners' interaction with the input is manipulated (Lee, 2007). The present research focuses on the second one. The learners are presented with two types of input, visual and aural input. The effects of these two types of enhanced texts will be compared. Given the purpose of this research, the following hypothesis was proposed:

H0. There is not any statistically significant difference between the effects of textual and aural enhancement on the learning of new grammar points.

## 2. Research Method

### 2.1 Participants

The participants of this research were selected through a sample of Oxford Placement Test, which helped the researcher to pick out homogenous learners. The test was administered to two classes, each of which included an average of 30 learners. The two classes were introduced by Besat High School in Zanzan to the researcher for research, so the participants were chosen in intact groups. No random sampling was applied because this could disrupt the educational programs in the institute.

### 2.2 Instruments

Four instruments were used for data collection procedures in this research. The Oxford placement test was applied to collect data and the multiple choice test to measure the learners' foreknowledge of new target forms and measure the participants' learning of the grammatical points presented in visual and textual enhancement.

### 2.3 Procedure

The following procedures were taken to complete this research study:

- 1) The Oxford Placement Test was administered to two intact classes to select those who were at the elementary level. Those who did not fall in the range specified in the guide of the test were not considered in the research, but they did not leave the research environment.
- 2) Thirty learners in one class were taken as the first group to which the grammatical points, the present continuous and 'have' and 'has' were presented through textual input enhancement. Another thirty learners in another class were considered as the second group to which the grammatical points, the present continuous and "have" and "has" were presented through aural input enhancement.
- 3) Before the treatment started, the multiple-choice test was administered to ensure that the learners did not know the two new forms.
- 4) The treatment which lasted for two sessions started, each of which was allocated to a grammatical point. A written text including an enhanced form of the new form was presented to the first comparison group. The enhanced form was made italic and bold-faced. Having read the text, the learners answered some reading questions. In the other comparison group, the learners listened to a short text containing the grammatical point. The teacher emphatically uttered the grammatical point. The learners heard the new emphatic form at least 5 times. In the aural text, the new form was stressed, and as a result, the learners answered some listening questions.
- 5) After the treatment was over, the multiple-choice test was administered to the participants. The multiple choices took 10 minutes to be answered.

## 3. Results

The research question of this study aimed at finding out whether there is any statistically significant difference between the effects of textual and aural enhancement on the learning of new grammar points. In order to answer this research question, independent sample *t*-test was performed. Before discussing the results of the *t*-test, the related descriptive statistics are provided in Table 1. Based on Table 1, the mean and standard deviation of the textual ( $\bar{x} = 5.27$ ,  $SD = 3.26$ ) and aural ( $\bar{x} = 5.90$ ,  $SD = 3.39$ ) groups are not far from each other on pre-test of grammar, but the students in the textual group ( $\bar{x} = 11.40$ ,  $SD = 3.37$ ) have acted better than those in the aural group ( $\bar{x} = 9.10$ ,  $SD = 3.50$ ) on post-test of grammar.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of two group's scores on the pre-test and post-test of grammar

Test	Group	N	Mean	SD	Std. Error Mean
Pre-test	Textual	30	5.27	3.269	0.597
	Aural	30	5.90	3.397	0.620
Post-test	Textual	30	11.40	3.738	0.682
	Aural	30	9.10	3.507	0.640

Table 2 contains the result of independent *t*-test that was used to compare aural and textual groups' grammar scores on the pre-test. As Table 2 indicates, the significance level for Levene's Test (.74) is above the selected significance level (.05), so the assumption of equal of variances is met.

Table 2. Independent samples test for two groups' scores on grammar pre-test

Levene's Test for Variances			T-test for Means			
Factor	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Sig.</i> (2-tailed)	Mean Diff.
Equal variances assumed	0.108	0.743	-0.736	58	0.465	-0.633
Equal variances not assumed			-0.736	57.91	0.465	-0.633

As displayed in Table 2, *t* value and significance level ( $t(58) = .73, p = .46, p > .05$ ) are indicative of no significant difference in grammar scores for textual ( $\bar{x} = 5.27$ ) and aural ( $\bar{x} = 5.90$ ) groups, in which the *t* observed is below than the *t* critical of 2.00; thus we conclude that the students in the two groups have the same grammar knowledge at the outset of the study.

Further, the results of independent *t*-test that was used to compare textually and aural groups' grammar scores on the post-test are shown in Table 3. As can be seen in Table 3 displays, the assumption of equal of variances is not violated ( $p > 0.05$ ).

Table 3. Independent samples test for two groups' scores on grammar post-test

Levene's Test for Variances			T-test for Means			
Factor	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Sig.</i> (2-tailed)	Mean Diff.
Equal variances assumed	0.255	0.616	2.458	58	0.017	2.300
Equal variances not assumed			2.458	57.766	0.017	2.300

The results of independent *t*-test in Table 3 show that there is a statistically significant difference ( $t(58) = 2.45, p = .01, p < .05$ ) in grammar scores for textual ( $\bar{x} = 11.40$ ) and aural ( $\bar{x} = 9.10$ ) groups, in which the *t* observed is greater than the *t* critical of 2.00. Accordingly, we strongly reject the null hypothesis of the current study that states, "There is not any statistically significant difference between the effects of textual and aural enhancement on the learning of new grammar points" and claim that there is a statistically significant difference between the effects of textual and aural enhancement on the learning of new grammar points. In fact, textual enhancement is more effective than aural enhancement on the learning of new grammar points. We draw a bar graph to graphically illustrate the results on both pre-test and post-test. As demonstrated in Figure 1, the students in the textual group have expressed significantly better performance than those in the aural group in view of grammar knowledge in the condition that they had the same grammatical knowledge on the pre-test.

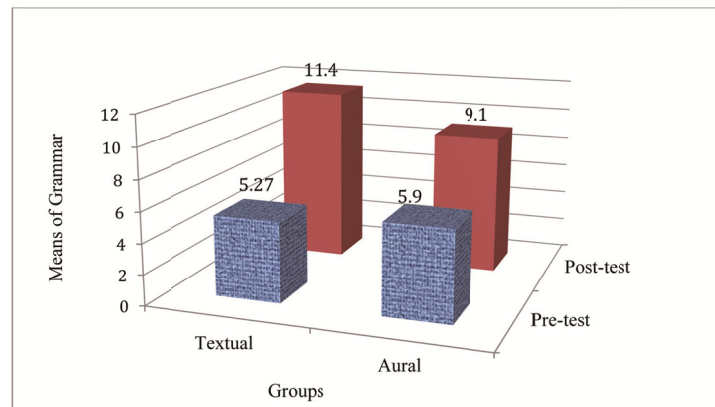


Figure 1. Two groups' means on grammar pre-test and post-test

#### 4. Discussion

The finding of this research indicated that textual enhancement was more productive in the development of new grammar forms. In this section, the finding will be compared and contrasted with that of other studies.

The finding of this research was somehow in line with the one done by Williams (1998), Long (2008). Their research showed that textual enhancement was more beneficial to learners if various cues are given. Enhancing input through some key ways including boldfacing, color-coding, underlining, italicizing, and capitalizing, we can readily draw the learners' attention to linguistic structures. In other words, employing various cues, we can improve saliency of input. Accordingly, "This added attention might lead to noticing more of the targets and to process them for subsequent acquisition" (Schmidt, 1993). In the present research, however, it was shown that textual enhancement was more useful than aural enhancement in the learning of new grammar points.

The finding of this research differs from Leeman's study (1995). He only focused on textual enhancement in a content-based instruction only, rather than an ordinary language program. He enhanced Spanish input by highlighting instances and imperfect verb forms in the written texts in content-based instruction and discovered the significant positive relationship between this cue of input enhancement (highlighting) and the process of second language learning. However, Leeman's research proves that textual enhancement was more useful.

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