
The Effect of Noticing and Input Enhancement in Reading on Speaking Skill by Intermediate Learners

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Abstract

This study was to determine the effect of noticing and input enhancement in reading on speaking skill. The participants of this study were 30 learners attending a language learning institute in Ardebil in the form of two groups. Two of the groups were at the intermediate level based on the proficiency test. The two groups at the institute were assigned to one experimental group (enhanced input) and one control group (unenhanced input). First we used the pre-test of speaking, then we had ten reading passages for each session. During the classroom, we had some in-class instructional activities and finally a post-test of speaking was given to the learners and for the assessment of learners' oral production, we used TOEFL speaking rubric. The analysis and comparison between pre-test and post-test through paired sample t-test showed that noticing and input enhancement had helped learners in the experimental group on intermediate level to learn more vocabulary items and improve their oral production.

Keywords: Noticing, Enhanced input, Unenhanced input, Experimental group, Control group

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1. Introduction

Speaking is being capable of speech, expressing or exchanging thoughts through using language. "Speaking is a productive aural/oral skill and it consists of producing systematic verbal utterances to convey meaning (Nunan, 2003)." Harmer (2001) notes down that from the communicative point of view, speaking has many different aspects including two major categories – accuracy, involving the correct use of vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation practiced through controlled and guided activities; and fluency considered to be 'the ability to keep going when speaking spontaneously'. Among the elements necessary for spoken production, are the following (Harmer, 2001):

1. Connected Speech: effective learners of English need to be able not only to produce the individual phonemes of English (as in saying I would have gone) but also to use fluent 'connected speech' as in (I'd 've gone). In connected speech sounds are modified, omitted, added or weakened.
2. Expressive Devices: native speakers of English change the pitch and stress of particular parts of utterances, vary volume and speed, and show by other physical and non-verbal means how they are feeling.
3. Lexis: spontaneous speech is marked by the use of number of common lexical phrases, especially in the performance of certain language functions.
4. Negotiation and language: effective speaking benefits from the negotiator language we use to seek clarification and to show the structure of what we are saying.

This study highlights vocabulary knowledge among these elements. Reading will enable learners to develop their vocabulary knowledge which will effectively contribute to their speaking skills.

Reading is one of the most effective ways of foreign language learning. Reading simply is the interpretation of a written message. Walter R. Hill (1979) briefly defines reading as what the reader does to get the meaning he needs from contextual resources. Reading will add to learners' conversational performance. Reading will help learners to decipher new words that they need for conversations.

There is increasing high relationship between reading and speaking skill. People who develop larger vocabulary capacity through reading tend to develop larger speaking vocabulary capacity. Indeed, reading power relies on continuous improvement in vocabulary knowledge that provides communication. Therefore fostering improvement in word knowledge through wide reading has the potential for fostering improvement in speaking skills. Reading can play a big part in successful language learning. It can develop speaking skills. It needs to be noted that speaking holds a very significant place in foreign language learning because through speech messages are conveyed.

Noticing and input enhancement are necessary for changing input to intake and refers to conscious attention to the occurrence of input and its storage in the long term memory (Schmidt, 1995). So in

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order for learning to take place, learners must attend to and notice certain language features which are crucial to the target system. Noticing involves conscious registration of an event; understanding entails recognition of general principle, rule or pattern. According to Schmidt, it is awareness at the level of noticing that is crucial for language learning. Conscious attention to the linguistic input facilitates the restructuring of the learners' interlanguage system (Schmidt, 1995). Intake is that part of the input that the learner notices (Schmidt, 1990).

Significantly, Homer combs (2005) claims that the greater saliency a particular form has in the input to which the learner is exposed, the greater chances are for it to be selected by the L2 learner. Although in the pedagogical arena of second language learning (L2) much of the input enhancement and noticing research (Sharwood smith, 1993) has focused on different parts of grammar such as conditional sentences and past simple sentences, or how noticing can influence intonation pattern, the impact of this pedagogical technique addressed how noticing and input enhancement through reading help learners improve their oral production and vocabulary learning in the second language learning environment.

2. Method

The participants of this study were 30 English learners in the form of two classes. Two of the classes were at the intermediate level. After the proficiency test these two classes assigned to one experimental group (enhanced input) and one control group (unenhanced input). The classes met three times a week and instruction on reading passage in any of the two classes was took place in last 30 minutes of each session. This study lasted for about two months with ten sessions; therefore, ten reading passages were given to the leaners. For experimental group the reading passages with highlighted vocabulary items were given to the learners but for the control group the reading passages without highlighted vocabulary items were given to the learners. In the treatment part, the highlighted vocabulary items were taught explicitly by the teacher for learners in experimental group. We had some in-class instructional activities such as synonym and antonym for each vocabulary item and also we had discussion about the topic of each reading passage by the teacher and learners to engage the learners and promote their attention to notice those vocabulary items. After ten session, the post-test of speaking was given to the learners and leraners' oral production was recorded and assessed through speaking rubric. Finally the analysis of data was done through the paired sample t-test.

3. Results

The first research question sought to investigate the efficiency of noticing and input enhancement in reading on developing learners' oral production. To answer this question, a paired-sample t-test was

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run to compare the mean scores on the pre-test and post-test of speaking to measure the effect of noticing and input enhancement in reading on speaking. As displayed in Table 1, the mean score for the control group was 7.97 and for the experimental group was 8.70.

Table 1
The Results of Paired Samples Statistics for Speaking Pre-test and Post-test

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	speaking	7.97	30	1.564	.286
	speaking	8.70	30	1.705	.311

Statistically speaking, the first research question was rejected, indicating that noticing and input enhancement had significant effect on developing students' oral production. We could also say that there was a significant difference between control and experimental group according to the means of the both groups.

Moreover, as table 2 showed, the significant of differences between two group was 0, so we could say that there was a significant differences between the control group and experimental group and also we could say that noticing and input enhancement had a significant effect on oral production of students and through the improvement of students' oral production we could answer to the second research question that noticing and input enhancement had a great effect on learning the vocabulary items' of students. Table 2

The Results of Paired Sample T-test for Speaking Post-test

		Paired Differences			95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Std. Mean	Std. Deviation	Error Mean	Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	speaking - speaking	-.733	.740	.135	-1.010	-.457	-5.430	29	.000

4. Discussion

The positive answer to the first research question showed that input enhancement had a significant effect on the oral production of students. The performance of the two groups of students on the achievement post-test indicated that the Enhanced group could outperform the Unenhanced group on the developing their oral production. It was signified that the learners' ability to speak and learn vocabulary would increase when the learners' attention was focused on a particular vocabulary in the course of doing different reading texts. Furthermore, this study suggested that for learning vocabulary and speaking in English noticing and awareness of the vocabulary items were necessary. It was worth mentioning that the result of the present study was in line with Schmidt's (1995) claim that noticing was necessary and effective in language learning. The finding also supported other input enhancement studies that have reported the ability of the learners in recognizing and producing vocabulary items correctly when their attention was focused on a particular vocabulary items while doing reading texts (White, Spada, Lightbown, & Ranta, 1991; White, 1998).

5. Conclusion

The result of this study might help teachers and practitioners in improving speaking skill and learning vocabulary items. Input enhancement was a technique which can be used for drawing students' attention to certain vocabulary items of input and increase the perceptual salience of these vocabulary items and use them in their speaking in the second language environment. This, also, would help students to focus on certain vocabulary items and increase the span of their lexical items. Paying attention to language vocabulary items through input enhancement would be facilitative and could assist learners in improving their language fluency.

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