**Research Paper**

# Using Input Enhancement and Output-Based Production in Writing Classes

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## Abstract

The current study adopted a qualitative-quantitative design to compare the effects of output-based production (OBP) and input enhancement (IE) as two teaching techniques on a group of EFL learners' writing and also to seek those learners' perceptions of the two instruction procedures. Accordingly, 65 intermediate learners were selected through convenience nonrandom sampling among 94 students in intact classes based on their performance on a sample proficiency test (the test had already been piloted among 30 learners). These 65 learners were subsequently divided into two groups consisting of 33 learners in the OBP group and 32 in the IE group. The researchers also made sure that the learners in both groups were homogeneous in terms of their writing prior to the treatment. Next, the treatment in both groups commenced. Once the treatment was over, the researchers gave both groups the same writing post-test. The results of the statistical analysis indicated that the IE group outperformed the OBP group significantly in their writing. The participants further sat for a semi-structured interview comprising five questions about their perception regarding both instructions which demonstrated that the IE group was generally more satisfied with the course than the OBP group. The findings of this study suggest more attention to the incorporation of IE in both English language schools and pre-and in-service teacher training programs.

**Keywords:** *ELT; Input enhancement; Output-based production; Writing*

كاابيد بهسازى ددوندد و توليد ببوندد-محوو دد كفك سراى ندراماش

مطالعه حاضر يك طرح كمى-كفى را براى مقايسه اثرات توليد مبتنى بر خروجى (OBP) و افزايش ورودى (IE) به عنوان دو تكنيك آموزشى بر روى گروهى از    .دبر زبان.موزان زبان انگليسى و همچنين براى .ستوجوى ادراكات آن يادگيرندگان از ا. دو ا .. كرد.   ..به هاى آ .زشى بر .ي . ا ساس، ۶۵ زبان آموز    ..ط.ز ميان ۹۴ ىلا للالامولالار كلاس هاى دسلا نخورده بر   للالا   للاكلاللاآلهالارلالازمون مهارت نمونه لازلالانلابلالالا ۳۰ للالللامولالا للللالا آلالللالللا لللا للا  لا)لاللالا لا ۹۴ دا نلالاآلالا متوسط انتخاب شدند. اين ۶۵ يادگيرنده متعاقباً به دو گروه متشك . از ۳۳ يادگيرنده در .روه OBP و ۳۲ در گروه IE تقسيم شدند. محققان همچنير . . .مئن شدند ك)  ير ...د... هر  . گروه .ز نظر ت.   . . . ق . از درمان   مگن هستند. سپس درمان در هر دو گروه آغاز  .د. پس از پايان درما .، محققان به هر دو گروه يك پس آزمون نوش.رى داددن. نتايج تجزيه و تحليل آمارى نشان داد كه گروه IE در نوشتن خود به طور قابل توجهى از گروه OBP بهتر عمل كرددد. شركت كنندگان در ادامه براى يك مصاحبه نيمه ساختاريافته شر .ت كردند كه شامل پنج سوال كه در مورد درك آنها در مورد هر دو دستورالعمل بود كه نشان مى داد گروه IE به طور كلى از دوره نسبت به گروه OBP رضايت بيشترى داش .. يافتههاى اين مطالعه. نشان ميدهد كه توجه برشرى به گنجاندن IE در مدارس زبا . انگليسى و برنامههاى آموزش معلمان قبل و حين خدمت .يشتر شود.

وووووان كليدى : ELT ؛ افزليش و   ...ى؛ تويد م.تنى ب. . .روجى؛  ....ا .

## Introduction

Writing is considered an important skill in many educational contexts in general and in the context of ELT in particular (Storch, 2017). This complicated skill is regarded as a pivotal component of education and thus a crucial path of language learning; accordingly, the acquisition of writing serves as proof that one has gained mastery over a language (Hyland, 2016). Indeed, writing is a basic communication skill and a unique asset in the process of learning a second language and, in a sense, a method of representing language in visual or tactile form (Ellis, 2012).

English writing and correspondence have very essential, cross-cultural, and traditional roles in the context of business, organizations, and governmental initiatives all over the world (Silva & Matsuda, 2002). It is of no surprise then writing is one of the main language skills and continues to be the focus of many studies both in the international scene (e.g., Lei, 2012; Leki, 2006; McCutchen, 2011; Padang & Gurning, 2014; Shehadeh, 2011; Wigglesworth & Storch, 2009) and in Iran (e.g., Author; Azizi, Nemati, & Estahbanati, 2017; Fahandezh & Othman, 2012; Ketabi & Torabi, 2013; Mazloomi & Khabiri, 2016; Mozaffari, 2017).

To improve the teaching of writing, researchers and teachers have always sought to find effective methods and techniques leading to the improvement of learners' writing performance. One of the techniques which can possibly be used in order to support learners in the process of writing is input enhancement or IE (Han, Park, & Combs, 2008). Introduced by Sharwood Smith (1993), IE, which is a typographical means to highlight forms in written texts (e.g., underlining, using different fonts and colors of print), enables learners to focus on important aspects such as the grammatical features of a text which may, in turn, enhance their skill of writing.

IE is normally used to raise learners' consciousness concerning the different aspects and components of the language (Wong, 2005) and through it, instructors can focus the learners 'attention on a linguistic form in question (Lee & Huang, 2008). IE has been the subject of many studies around the world and in Iran (e.g., Birjandi, Alavi, & Najafi, 2015; Doughty & Williams, 1998; Fahim & Vaezi, 2011; Goudarzi & Raouf, 2012; Mayén, 2013; Rashtchi & Gharanli, 2010).

Apart from IE, another technique which can possibly help learners improve their writing skill is focusing on the output. According to Ellis (1997), while input-based instruction provides inputs, output-based production (OBP) activities seek to give learners a chance to produce language in their interactions (i.e., by speaking and writing). Naturally, production practice is an inseparable part of language instruction, consisting of different types of linguistic performance (Izumi & Izumi, 2004; Swain, 2000). Initiated by Swain's (1985) conceptualization, OBP has been and continues to be investigated by many researchers in the field (Abadikhah & Zarrabi, 2012; Ghaemi & Bagherzadeh, 2012; Morgan-Short & Bowden, 2006; Song & Suh, 2008; Swain, 2005; Swain & Lapkin, 1995; Toth, 2006).

## Review of Literature

### Writing

Writing systems use sets of symbols to represent the sounds of speech, and also have symbols for issues such as punctuation and numerals (Hedge, 2005; Raimes, 1983). Writing is a productive skill that is divided into aspects including a means of learning language forms and a way to communicate a message (McCutchen, 2011). Evidently, the ELT literature from several decades ago to the present day demonstrates that EFL students have been facing major problems in writing (e.g., Flower & Hayes, 1980; Grabe & Kaplan, 1996; Hinkel, 2015; Kieft, Rijlaarsdam, & van den Bergh, 2006).

Ironically, despite being considered by many to be the most cumbersome task in L2 acquisition (e.g., Casanave, 2013; Richards & Farrell, 2011; Silva & Matsuda, 2002), writing

remains perhaps underestimated in ELT circles often overshadowed by the other productive skill of speaking (Hyland, 2015). This subtle point which brings about students' not receiving adequate instruction, practice, and feedback in writing is considered by Kellogg (2008) to be the most obvious cause – amidst a multiplicity of reasons hypothesized – for learners' inability to write well.

Writing is indeed a highly challenging skill due to its being categorized as a socio-cognitive activity characterized by its significant complexity (Hyland, 2003, as cited in Nobahar, Tabrizi, & Shaghaghi, 2013). Furthermore, the very process of thinking in another language and translating the content into English is yet another main issue with which EFL learners grapple (Wolfe-Quintero, Inagaki, & Kim, 1998, as cited in Author).

If the above arguments are already not sufficient in proving the case, one must bear in mind that L2 learners cannot always perceive specific structures in naturalistic input even following their exposure to them for an extended time; in other more technical terms, the input does not necessarily transform into the intake (Beilder, 2010; Lightbown & Spada, 1990). All this translates into an outstanding responsibility for EFL writing instructors to further pave the way for learners to become skillful writers, an endeavor with necessitates ongoing investigation of different methods and techniques of teaching writing (Koll, 2012).

**Input Enhancement**

IE or text manipulation has to do with making specific items of input prominent through typographically manipulating them, with the learner failing to notice the same input under normal circumstances (Loewen & Inceoglu, 2016). Doughty and Williams (1998) argue that IE involves enhancing the perceptual salience of the L2 items in a written text through employing diverse formatting techniques including capital letters, underlined target forms, etc.

According to White, Spada, Lightbrown, and Ranta (1991), there are three ways the manipulation of textual input or IE: 1) increasing the saliency of the linguistic features in the written text through typographical or textual enhancement, 2) giving detailed input, and 3) presenting modified input. To this end, Sharwood Smith (1993) asserts that IE involves the written mode of input in which the target item is highlighted, underlined, or bolded or, alternatively, a combination of these techniques can be used. In addition, Chapelle (2003) argues in favor of the repetition of marked input as a means of making the input more prominent.

The rationale underlying visual or textual IE is architected upon the assumption that mere and exclusive exposure to specific L2 structures in a text is inadequate for the successful realization of language acquisition objectives (Simard, 2009). As discussed earlier of course, there is ample evidence in the literature concerning the advantageousness of IE in the ELT environment.

**Output-Based Production**

Initially, it was Swain (1985) who claimed that input alone could not be adequate for language learning and that the role of output was being ignored. She maintained that L2 learning can be more optimally achieved if learners were encouraged to produce language via output-based activities under specific circumstances in the classroom. Accordingly, Swain (1985) formulated the output hypothesis thus complementing Krashen's (1985) input hypothesis. Furthermore, she drew a distinction between the role of the comprehensible output produced by the learner and the role of the comprehensible input provided by the teacher/classroom.

In this sense, language production is no longer considered as practicing available knowledge; rather OBP is in effect an attempt to create linguistic knowledge (Gass, 1997; Swain, 1995). Swain (2000) further maintains that OBP prompts learners to move away from strategic processing which is commonplace in comprehension to thorough grammatical processing as is required for accurate production.

Following Swain's work in the 1980s and 1990s, many theoretical and empirical studies were conducted involving an input versus output theme. The studies varied in their findings from those revealing no significant difference between the two themes on L2 learning to those which demonstrated the stronger effect of OBP (as reported by Morgan-Short & Bowden, 2006). There were also studies demonstrating that a learner acquires comprehension and production skills separately (DeKeyser & Sokalski, 2001).

## Purpose of the Study

The above literature review demonstrates that there is sufficient empirical evidence reported in favor of using both OBP and IE in English classes. However, there seems to be a gap in the literature (to the best knowledge of the researchers of course) over a comparison of the aforesaid approaches to the teaching of writing. To this end, the researchers set out this study for two purposes: 1) to identify whether there was a difference of impact between IE and OBP on learners' writing performance and 2) to learn about the participants' perceptions regarding the two modes of treatment. In line with the abovementioned purposes of the study, the following two research questions were raised:

Q1: Is there any significant difference between the effect of output-based production and input enhancement on EFL learners' writing performance?

Q2: What are EFL learners' perceptions regarding the efficacy of input enhancement and output-based production in improving their writing performance?

## Method

### Participants

The participants of this study were 65 Iranian male intermediate EFL learners studying at a private language school in Tehran; they were selected from among 94 students based on their performance on a sample proficiency test (i.e., those whose scores fell within the range of one standard deviation above and below the mean) previously piloted among 30 learners with similar English language background. The 94 students were selected through nonrandom convenience sampling within intact classes due to manageability and availability reasons. The participants' age ranged from 18 to 30.

The 65 participants of the study were thus divided into two homogenous groups with 33 and 32 learners in the OBP and IE groups, respectively. Furthermore, the two researchers rated the writing tests at both the pre-and post-test levels. Their inter-rater reliability had been established a priori (r = 0.58, $p = 0.001 < 0.05$).

### Instrumentations and Materials

The following instruments and materials were used in the current study:

### Preliminary English Test (PET)

A sample PET was administered for selecting the participants. PET which includes all four language skills is part of a group of examinations developed by Cambridge ESOL entitled the Cambridge Main Suite. PET consists of reading and writing (paper 1), listening (paper 2), and speaking (paper 3). As this study was focused on EFL learners' writing, the speaking paper was not administered. Furthermore, the original PET includes 75 items but eight of these items were actually discarded following the comprehensive item analysis which took place after the piloting (the item facility and item discrimination indices of these items proved faulty).

**PET Writing Rubric**

For the assessment of the writing section, the researchers used the PET general mark scheme; this is ESOL's standard rubric for a summative score with the criteria including language range, variety, complexity message communication, grammatical structure, vocabulary, spelling, punctuation, content points, length, and target reader.

**Writing Post-test**

The writing paper of another sample PET was used as the post-test and administered to both groups at the end of the course.

**Course Book**

The course book used in the current study was *Touchstone 3* (McCarthy, McCarten, & Sandiford, 2013). The book consists of 12 units and has a functional syllabus as the backbone of the course book while there are also subsections in each unit covering language focus such as grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. During the course of instruction, four units of the course book were covered.

**Semi-Structured Interview**

The following five questions constituted the semi-structured interview conducted by the researchers in both groups after the treatment. Obviously, the interviews were held in Farsi so that the learners could express their perceptions more accurately.
1. What do you think of the course in general?
2. What positive points did you find with the course?
3. What problems did you have with the course?
4. Did you find the course useful in terms of improving your writing?
5. Would you like to take such a course in the future?

**Procedure**

Following the selection of the 65 participants, the researchers compared the mean scores of the two groups on the writing section of the PET already administered to be ascertained the homogeneity of the two groups in terms of their writing prior to the treatment.

Next, the treatment in both groups began. Both groups were taught by the same teacher (one of the researchers) throughout the term which comprised 12 sessions of 90 minutes each. As one session was allocated to the PET administration at the outset and one to the post-test, the actual instruction period consisted of 10 sessions.

In the IE group, the teacher/researcher enhanced the materials in the course book through underlining, boldfacing, italicizing, capitalizing, and other strategies such as color coding or using different font sizes or types in line with the propositions of Simard (2009) and Smith (1993). The language items to be enhanced were those that the syllabus of the course book determined to be important. The learners were instructed to pay attention to the aforesaid strategies due to their importance.

In the OBP group, however, the learners went through three stages including presentation, practice, and production in line with Morgan-Short and Bowden's (2006) proposed instruction procedure. To this end, the target linguistic structures based on the syllabus of the course book were initially explicitly instructed to the learners. To do this, the teacher/researcher wrote some example sentences of the targeted grammatical items on the board and elaborated on the way the sentences were structurally formed.

Moreover, explicit rules were given to the participants concerning the grammatical forms and they were also asked to state the rules after the instruction. Subsequently, the participants were

given some situations in which they were required to use the target forms exposed to in the presentation stage. To do so, the learners were provided with samples of the use of such structures and asked to identify the intended grammatical forms. Finally, the learners were required to use the instructed grammatical points in their dialogues and discussions.

In both groups, corrective feedback was provided by the teacher while he also encouraged peer- and self-correction. Once the treatment was over, the researchers gave both experimental groups the writing post-test. Moreover, the semi-structured interviews were conducted in both groups.

# Results

## Participants Selection

To select the participants required for this study, the researchers used a sample PET (as described earlier). Prior to the actual administration, the test was piloted to make sure that it could be used confidently for this screening. The mean and standard deviation were found to be 49.21 and 16.63, respectively, while the reliability of the test scores (estimated through the KR-21 procedure) gained by the participants on the pilot PET was also 0.89.

Following the piloting of the PET, the actual administration of the sample PET among the 94 preliminary learners took place. Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics of this administration with the mean being 50.51 and the standard deviation of 5.89, respectively.

**Table 1**
*Descriptive Statistics of the PET Administration*

|                      | N  | Minimum | Maximum | Mean  | Std. Deviation |
|----------------------|----|---------|---------|-------|----------------|
| PET Administration   | 94 | 31      | 62      | 50.51 | 5.887          |
| Valid N (listwise)   | 94 |         |         |       |                |

Among the 94 students who took the PET, the researchers selected 65 who scored between one standard deviation above and below the mean. As the students in the language school came from intact groups and the researchers did not have the luxury of random sampling, they had to make sure that the learners in each group bore no significant difference in terms of the dependent variable (writing skill) prior to the treatment. To this end, they checked whether the mean scores of the two groups on the writing section of the PET administered earlier as the pre-test bore no significant difference. First, the descriptive statistics of the scores obtained by these 65 learners on the pre-test are presented (Table 2).

**Table 2**
*Descriptive Statistics of the Two Groups' Scores on the Pre-test*

|                    | N | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std. Deviation | Skewness | |
|--------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
|                    | Statistic | Statistic | Statistic | Statistic | Statistic | Statistic | Std. Error |
| OBP Pre-test       | 33        | 11        | 16        | 13.88     | 1.495     | -.437     | .409      |
| IE Pre-test        | 32        | 10        | 16        | 13.78     | 1.641     | -.747     | .414      |
| Valid N (listwise) | 32        |           |           |           |           |           |           |

As is seen, the mean and standard deviation of the OBP group were 13.88 and 1.50, respectively, while those of the IE group stood at 13.78 and 1.64, respectively, prior to the

treatment. Furthermore, the skewness ratios of both groups (-1.07 and -1.80) fell within the acceptable range of ±1.96 thus signifying that the score distributions in both groups represented normality. Therefore, running an independent sample *t*-rest to check whether there existed a significant difference between the two groups' writing scores at the outset of the study or not was legitimized.

As Table 3 indicates, with the *F* value of 0.381 at the significance level of 0.539 being larger than 0.05, the variances between the two groups were not significantly different. Therefore, the results of the *t*-test with the assumption of homogeneity of the variances were reported here. The results ($t = 0.251$, $p = 0.803 > 0.05$) indicate that there was no significant difference at the outset meaning that any differences at the end of the treatment could be attributed to the treatment.

**Table 3**
*Independent Samples t-Test of Both Groups' Mean Scores on Their Writing Pre-test*

| | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances | | *t*-test for Equality of Means | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | |
| | *F* | Sig. | *t* | Df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference | Lower | Upper |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Equal variances assumed | .381 | .539 | .251 | 63 | .803 | .098 | .389 | -.680 | .875 |
| Equal variances not assumed | | | .381 | .539 | .251 | 63 | .803 | .098 | .389 |

**Post-test**
The researchers administered the writing post-test (detailed earlier) among the two experimental groups once the treatment was completed.

**Table 4**
*Descriptive Statistics for the Post-test in Both Groups*

| | N | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std. Deviation | Skewness | |
| | Statistic | Statistic | Statistic | Statistic | Statistic | Statistic | Std. Error |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| OBP Post-test | 33 | 13 | 19 | 15.76 | 1.458 | .000 | .409 |
| IE Post-test | 32 | 16 | 19 | 17.91 | .963 | -.498 | .414 |
| Valid N (listwise) | 32 | | | | | | |

Table 4 displays the descriptive statistics. The mean and the standard deviation of the OBP group were 15.76 and 1.46 while those of the IE group were 17.91 and 0.96, respectively.

**Testing the Hypothesis**

To verify the null hypothesis of the study raised based on the research question, i.e., there is no significant difference between the effect of IE and OBP on learners' writing, the researchers intended to conduct an independent samples $t$-test. Prior to this, the normality of the distribution of these scores within each group had to be checked. Going back to Table 4, the skewness ratios of both groups fell within the acceptable range of $\pm1.96$ (0 and -1.20) thus signifying that the score distributions in both groups represented normality. Therefore, running a $t$-rest was legitimized.

As Table 5 indicates, with the $F$ value of 6.034 at the significance level of 0.017 being smaller than 0.05, the variances between the two groups were significantly different. Therefore, the results of the $t$-test with the assumption of heterogeneity of the variances were reported here. The results ($t = -7.03$, $p = 0.0001 < 0.05$) indicate that there was a significant difference between the mean scores of the two groups at the post-test with the IE group who gained a higher mean on the post-test outperforming the OBP group.

**Table 5**

*Independent Samples t-Test on Both Experimental Groups' Post-test Mean Scores*

| | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances | | *t*-test for Equality of Means | | | | | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | |
| | $F$ | Sig. | $t$ | Df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference | Lower | Upper |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Equal variances assumed | 6.034 | .017 | -6.988 | 63 | .000 | -2.149 | .308 | -2.763 | -1.534 |
| Equal variances not assumed | | | -7.03 | 55.6 | .000 | -2.149 | .306 | -2.761 | -1.536 |

Following the rejection of the null hypothesis, the researchers were interested to know how much of the obtained difference could be explained by the variation in the two levels of the independent variable. To determine the strength of the findings of the research, that is, to evaluate the stability of the research findings across samples, the effect size was also estimated to be 0.48. According to Cohen (1988, p. 22), a value below 0.8 is generally considered a moderate effect size. Therefore, the findings of the study could be moderately generalized.

## Discussion

The results of the present study are in line with quite a number of researches proving the positive impact of IE on different language skills and sub-skills. To begin with, Jahan and Kormos (2013) demonstrated that IE facilitates grammar awareness while Meguro (2019) who conducted a study among a group of Japanese EFL learners showed the positive effect of IE on grammar and

reading. Mayén (2013) demonstrated that the application of IE techniques through visual aids was helpful in noticing and recalling verbal morphology.

Furthermore, Fahim and Vaezi (2011) showed that IE had a significant impact on learning collocations while Rashtchi and Gharanli (2010) delineated such an impact in the process of learning conditionals. Abbasian and Yekani (2014) demonstrated how IE paves the way for the development of grammar. Moreover, the findings of this study are in accordance with the results of Birjandi et al.'s (2015) work who revealed that typographical IE had a better effect on L2 learners' ability to learn English phrasal verbs. In a study among Korean EFL learners, Lee (2007) also found the usefulness of IE when it comes to improving reading comprehension and learning the passive form.

The result of the present study is also concordant with those of quite a number of not-so-recent research reported from the 1990s. For instance, Alanen (1995) indicates how IE contributes to rule presentation while Robinson (1997) demonstrates the positive effect of learners' automaticity in learning L2 rules. In another well-cited study, Jourdenais, Ota, Stauffer, Boyson, and Doughty (1995) show the impact of IE on noticing which per se facilitates learning. Similarly, White (1998) revealed the effectiveness of IE in drawing learners' attention.

Interestingly, there have been studies on the positive contribution of IE in language learning environments other than English. Three such research have been reported by Bowles (2003), LaBrozzi (2016), and Overstreet (1998) among Spanish students while Wong (2003) concluded that IE helps L2 (in this case, French) comprehension and acquisition of non-meaningful grammatical forms.

At the same time, a few studies have reported findings that are incongruent with those of the present study concerning the effectiveness of IE. For example, Loewen and Inceoglu (2016) found that IE did not contribute to improvement in learning the Spanish past tense. In another study, Leow, Egi, Nuevo, and Tsai (2003) found no significant difference between the effect of enhanced and unenhanced texts on learners' comprehension and intake.

Theoretically, the benefits of input-based activities can be linked to Krashen's (1985) comprehensible input hypothesis and Schmidt's (1990) noticing hypothesis. According to Krashen, input needs to be comprehensible and language learners need to be ready to acquire it. It seems that IE makes the input comprehensible enough and prepares the learner to grasp it. Based on Schmidt's noticing hypothesis, attracting L2 learners' attention regarding target language forms in meaning-oriented situations is required to help learners to see the gap between their present interlanguage and the target language. According to Schmidt (1994), seeing L2 highlights in the written input to which L2 learners are uncovered through reading is the necessary and sufficient condition for the transformation of input into the intake through which learning takes place.

Moreover, as Schmidt (2001) notes, the input does not turn into the intake for language learning unless it is noticed or, in other words, learners get an awareness and consciousness of what they are going to learn. It can thus be concluded that, in the current study, IE paved the way for more noticing as the target structures were made salient through different techniques and, ultimately, served more purposefully in improving learners' writing compared to OBP.

The above result which was concluded through the quantitative analysis reported earlier can also be corroborated through the semi-structured interview conducted. While the participants in the IE group unanimously expressed their satisfaction with the course, 40 percent of the learners in the OBP group were not pleased with the treatment. Some 80 percent of the learners in the IE group regarded the enhanced texts as a positive point of the whole course and only 20 percent stated that the texts would at times distract them and thus considered them as a negative aspect of the course. In the OBP group, however, over 80 percent of the participants stated that their

expectation was not met meaning that they thought the negative points outweighed the positive points.

The participants in the IE group almost unanimously noted that they had found the course useful in terms of improving their writing. On the contrary, the learners in the OBP group had very mixed feelings about this, indeed so mixed that one could not delineate a pattern of approval or dislike in this regard. Finally, the learners in the IE group – even the few who had concerns about being somewhat distracted by the enhanced texts – affirmed that they would eagerly continue receiving such treatment, whereas 60 percent of the participants in the OBP group noted that they would decline to do so.

## Conclusion

The findings of this study may have certain implications for the ELT environment in general. First and foremost, is perhaps the role of material developers and syllabus designers who need to incorporate IE materials and tasks in course books. This of course is not at all a haphazard activity of simply using highlighting, bolding, underlining, etc. here and there sporadically in the textbook. Rather, ongoing studies are required to constantly optimize both the quality and quantity of IE in materials and course books. Such studies should of course engage graphic designers who hold expertise in education since their ideas and experience in designing IE is of course very much noteworthy.

At the same time, the feedback provided by both teachers and learners regarding the effectiveness of IE is also very crucial as this feedback could help syllabus designers and materials developers revise what they have produced in order to make their products more user-friendly.

Alongside the engagement of syllabus designers and material developers in incorporating IE in the materials, teacher education institutions – both at the pre-and in-service levels – could play a significant role in facilitating the employment of IE in ELT. To be able to use this procedure more effectively, teachers would require careful awareness concerning the mode of applicability and the advantageousness of IE in language teaching. Accordingly, teachers could become acquainted with both aforesaid points through being provided empirical evidence during their teacher training courses.

This study, similar to most studies, had a number of limitations under which it was conducted. To this end, the researchers suggest the following studies to further complement the findings presented here. Firstly, the participants of the present study were only male learners since the researchers did not have access to female participants. Thus, similar studies with female participants are recommended to demonstrate whether gender is an intervening variable or not. Age was also another limitation; studies focusing on participants from other age denominations could hence serve purposefully.

Furthermore, the dependent variable of the current study was writing performance. Another study focusing on the sub-constructs of writing, e.g., complexity, accuracy, and fluency, can be done to investigate the impact of IE on these elements. Finally, this study looked into the comparative impact of IE and OPB on writing. It may be interesting to compare the effect of each of the two procedures with a group in which a combination of both procedures are being conducted.

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