System learning involves internalization of a set of abstract and inter-related linguistic rules, which are gradually reorganized into a system

learning as an indispensable component of L2 learning and try to complement their typically implicit second language instruction currently in vogue in Communicative Language Teaching with more explicit methods of teaching language structures. Provided with a more concrete footing, teachers are advised to abandon teaching *syntactic* structures – characterizing a system with abstract underlying rules - through implicit methods such as textual enhancement in favour of more explicit methods of instruction and reserve the textual enhancement technique for individual *morphological features*. Nevertheless, they should heed the fact that the amount of explicit instruction should be moderate, so that learners are not overwhelmed by cognitive overload and that they do not conceive of language learning as learning *about* language rather than learning the *language* per se.

2. The second implication should receive the attention of textbook writers. Textbook writers are advised to carry out a careful investigation of the syntactic structures amenable to system learning and focus on them through more explicit methods of teaching grammar. The choice of the input features should be based on careful scrutiny of learners' problems in system learning, implying that the forms posing serious system -learning problems for the learners are those which are more appropriate to be selected as the structural part of instructional materials.

References:

Alanen, R. (1995). Input enhancement and rule presentation in second language acquisition. In R. Schmidt (Ed.), *Attention and awareness in foreing language learning and teaching* (pp.259-302). Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai 'i Press.

Cruttenden, A. (1981). Item-learning and system-learning. *Journal of Psycholinguistic Research, 10* (1), 79-88.

Doughty. C. (1991). Second language instruction does make a difference. Studies in second Language Acquistion, 13, 431-469.

Doughty, C., & Williams, J. (Eds.). (1998). *Focus on Form in Classroom Second Language Acquistion. Classroom Second Language Acquistion*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ellis, R. (1991). Grammar teaching practice or Consciousness raising? In R. Ellis (Ed.), *Second language acquisition and second language pedagogy* (pp. 232-241). Clevedon, Avon: Multilingual Matters.

Ellis, R. (1997). *SLA Research and Language Teaching*. Oxford Univesity Press: Oxford Ellis, R. (1999). Item versus system learning: explaining free variation. *Applied Linguistics*, 20(4), 460-480.

Han Z.H-, Park, E.S., & Combs, C. (2008). Textual Enhancement of Input: Issues and Possibilities. *Applied Linguistics*, 29 (4), 597-618.

Harley, B. (1998). The role of focus-on-form tasks in promoting child L2 acquistion. In C. Doughty & J. Williams (Eds.), *Focus on Form in Classroom Second Language Acquisition* (pp. 156-174). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Harley, B., & Swain, M. (1984). The interlanguage of immersion students and its implication for second language teaching. In A. Davies, C. Criper, & A. P. R. Howatt (Eds.), *Interlanguage* (pp. 291-311). Edinburgh, Scotland: Edinburgh University Press.

Hawkins, R. (1987). Markedness and the acquistion of English dative altermation by L2. *Second Language Research*, 4, 20-55.

Izumi, S. (2002). Output, input enhancement, and the

enhancement (TEG) and the rule-oriented (ROG) groups lends support to the decisive effect of explicit metalinguistic explanations on system learning and its absolute superiority over the implicit textual enhancement technique. The results fully concur with the findings of previous studies considering unsatisfactory outcomes for textual enhancement (Lewo, 1997, 2001; Overstreet, 1998; Jourdenais, 1998; Izumi, 2002; Leow et al., 2003; Wong, 2003; Radwan, 2005).

Concerning the pitfalls in the textual enhancement technique, the bottom line of the present and previous studies is that the problem stems from learners' tendency to *notice* regularities in the input, and subsequently form overgeneralizations of these regularities to cases where they do not apply; hence *acquisition* is seemingly limited to the items *noticed* during instruction (i.e. item learning), leading to the failure of system learning. This shortcoming corroborates the findings by Harely (1998) in that learners stop short of generalizing the textually enhanced features in the input to correctly judge the grammaticality of unfamiliar - albeit associated - syntactic structures. Therefore, for system-learning to occur, moderate amounts of explicit metalinguistic explanation is deemed essential. In a nutshell, the level of awareness correlates positively with the liklihood of system learning and acquisition, so that the higher the level of awareness, the more likely the system-learning to occur.

Taking the relationship between level of awareness and language learning into consideration, the results of this study are in line with Robinson (1997b) in showing that when L2 acquisition is concerned, awareness at the level of *noticing* (i.e. surface level phenomenon characterizing item learning) is not sufficient and that awareness at the level of *understanding* (i.e. abstration of underlying rules known as system learning) is a more reliable barometer of success in L2 acquisition. Simply put, although textual enhancement is allegedly useful in drawing the learners' attention to *notice* specific features in the input, it is not particularly instantiated as a successful technique leading to *acquisition*.

Bearing in mind that "the efficacy of TE is, in part, a function of the learner prior knowledge (or lack thereof) and of the nature of the linguistic element enhanced" (Han et al., 2008), and due to other constraints (e.g. the limited number of participants, the short duration of treatment period, institutional constraints, and the learners' proficiency level, to name a few), we should be caucious when generalizing the findings to other relevant areas of concern within the focus-on-form framework. Based on the findings obtained under such circumstances, the following implications are presented:

1. The first implication is for language teachers in EFL settings. Based on the results obtained, teachers of foreign languages should regard grammar

underlying these items. In stark contrast, as is observed, the mean of the ROG learners' post-test scores reflects a substantial increase in comparison with the mean of the pre-test and with the mean of the TEG learners' pos-test, showing that explicit instruction could enable the learners to generalize their knowledge to novel items not previously highlighted in the instructional input (i.e. system learning). Also, ROG learners' post-test SD had a minor increase, implying that the group's dispersion on the post-test has not considerably changed in comparison with their pre-test SD.

The scores of the TEG and ROG learners on the post-test GJ task were also submitted to an independent two-tailed t-test to see whether the two instruction types were really different in terms of their effect on system learning (Table 3):

Table 3. Independent-test for both groups on the post-test

Critical t Value	df	2-tailed Probablility	Observed t Value
2.00	62	0.05	4.8

Table 3 indicates that the difference between the two groups on the post-test is significant, since the observed t value is far greater than the critical t value at the probability level of $p \leq 0.05$. Consequently, it could be claimed that the learners who were exposed to simultaneous textual enhancement and rule-oriented instruction had significantly greater achievement in system learning than their counterparts in the textual enhancement group who merely received specialized textual enhancement istruction.

Input enhancement can be achieved through a number of ways: explicit discussion of the form, metalinguistic description of the form, implicit error correction through the use of special patterns of stress or intonation or through the use of gestures or facial expressions, input flooding, and textual input enhancement.

Conclusion and Implications

SLA researchers investigating the focus-on-from framework disagree over "whether the enhanced input will ultimately trigger the relevant mental representation" (Sharwood-Smith, 1991: 120). It is this question that has spurred a considerable amont of empirical research as to the effectiveness of input enhancement. Some studies carried out by White (1998), Jourdenais (1998), and Izumi (2002) demonstrate that this form of implicit instruction may not be sufficient to induce changes in learners' performance. On the other hand, studies conducted under explicit instructional conditions have generally demonstrated positive effects on learners' L2 development. In this regard, exploring the effects of instructional condition on learners' language progress, Alanen (1995), Harley (1998), Robinson (1997b), and Rosa and O'Neill (1999) concluded that learners exposed to explicit learning conditions outperformed those exposed to implicit learning conditions.

Based on the results of this study, the difference between the textual

The treatment lasted for two weeks, two sessions each week (i.e. 4 sessions of treatment on the whole) for both groups. During the treatment period, the TEG learners were exposed to 4 simple texts, each having 10 textually enhanced instances of English dative alternation, 5 alternating verbs and 5 non-alternating verbs. The verbs were highlighted through bolding, underlining, and capitalizing. The ROG group also received the same 4 texts with equal number of highlighted instances, but with a one-page grammatical explanation additionally supplied on the rules governing the use of English dative alternation.

After the treatment, the post-test GJ task was administered to both groups. The post-test was the same as the pre-test GJ task with approximately the same reliability coefficient (α =.88).

Results

As for the data analysis stage, the pre-and post- tests were scored and the results for the 64 participants of the Textual Enhancement Group (TEG) and the Rule oriented Group (ROG) learners were tabulated.

Since the mean of the TEG ($\overline{X}$ =24.2) and ROG ($\overline{X}$ =25.1) of learners were not that different, the two groups were regarded as homogeneous groups. However, to establish their homogeneity prior to the treatment period, the pre-test data were submitted to an independent two-tailed t -test (Table 1):

Table 1. Independent-test for both groups on the pre-test

Critical t Value	df	2-tailed Probablility	Observed t Value
2.00	62	0.05	1.33

The observed t value was 1.33 which was less than the critical t value of 2.00 at the probability level of 0.05. So, no significant difference was found between the two groups.

After the two-week treatment period, the same GJ task, used as the pre-test, was used as the post-test. The descriptive statistics illustrating the performance of the TEG and ROG learners on the post-test GJ task are as follows (Table 2):

Table 2. Descriptive statistics for both groups' post-test

	Textuqal Enhancement Group (TEG)	Rule Oriented Group (ROG)
N.	32	32
X	26.7	31.4
SD	4.5	3.2
V	20.2	10.2
Min.	17	24
Max.	35	38

Table 2 clearly show that the mean of TEG learners' scores had relatively minor increase which could mostly be due to the effect of the type of instruction they received. In addition, the apparent increase in TEG learner's Standard Deviation (SD) could be attributed to the differential and tacit knowledge induced by the textual enhancement technique, leading the learners to variably infer the point underlying the textually enhanced items in the texts and not enabling them to properly learn the systematic knowledge

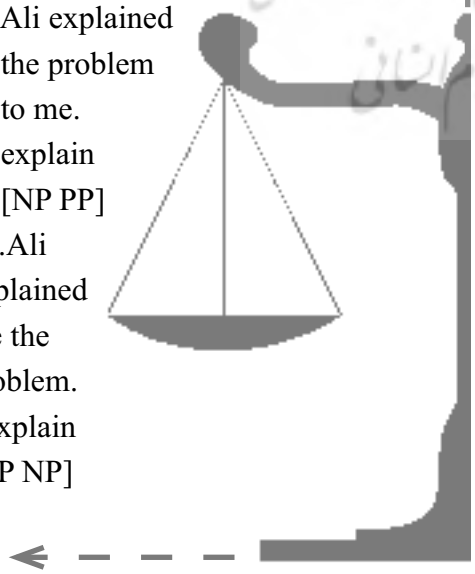
English dative alternation, one of the most problematic areas for L2/FL learners (Hawkins, 1987). The types of verbs subsumed under the English dative alternation fall into two categories: alternating verbs and non-alternating verbs. Alternating verbs (e.g. pay, save, read, build, write, buy, send, throw, bring, lend) (i) allow two complements (i.e. [NP NP] and [NP PP]), (ii) are mono-syllabic, and (iii) have animate recipient; non-alternating verbs (e.g. report, announce, transfer, present, describe, dictate, propose, select, explain, return) (i) allow just [NP PP] complements, (ii) are typically disyllabic, and (iii) have inanimate recipient.The examples below well indicate the differences between the two types of verbs and the constraints on each type:

(1) a. Mohammad bought a present for me. buy [NP PP]

b. Mohammad bought me a present. buy [NP NP]

(2) a. Ali explained the problem to me. explain [NP PP]

*b.Ali explained me the problem. *explain [NP NP]



Whereas in example 1, both [NP PP] and [NP NP] complement types are possible for the verb buy, in example 2, the verb expain receives just the [NP PP] complement type. So, as the learners are not usually aware of such complex constraints on each category of verbs in the English dative alternation, the phenomenon was selected as the target of instruction in this study. To this end, 10 simple dative verbs were chosen, half of which alternate (e.g.buy, pay, read, write, bring) and the other half (e.g.select, explain, return, describe, report) which do not.

The instrument used for the measurement of the effectiveness of instruction types in system learning was a Grammaticality Judgement (GJ) task, once used as the pre-test and once more as the post-test. The task consisted of 60 items: 40 genuine items, representing possibilities and constraints on dative verbs, and 20 items as distractors. To investigate learners' ability in generalizing their knowledge of English dative verbs received during the treatment period to novel dative verbs, half of the genuine items of the GJ task (i.e. 20 items) represented the seen dative verbs used in instructional texts, and the other half comprised the unseen dative verbs. Each seen/unseen half in turn included a group of 10 alternating verbs and 10 *non-alternating* verbs. Also, each group of alternating/non-alternating verbs consisted of 5 *grammatical* and 5 *ungrammatical* verbs.

Before the treatment, the pre-test GJ task was administered to both groups of learners. The reliability coefficient of the test was . 91 (α =.91).

More specifically, in advanced stages of L2/LF learning, the learner comes across sudden moments of enlightenment where unanalysed forms already acquired implicitly merge into a unified whole leading the learner to some kind of *system*. In fact, in system learning, some linguistic rules are so complex that they cannot be stated clearly or exhaustively, so the learners have to go beyond the surface information available in the input and extract the rule underlying some linguistic feature in the input by seeking recourse to some mental device called "projection device" (Zobl, 1983). Therefore, utilizing such a device, the acquisition of one linguistic feature triggers the acquistion of other relevant features.

In an investigation into the effect of instructional Focus on Form (Long, 1991) on young learners' acquisiton of grammatical gender in French, Harley (1998) designed a study in which the experimental group was exposed to activities drawing their attention to the formal clues of the grender of French nouns, and the comparison groups received no systematic insturction in this grammatical domain. The instructional package designed for the experimental group included information on both the masculine/feminine determiners and the noun endings marking gender. One of the major questions addressed in Harley's study was whether the students receiving instruction on gender assignment would be able to generalize the knowledge they acquired about noun endings to new nouns that were unfamiliar to them. The result of the study revealed that although the students in the experimental group performed accurately in producing familiar nouns with correct masculine/feminine articles and were able to correctly attribute gender to such nouns, they failed to generalize their knowledge about noun endings to unfamiliar nouns. In sum, the learners were successful in "item learning", but not in "system learning".

Research Question

The study endeavours to address the following research question: Which type of instruction (i.e. implicit textual enhancement or explicit rule explanation) lead to better system learning, inducing the learners to properly generalize their implicit/explicit knowkedge beyond the input data?

Design and Procedure

Two classes comprising 64 male lower-intermediate students studying at Jahad Daneshgahi of Isfahan University of Technology participated in this study. participants in these classes were a mixture of high school and undergraduate students with an average age of 21. They had the same level of grammatical competence determined previously through the language institute's placement tests. The participants were divided into two groups of 32 and assigned to one of the two conditions: a Textual Enhancement Group (TEG) and a Rule Oriented Group (ROG).

The target of instruction was the

2001; Overstreet, 1998; Jourdenais, 1998; Izumi, 2002; Leow et al., 2003; Wong, 2003; Radwan, 2005), and three of them yielded limited effects (Alanen, 1995; Robinson, 1997a; J.White, 1998).

The conflicting findings of theses studies make it really difficult to come to a soundlybased conclusion regarding the advantages this technique might or might not have for SLA. Furthermore, the bulk of textual enhancement (TE) studies to date have investigated the effect of this technique on the implicit learning of individual items in the input known as 'item learning' (R. Ellis, 1991; Doughty & Williams, 1998) and have dispensed with the question of whether drawing learners' attention to a single grammatical element might induce the learners to proceed beyond the individual item in the input and implicitly learn the systm underlying that item (i.e. system learning). The next section elaborates on the concepts of item learning and system learning in detil.

Item Learning VS. System Learning

The basic idea behind the dichotomy of item learning and system learning is that L2/LF learning involves two completely different modes of learning, usually occurring in two consecutive stages. Item learning involves learning a single concrete linguistic item (i.e.chunk or formula) at a time, whereas system learning involves internalization of a set of abstract and inter-related linguistic rules, which are gradually reorganized into a system. Cruttenden (1981), who first introduced the distinction, maintains that the two modes (stages) of learning can be applied to various levels of language including phonology, intonation, morphology, syntax, and semantics.

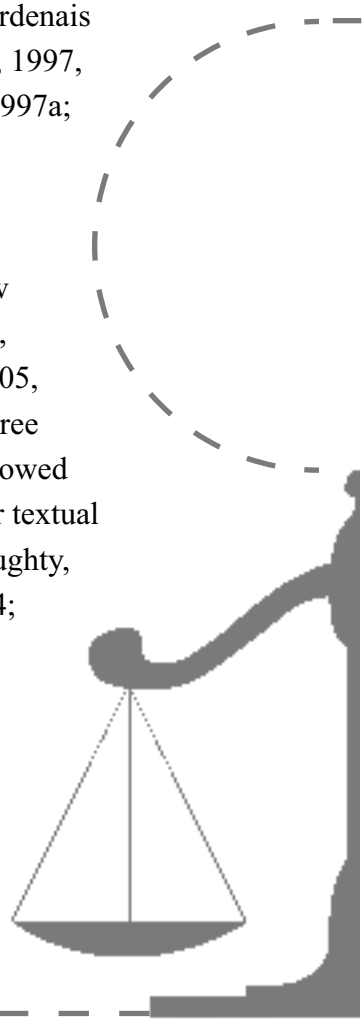
Capitalizing on a simple example, Ellis (1997) points out the difference between the two modes of learning. He contends that when learners learn the expression 'Can I have a —— ?' they are engaging in item learning -they learn the expression as an unanalysed whole. In contrast, when they learn that 'can' is followed by a variety of verbs ('have', 'run', 'help', etc.) and that it can express a variety of functions (ability, possibility, permission, etc.) they are engaging in system learning-they are learning some kind of rule for 'can'.

As implied in the example above, learners' early interlanguage stages are best characterized by a critical mass of individual linguistic *items* which 'vary freely' until in later stages some kind of overgeneralization of cognitive response is triggered through exposure to input and the learner attempts to group presumably irrelevant items, discover relationships among them and extract syntactic categories from the items that are implicitly acquired. This systmatic variation of the learner language known as "free variation ...reflects the role of item learning in acquiring an L2/LF [and] arises when learners add items to those they already acquired and before they have analyzed these items and organized them into a system" (Ellis, 1999:460).

However, considering consciousness as an ambiguous folk term which could take a plethora of meanings, he modified the term to the more cautious *input enhancement* (Sharwood Smith, 1991, 1993). The plausible reason for this modification was that we can only manipulate the input which is external to the learner and we do not know what internal consequences will ensue on the part of the learner.

Input enhancement can be achieved through a number of ways (Sharwood-Smith, 1991, 1993): explicit discussion of the form, metalinguistic description of the form, implicit error correction through the use of special patterns of stress or intonation or through the use of gestures or facial expressions, input flooding, and textual (or visual or typographical) input enhancement. Along with the development of cognitive theories of SLA during the past two decades, the role and efficacy of 'textual enhancement' technique in second language learning has provoked considerable controversy. Being a representative example of data-driven pedagogical techniques based on information -processing framework, textual enhancement prompts the learners to extract and notice the implicit rule-like behaviour and the probabilistic patterns on the basis of the grammatical and morphological regularities wich are repeatdly reactivated in the input data. In other words, textual enhancement is an implicit attention-drawing device which draws learners' attention to a perceptually salient and enriched linguistic feature in a typical written text used as the input. More specifically stated, it refers to the manipulation of typographical cues through highlighting techniques such as font enlarging, italicizing, bold-facing, underlining, capitalizing, shadowing, or a combination of more than one of these techniques. This pedagogical technique is assumed to achieve learners' *noticing* of the targeted form while communicating the meaning with the hope that input becomes *intake*.

The plethora of studies conducted to date to investigate the effects of textual enhancement have yielded quite mixed results (Doughty, 1991; Shook, 1994; Alanen, 1995; Jourdenais et.al., 1995; Leow, 1997, 2001; Robinson, 1997a; Jourdenais, 1998; Overstreet, 1998; J. White, 1998; Izumi, 2002; Leow et al., 2003; Wong, 2003; Radwan, 2005, among others). Three of these studies showed positive effects for textual enhancement (Doughty, 1991; Shook, 1994; Jourdenais et al., 1995), whereas in eight of these studies, textual enhancement proved to be of no benefit (Leow, 1997,



Introduction

All SLA researchers unanimously concur with the fact that learning a second language without input is something impossible. However, regarding the kind, quality, and quantity of the input required for secound language development, there is no universal agreement. Some researchers maintain that being exposed to a large dose of language input in a meaning-oriented context over long periods of time is the *necessary and sufficient* condition for second language *acquistion* (Krashen, 1985). The idea was evident in Krashen and Terrell's (1983) Natural Approach which provided the learners with opportunities to use language in communicative contexts without any primary concern for structures of language. Another well-known pedagogical approach which drew upon the principles of comprehensible input and strong meaning-based versions of communicative language teaching was the immersion programmes in Canada since the 1970's (Harley & Swain, 1984; Swain, 1985; Lapkin, Swain, & Shapson, 1990).

Although such meaning-based approaches proved to be successful in developing L2/FL learners' native-like communicative *fluency*, they failed to account for how accuracy of forms could be developed at the same time. Such findings led researchers to challenge the idea and state that comprehensible input is not *sufficient* – albeit *necessary* – for the development of SLA. In addition to comprehensible input, which developed fluency to the exclusion of accuracy, it seemed crucial to consider other instructional options which could simultaneously develop accuracy.

As a result of dissatisfaction with Krashen's *innatist* model of SLA, some adherents of *cognitive* models of SLA began to argue for the positive role of *attention* to form within a communicative context so that besides fluency formal accuracy be fostered too. This prompted the surfacing of a variety of terms including *consciousness-raising* (Rutherford, 1987; Sharwood-Smith, 1981), *focus on form* and *focus on forms* (Long, 1991; Doughty & Williams, 1998; Long & Robinson, 1998), *attention* and *noticing* (Schmidt, 1990, 1993, 2001), *awareness* (James & Garrett, 1991), and *input enhancement* (Sharwood-Smith, 1991, 1993; L. White et al., 1991).

The bottom line of all of these pedagogical proposals is that "SLA is largely driven by what learners pay attention to and what they understand of the significance of the noticed input to be" (Schmidt, 2001: 3-4) and that L2 learners "learn about the things they attend to and do not learn much about the things they do not attend to" (Schmidt, 2001:30). The controversy now arises as to how learners' attention should be drawn to forms in the input for input to become *intake* (i.e.the part of input which is incorporated into the learner's interlanguage). One presumably optimal solution to the problem is to encourage learners to attend to formal features manipulated in the input. This refers to what Sharwood-Smith (1981) initially coined as *consciousness-raising*.

روش مناسبی برای یادگیری سامانه‌مدار و هم‌چنین برای یادگیری غیرمستقیم قواعد انتزاعی و ژرف ساختی نیست، از این‌رو برای میسر ساختن یادگیری سامانه‌مدار، فراهم کردن توضیحات دستوری، ضروری می‌نماید. به‌طور خلاصه، در آموزش دستور زبان، سطح توجه آگاهانه با موفقیت یادگیری سامانه‌مدار رابطه‌ی مستقیم دارد؛ بدین‌معنی که هرچه سطح توجه آگاهانه بیشتر شود، میزان یادگیری سامانه‌مدار هم افزایش می‌یابد.

با توجه به نتایج بدست آمده به مدرّسان زبان‌های خارجی توصیه می‌شود، برای تدریس دستور زبان، علاوه بر روش‌های جاری که اغلب بر آموزش دستور زبان از طریق آموزش غیرمستقیم نکات دستوری تکیه دارند، روش‌های مستقیم نظیر توضیحات دستوری را نیز به عنوان مکمل روش‌های غیرمستقیم به‌کار بندند. به‌علاوه، نویسندگان کتاب‌های زبان‌آموزی لازم است به بررسی دقیق نکات دستوری که امکان فراگیری آن‌ها از طریق یادگیری سامانه‌مدار وجود دارد، مبادرت کنند و علاوه بر آموزش دستور زبان با استفاده از روش‌های غیرمستقیم آموزشی که اخیراً رایج شده‌اند، به آموزش از طریق توضیحات دستوری نیز بپردازند.

کلید واژه‌ها: برجسته‌نویسی متن، یادگیری سامانه‌مدار، یادگیری جزءمدار، فعل دو متمّمی متغیر، فعل متغیر، فعل غیرمتغیر

Abstract

The paper set out to explore whether textual enhancement, as an implicit instructional technique, could override expicit metalinguistic instruction in inducing system learning. "System learning" refers to the extraction by learners of the abstract rule underlying some linguistic features in the input. It is typically contrasted with "item learning" which aims at getting learner's attention to the surface structure of an individal linguistic feature in the input. In order to operationalize the system-learning of second language structures, the acquisition of English dative alternation (i.e. whether the verb in the sentence allows two different types of complements or not) was used as the target for instruction. Specifically, the study addressed the question: which of the two types of instruction (i.e. textual enhancement or rule explanation) resulted in better system learning. To this end, two groups, each including 32 low-intermediate L2/FL learners, served as the participants of the study: one group known as the textual enhancement group (TEG) were exposed to 4 texts, each one containing different textually enhanced instances of 10 dative verbs (i.e.5 alternating and 5 non-alternating verbs) and the other group called rule-oriented group (ROG) received the same number of textually enhanced texts with a one-page grammatical explanation of the rule governing dative verbs. Two tests were administered to each group: a Grammaticality Judgement (GJ) task used both as the pre-test and post-test. In order to analyze the results of the two different types of instruction, the data obtained through the post-test results of the two groups were submitted to a t-test. The post-test results showed that the ROG learners considerably outperformed the TEG learners in overgeneralizing their knowledge and learning the system underlying the dative verbs of English. Prouducing no significant effect on triggering the implicit knowledge characterizing English dative alternation, the textual enhancement technique proved to be of no superiority over rule explanation. The results of the study revealed that the implicit instructional technique of textual enhancement can not be considered as an appropriate technique for triggering the implicit system-learning of the abstract kowledge underlying language structures. Hence, for system-learning to occur, moderate amounts of explicit metalinguistic explanation is deemed essential.

Key words: textual enhancement, system learning, item learning, English dative alternation, alternating dative verb, non-alternating dative verb

The Effectiveness of Textual Enhancement in System Learning of English Dative Alternation

Mehdi Vaez Dalili (MA in TEFL)
Email: mvaezdalili@yhoo.com
Jahad Daneshgahi of Isfahan University of Technology
Rajab Esfandiari (PhD Candidate in TEFL)
Email: ra_esfandiari@yahoo.com
University of Tabriz

چکیده

مقاله‌ی حاضر به مقایسه‌ی اثر روش‌های تدریس «برجسته‌نویسی» و «توضیح دستوری» بر یادگیری سامانه‌مدار می‌پردازد. یادگیری سامانه‌مدار به نوعی یادگیری اطلاق می‌شود که براساس آن، زبان‌آموز باید قاعده‌ی انتزاعی ژرف ساخت یک ساختار نحوی یا واژه‌شناختی در درونداد را استخراج کند. این نوع یادگیری معمولاً با یادگیری جزء مدار، که هدف آن جلب توجّه زبان‌آموز به ساختار ظاهری یک جزء نحوی یا واژه‌شناختی در درونداد است، مقایسه می‌شود. به‌منظور بررسی یادگیری سامانه‌مدار در فراگیری زبان دوّم، یادگیری «فعلِ دو متمّمی متغیّر» (فعلی که متمم آن دو ساختار متغیّر دارد) به‌عنوان ساختار مورد نظر انتخاب شد.

در تحقیق حاضر، سؤال اساسی آن است که کدام یک از روش های تدریس مورد اشاره در تحقیق حاضر (یکی برجسته‌نویسی و دیگری توضیح دستوری) بر یادگیری سامانه‌مدار اثر محسوس‌تری دارد. به همین منظور دو گروه شامل ۶۴ نفر از فراگیران زبان انگلیسی که سطح بسندگی دانش زبانی آن‌ها پایین‌تر از متوسّط بود، در نظر گرفته شد: گروه اول ۴ متن دریافت می‌کرد که هر یک از این متون دارای ۱۰ نمونه از افعال دو متمّمی متغیّر (۵ فعل متغیر و ۵ فعل غیرمتغیر) به‌صورت برجسته‌نویسی بود و گروه دوم علاوه بر متون برجسته‌نویسی یک صفحه توضیح دستوری درباره‌ی کاربرد فعل دو متمّمی متغیر نیز در اختیار داشت. هر یک از گروه‌ها دو آزمون دریافت کرد: یک پیش‌آزمون قضاوت دستوری و یک پس‌آزمون قضاوت دستوری.

در پایان به منظور برآورد نتایج دو نوع آموزش متفاوت، داده‌های به‌دست آمده از پس‌آزمون قضاوت دستور در هر دو گروه، با استفاده از آزمون t مورد مقایسه و بررسی قرار گرفت. نتایج بدست آمده از پس‌آزمون نشان داد، گروه «توضیح دستوری» چه در یادگیری جزء مدار، چه در یادگیری سامانه‌مدار، نسبت به گروه «برجسته‌نویسی» عملکرد بهتری داشت.

بدین‌ترتیب، روش آموزش دستور از طریق برجسته‌نویسی، به‌دلیل انتقال ندادن دانش انتزاعی لازم برای فراگیری فعل دو متمّمی متغیر، نسبت به روش آموزش توضیح دستوری دارای تأثیر قابل‌توجهی نمی‌باشد. نتایج این تحقیق مشخص کرد که روش آموزشی غیرمستقیم برجسته‌نویسی،