

The Effect of Noticing in Second Language Grammar Acquisition: Under Input Enhancement and Explicit Rule Learning Condition

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Park, Junghyun and Song, Jina. 2010. The Effect of Noticing in Second Language Grammar Acquisition: Under Input Enhancement and Explicit Rule Learning Condition. *SNU Working Papers in English Linguistics and Language* 9, 86-105. In *Noticing Hypothesis*, Schmidt (1995) proposed that SLA is largely driven by what learners pay attention to and noticing target language input and how they understand the significance of noticed input to be. However, in previous studies, there has been mixed results on the effect of noticed input in SLA. The present study aims to explore the effect of two approaches, input enhancement and explicit rule learning on a formal feature, especially English relativization. This study assumed that both input enhancement and explicit rule learning promote the acquisition of grammatical item, relativization, since both approaches give students more opportunities to notice the target items in the process of learning. Twenty Korean first grade middle school students participated in the pretest, training session, posttest and filled out a questionnaire. The results indicated that input enhancement could be more effective than explicit rule learning in acquisition of relativization. Considering recent focus-on-form approach in SLA context, this research puts more weight on the implicit grammar learning than full teacher directed instruction. (Seoul National University)

Keywords: Noticing hypothesis, grammar acquisition, input enhancement, explicit rule learning

1. Introduction

It is commonly believed that learning a linguistic form needs attention on the form. A few works have been done based on Noticing Hypothesis in SLA the present study attempts to draw learners' attention by input

enhancement and explicit rule learning on a formal feature, especially English relativization. As previous studies about input enhancement yield some mixed results, we examine the facilitative effect of promoting learners' attention on form by two different approaches: input enhancement and explicit rule learning. This paper is structured as follows: section 2 explores the theoretical background, the Noticing hypothesis. And section 3 reviews the previous studies, including Doughty (1991), Alanen (1995), and White (1998). Section 4 and 5 introduces the experimental method of this study and analyzes the results of the experiment. Finally, section 6 summarizes and draws conclusions including pedagogical implications.

2. Theoretical background: The Noticing Hypothesis

The role of attention has been central to most theoretical accounts of how the process of SLA takes place. Recent researches have examined the role of attention in mediating input and intake. According to Noticing Hypothesis (Schmidt 1995), what learners notice in input is what becomes intake for learning. Noticing works as follows. Once a learner becomes aware of a particular grammar point or a language feature in input, he often continues to notice the structure in subsequent input, particularly if the structure is used frequently. Repeated noticing and continuing awareness of the language feature is important because it appears to raise the student's awareness of the structure and to facilitate restructuring of the learner's unconscious system of linguistic knowledge. In this way, explicit knowledge developed. Schmidt (1995) also claimed that SLA is largely driven by what learners pay attention to and notice in target language input and how they understand the significance of noticed input to be. Thus, second language learners must consciously notice the grammatical form of their input in order to acquire grammar. He concluded that noticing of relevant aspects of L2 is the requisite condition for learning those features, so it is essential for successful second language learning.

If attention or noticing plays a significant role in SLA, we have to find the way to draw learners attention to grammatical features in the input. We attempt to compare two approaches: input enhancement and explicit rule learning.

3. Literature review

There are previous studies about input enhancement and explicit rule learning. Among those studies, we reviews some studies which focus on the visual input enhancement, which is specifically what this study focuses on. Visual input enhancement is the way to draw learners' attention by manipulating typography, such as larger or different fonts, and by using typographic cues, such as italic, bold face, underline and capital letters etc. However, the visual input enhancement showed mixed results, either facilitative or non-facilitative, in many studies.

Doughty (1991) showed the positive effect of visual input enhancement. With the English relativization, she investigated the relative effectiveness of 2 types of instruction, one was meaning oriented instruction and the other was rule oriented instruction. In this study, the participants were divided into 3 groups: meaning oriented instruction group (MOG), rule oriented instruction group (ROG) and control group. All the participants received 2 weeks of treatment involving computer assisted instruction with reading materials of many examples of object preposition relative clauses. The ROG received explicit rules of relativization, while the MOG was helped by a dictionary and the expansion or rephrasing of the original sentences. And the ROG and MOG read visually enhanced examples of the relative clauses. Otherwise, the control group received the same examples of the relative clauses without the visual enhancement. The results revealed that the ROG and MOG had better performance than the control group. Although, there was no significant difference between the ROG and MOG, the visual input enhancement, which was a variable that differentiated the ROG and MOG from the control group, proved its effectiveness.

Alanen (1995) also, investigated the relative efficacy between the rule presentation and visual input enhancement, in locative suffixes and rule underlying consonant alternation of semi-artificial Finnish. The participants were divided into a control group and 3 treatment groups: the enhanced-text group, rule group, and rule-and-enhanced-text group. The control group got the text only. And the enhanced-text group received the same text, which was made perceptually salient. The rule group got the explicit description of the grammatical rules. Lastly, rule-and-enhanced-text

group received the explicit rules and the text with the enhanced learning target. In the overall result, the explicit rule based group outperformed the other groups and no positive effect of the visual input enhancement was found in the subsequent tests. However, further analysis of the learners' production showed some subtle effect of the visual input enhancement. And the visual input enhancement speeded up hypothesis formation especially in the locative suffixes.

Above 2 studies revealed great facilitative effects of the explicit rule based instruction and positive or at least limited facilitative effect of the visual input enhancement. As it is already shown Doughty (1991) showed the more positive and clear effect of the visual input enhancement than Alanen (1995), because the treatment that Doughty (1991) had given to the participants was much more elaborate than the other studies' simple provision of the visual input enhancement. However, unlike the explicit rule based instruction, not all studies reported the facilitative effect of the visual input enhancement.

White (1998) is one example. This study investigated the relative effectiveness between the visual input enhancement and input flood instruction in English possessive determiners not including the explicit rule based instruction. There were 3 groups: the unenhanced input group, input enhancement group, and enhancement plus input flood group. The tests were conducted before and after treatment sessions to observe the learners' improvement over time. In conclusion, all 3 groups showed great improvement. However, there was no significant difference among the 3 groups.

Seeing the above 3 previous studies, we can get to know that the explicit rule based instruction have great facilitative effect, while the visual input enhancement have mixed results. Therefore, considering the inconclusive nature of the results of the previous studies, the efficacy of visual input enhancement needs to be further explored.

4. Method

4.1 Research question and hypothesis

1. Both learners who exposed to the visual input enhancement and the explicit rule learning would progress further in the acquisition of relativization than learners who did not.
2. Learners who received visual input enhancement would show similar facilitative effect in acquisition of relativization as well as explicit rule learning.

Schmidt's Noticing Hypothesis has stimulated the development of the teaching methods such as focus on form approach as well as input enhancement and input flooding. As it suggests that learners develop explicit knowledge by indirect instruction which leads learners to notice the input, we investigate the effects of one of approaches, input enhancement, and explicit rule learning which is believed to build grammatical knowledge by direct instruction.

Keenan and Comrie (1977) suggested Noun Phrase Accessibility Hierarchy (NPAH) in acquisition of relative clauses. According to NPAH, learners' acquiring of relativization has a predictable order, like the figure below: the easiest position to relativize should be the subject while the most difficult one should be the object of a comparative particle. We chose the easiest one, subject relativization for the target item for the study.

SU > DO > IO > OPREP > GEN > COMP

Figure 1. Noun Phrase Accessibility Hierarchy ¹⁴⁾

White (1998) claimed that complex grammar features should be taught by careful explicit instruction as her experiment on input enhancement did not show beneficial effect on acquisition as expected. Unlike her research, we give the learners input with the highest accessibility, the subject relative clauses, therefore, we hypothesize that the visual input enhancement group would show the similar positive effect as the explicit rule learning group. Also,

¹⁴⁾ Keenan and Comrie 1977

we suppose those results from input enhancement and explicit rule learning will be very similar as we focus on the effect of noticing on the form. The treatments will promote intake from the input and lead successful form acquisition.

4.2 Participants

The participants were 20 Korean first grade middle school students who belong to one class. For the first grade middle school students, the grammatical feature, relativization is not included in English curriculum. Therefore, we supposed they have not built the grammatical knowledge about relativization. We also assumed all students have similar English proficiency since all students in this class were in the 60 to 80 (out of 100) mid-term score range.

4.3 Procedure

4.3.1 The pretest session

Prior to the experimental test, the pre-test was conducted to find out the students who already had knowledge about English relativization. All students were told that the whole process was set to back up their poor performance as complementary tests to make them do their best. All students were required to complete the grammaticality judgment pre-test composed of 10 relative clauses which includes 7 correct sentences and 3 incorrect sentences, during 5 minutes. Since we concerned about the reliability of the experiment that could be influenced by the students' attention to the structure, the number of testing items and the amount of time for the pre-test were limited and there were no visual input enhancement in the pretest sheet.

4.3.2 The training sessions

After completing the pre-test, the participants were randomly assigned to one of the 3 groups: one is a visual input enhancement group; another is an explicit rule input group; and the other is a control group, which experienced neither input enhancement nor explicit rule learning. The former 2 groups, a visual input enhancement group and an explicit rule input group, went through 15 minutes training session, and all materials

given in the session were paper-printed texts. And the participants were told to read the text materials by themselves. For the control group, they did not get any material for the given time to compare their results with those of other two groups.

- **A visual input enhancement group:**

The visual input enhancement group received the text materials with 15 subject relative sentences that were typographically enhanced: the antecedents were underlined, relative markers were written in bold face, and verbs in the relative clause were written in italic. Also, the example sentences were grouped according to the relative markers such as *who*, *which* and *that* to help participants notice the target form. Each relative marker group consists of 5 sentences.¹⁵⁾ The participants had 15 minutes to read the materials by themselves carefully.

- **An explicit rule input group:**

The explicit rule input group received the text materials with explicit description of the subject relativization rules and sample model sentences. The details were written in their native language, Korean. In addition, they were written in a simple and easy manner not to make subjects feel burden or get bored of reading. To differentiate the condition from the input enhancement, these materials did not include any visual enhancement elements such as different font faces or sizes.¹⁶⁾ The participants had 15 minutes to read the materials by themselves as the input enhancement group did.

4.3.3 The test sessions

After completing the training sessions, all participants were asked to complete a fill-in-the-blank test. The questions of the task were composed of 15 relative sentences without relative markers. The participants were requested to fill the blanks with the appropriate relative marker and 3 relative markers, *who*, *which* and *that*, were provided in the stem of the instruction on the test sheet.¹⁷⁾ The whole session took 10 minutes.

15) see Appendix C

16) see Appendix B

17) see Appendix D

4.3.4 Questionnaire

Lastly, simple 3 yes-no questions were given as questionnaire to make sure whether students would have already known or studied the target grammatical form, relativization, or not.¹⁸⁾ It took no more than 3 minute.

4.4 Materials

Considering the students' proficiency, vocabularies used in the materials were the basic ones from the English text book of the first grade middle school. In order to minimize the effects of the other variables except relativization, only active form sentences and the simple SVO structure were used.

5. Data analysis

First of all, among 20 participants, data from two subjects were excluded as it turned out that they already mastered the grammatical feature, relativization. They almost got every question right not only in pretest but also in posttest showing over 90% of correct answers and they responded all of three questionnaire yes, which proved that they fully knew about our target form. Thus, data from 18 subjects were analyzed.

To see the effects of the each treatment, explicit rule learning and input enhancement, a repeated-measured ANOVA was performed. Within-Subjects Factors are Pre-test (time 1) and Post-test (time 2). Between-Subjects Factors are control group (.00), Explicit rule group (1.00) and Input enhancement group (2.00) (See Table 1).

¹⁸⁾ see Appendix E

Table 1. Factors of a Repeated-measured ANOVA

Within-Subject Factors		Between-subjects Factors	
Time	Dependant Variables	Group	Number
1	pre test	.00	5
2	post test	1.00	7
		2.00	6

The result of tests of Within-Subjects Effects shows significant main effects for Time ($F(1,15)=13.481$, $P < .05$) (See Table 2). This means there are significant differences between pre-test and post-test in all 3 groups. However, there is no significant interaction between Time and Group ($F(2,15)=0.201$, $P > 0.05$). In other words, no different results were found in pre-test or post-test, depending on the group, respectively.

Table 2. Results of Tests of Within-Subjects Effects

Source		Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Time	Sphericity Assumed	.229	1	.229	13.481	.002
	Greenhouse-Geisser	.229	1.000	.229	13.481	.002
	Huynh-Feldt	.229	1.000	.229	13.481	.002
	Lower-Bound	.229	1.000	.229	13.481	.002
Time * Group	Sphericity Assumed	.007	2	.003	.201	.820
	Greenhouse-Geisser	.007	2.000	.003	.201	.820
	Huynh-Feldt	.007	2.000	.003	.201	.820
	Lower-Bound	.007	2.000	.003	.201	.820

Furthermore, Tests of Between-Subjects Effects shows insignificant differences between 3 groups, in Pre-test and Post-test all put together ($F(2,15)=0.909$, $P > 0.05$) (See Table 3). That is, different training treatment, explicit rule and input enhancement training, did not draw any significantly different outcome between groups. Moreover, all 3 groups show better performance in their post-tests, regardless of their training treatment.

Table 3. Results of Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Transformed Variable: Average

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Intercept	16.259	1	16.259	555.248	.000
Group	.053	2	.027	.909	.424
Error	.439	15	.029		

To make sure the validity of the given analysis again, Post Hoc Test was performed. Through Dunnett t-test, mean values of the 2 treatment groups were compared with that of the Controlled group. However, no significant differences were found between Controlled group and the 2 treatment groups ($P > 0.05$) (See Table 4).

Table 4. Results of Tests of Post Hoc Tests

Multiple Comparisons

(I) Group	(J) Group	Mean difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval
					Upper Bound
1.00	.00	-.0614	.07085	.304	.0841
2.00	.00	.0267	.07327	.783	.1772

Any significant differences were not found between groups, either. So, One-way ANOVA for Pre-test was performed since the different results of Pre-test between groups could give us some clues and insight for the insignificant differences in Post-test between groups. However, the significant differences were not found in Pre-test between groups ($P > 0.05$) (See Table 5), and that indicates the results of Pre-test are similar between groups and all

3 groups were in a similar level, before the training session.

Table 5. Results of One-way ANOVA

pre-test					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.016	2	.008	.304	.742
Within Groups	.393	15	.026		
Total	.409	17			

T-test is performed, except for control group, in order to find out significant differences between 2 groups, explicit rule group and Input enhancement group. But, there are no significant differences, between those 2 groups (T (11)=1.524, P >0.05) (See Table 6) as well.

Table 6. Results of T-Test

		Independents Samples Test								
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F.	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Df.	Std. Error Df.	95% Confidence Interval of the Df.	
									Lower	Upper
p o s t t e s t	Equal Variances assumed	.453	.515	-1.524	11	.156	-.11667	.07656	-.28519	.05185
	Equal Variances not assumed			-1.507	10.106	.162	-.11667	.07741	-.28890	.05557

To check out the reason why the data yield quite different results from what we expected from our hypothesis, we tried to

look into the mean figures between pretest and posttest. We examined in detail.

Table 7. Mean value of the posttest among groups

Group	Mean	Difference from Overall Mean
Input enhancement	0.83	0.05
control	0.77	0
explicit rule	0.72	-0.05
Overall Mean	0.77	

In Table 7, the mean figures based on the results of post-test in each three group are shown. The figure from input enhancement group is the highest while that of explicit rule learning group is the lowest. Surprisingly, the mean score of control group is higher than that of explicit rule learning group. We examined the data again and found that in pretest the subjects from the control group performed better than the other two groups as in Table 8.

Table 8. Mean value of the pretest among groups

Group	Mean	Difference from Overall Mean
I n p u t enhancement	0.62	0.02
control	0.61	0.02
explicit rule	0.55	-0.03
Overall Mean	0.59	

When it comes to comparing the figure of standard deviation (SD), the figure from the control group is the highest meaning that subjects in the group are distributed in a wide range of proficiency. On the other hand, the explicit rule learning group which showed the lowest pretest score in average indicated the lowest figure in SD as well in Table 9. It can be interpreted that subjects in this group are almost equally ranged.

Table 9. Standard Deviation value of the pretest among groups

Group	Standard Deviation(SD)
Input enhancement	0.14
control	0.19
explicit rule	0.10
Overall	0.15

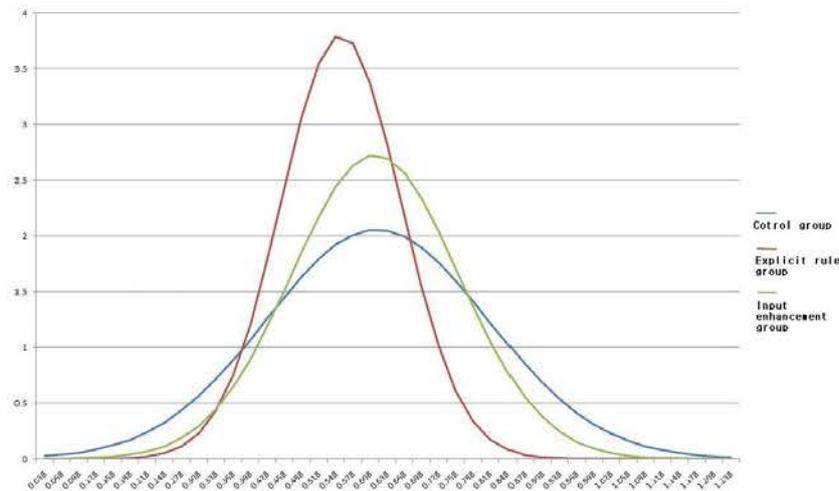


Figure 2. Standard Deviation graph of the pretest among groups

All in all, from the mean scores to SD in pretest, we can see that subjects in control group were well prepared students, so they also showed good results in return without any meaningful treatment. Indeed, it is the main reason that explicit rule learning group showed lower point than the control group. However, the effect of training in input enhancement group is worth in the study in that the figure of the posttest is the highest. Also, our research dealt with quite small number of subjects, so further study should be done to make sure the facilitative effect of input enhancement with more subjects.

6. Discussion

We expected that both input enhancement and explicit rule learning promote the acquisition of grammatical item, relativization, since both approaches give students more opportunities to notice the target items in the process of learning. Yet, the results indicated that input enhancement is more effective than explicit rule learning in acquisition of subject relativization. Even though it is commonly believed that explicit rule learning have great facilitative effect, it didn't work out well for our research. Rather, it is more obvious that input enhancement brings the facilitative effect on the acquisition of grammatical item. Nowadays, it is highly recommended to lead the language classroom with focus on form approach which suggests meaning based learning with minimized explicit rule instruction. As input enhancement is one of the methods from the focus-on-form approach, this research seems to put more weight on the implicit grammar learning than full teacher directed instruction.

7. Conclusion

It is commonly believed that attention or noticing plays a significant role in SLA. In other words, second language learners must consciously notice the grammatical form of their input in order to acquire grammar. In this respect, we attempt to find the best ways to draw learners' attention comparing two approaches: input enhancement and explicit rule learning. We assumed that both approaches help raise students' awareness of target grammatical items. However, our research indicated that there is more facilitative effect of input enhancement than that of explicit rule learning when it comes to studying English relativization. We noticed that there were inevitable proficiency variable from the very beginning, on the pretest, since subjects involved in explicit rule learning group performed the worst even before the treatment. Therefore, they couldn't make a comeback in spite of positive training results. Also, we cannot overlook the possibility that learners could face the difficulty in learning the target item even though we supposed it as a simple and easy grammatical feature. Nevertheless, this paper shed light on grammar teaching issues concerning implicit method and focus on form approach.

Consequently, students can get a lot of benefit from the input enhancement as it gives more chances for learners to notice the items.

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APPENDIX 1

Pretest

다음 예문을 읽고 올바른 문장이면 o, 틀린 문장이면 x를 표시 하시오.

1. This is the boy who came here yesterday. ()
2. She is a teacher who teaches us English. ()
3. He is a student which broke the window. ()
4. I know a man that speaks English very well. ()
5. Give me a book which is on the desk. ()
6. We have a cat which catches a mouse very well. ()
7. Look at the house who stands on the mountain. ()
8. I watched a man and a rabbit which ran around the house. ()
9. She loves a boy that is dancing with her sister. ()
10. He listend to the music that is popular. ()

APPENDIX 2

Training sessions

Explicit rule input

관계대명사의 개념을 간단히 알아보시다.

관계대명사는 문장과 문장을 이어주는 연결고리입니다.

그럼 주격 관계대명사는 무엇이나? 흔히 주격, 소유격, 목적격이 있죠? 관계대명사도 마찬가지입니다. 관계대명사의 종류에는 주격, 소유격, 목적격 관계대명사가 있습니다, 우리는 주격 관계대명사를 공부할 것입니다. 주격 관계대명사는 쉽게 말해 주격인 주어가 생략된 문장입니다.

예문을 살펴봅시다.

People who play sports need to drink lots of water.

아래 두 문장이 원래의 문장입니다. .

People need to drink lots of water.

People play sports.

선행사라고 하는 것은 두 문장에서 겹치는 명사를 말합니다. 여기서 겹치는 단어는 people입니다. 영어는 반복을 싫어하는 언어입니다. 당연히 반복된 단어인 people을 빼야 하죠. 그런데 people은 문장이 어느 위치에서 쓰이나요? 주어입니다. 이럴 때 바로 주격 관계대명사가 쓰이는 것입니다. 선행사가 사람일 때, 주격 관계 대명사 who를 씁니다.

또 다른 예문을 살펴봅시다.

Today we eat food which come from all over the world.

아래 두 문장이 원래 문장입니다.

Today we eat food.

Food come from all over the world.

이 문장도 food라는 명사가 겹쳐 쓰이고 food가 주어 자리에 왔습니다. food가 사물이므로 주격 관계 대명사 which를 씁니다.

다음으로 that을 살펴봅시다. that은 선행사가 사람이든 사물이든 관계 없이 쓸 수 있습니다.

The man that is sitting over there is my father.

이 문장에서는 that 대신에 who를 써도 괜찮습니다. 선행사가 the man이라는 사람이기 때문입니다.

APPENDIX 3

Input enhancement

다음 주어진 문장들은 올바르게 쓰인 문장들입니다

This is a uniform **which** *is* colorful.

I like a hamburger **which** *tastes* good.

I have a book **which** *is* very interesting.

I need a table **which** *is* round.

She is looking at a dog **which** *has* blue eyes.

I saw a woman **who** *was* kicking a ball.

Minsu is a student **who** *loves* listening to music.

I have a friend **who** *plays* tennis very well.

I know a businessman **who** *lives* in New York.

This is Sujin **who** *drinks* lots of orange juice.

I saw a man and his dog **that** *were* passing by me.

This is the book **that** *has* a lot of stories.

He wants a foreign friend **that** *is* interested in Korean food.

I met a girl **that** *wrote* a letter to me.

She keeps a cat **that** *is* very cute.

APPENDIX 4

Posttest

빈칸에 who, which, that 중 알맞은 것을 써 넣으시오.

1. I have a friend _____ lives in Seoul.
2. This is my sister _____ likes playing with a doll.
3. There is a house _____ has a green roof.
4. She ordered two French fries _____ were hot and delicious.
5. I saw Sujin and her cat _____ were running down the street.

6. I met Minsu _____ told the news to me.
7. She keeps a bird _____ enjoys singing a song.
8. I gave him the apples _____ were in the box.
9. I need a man _____ can drive a car.
10. Look at the ducks _____ swim in the lake.
11. She bough a picture _____ was expensive.
12. I helped my classmate _____ lost his keys.
13. She goes to the park _____ is her favorite place.
14. I felt proud of my son _____ finished his school.
15. I can find a restaurant _____ has simple and cheap food.

APPENDIX 5

Questionnaire

다음 물음에 답하십시오.

1. 관계대명사라는 명칭을 들어본 적이 있는가? (네/아니오)
2. 관계대명사가 어떠한 역할을 하는 지 알고 있는 가? (네/아니오)
3. 주격 관계대명사의 용법에 대해 공부해 본적이 있는가? (네/아니오)