The Effects of Textual Enhancement Technique on the Acquisition of Comparison Degrees of Indonesian Secondary School Students

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Abstract

Textual enhancement technique is a technique that refers to the specific linguistics target through the text. The main purpose of this study was to determine whether the technique of using textual enhancement affects the students' grammar mastery, especially in the comparison degree material. Comparison degree is the process of comparing things, persons, or places through the level of quality, or relation and is formed by adjectives and adverbs. This research method was quantitative in the form of a pre-experimental design. There were 40 Indonesian Secondary School students participating in the study. They were randomly assigned to one control and one experimental group by 20 participants in each group. During the four-week period of the current study, the participants received the instructions and treatment. Then the experimental group was exposed to comparison degrees presented with four different textual enhancement techniques. The control group was exposed to comparison degrees used with a different technique (traditional technique) in teaching activities. The data were collected after instructional sessions during the four weeks through paragraphs focusing on comparison degrees production written by the participants. After the treatment, a comparison degree was also administered to the control group, as a posttest. The results showed that the textual enhancement technique can be an alternative strategy in learning English, significantly affecting Indonesian secondary school students' comparison degrees.

Keywords:Comparison Degree, Grammar Mastery, Textual Enhancement

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, there are many significant studies of grammar mastery. It is very important in the communication process. The learners can study grammar because the skill can help them to organize words and messages in a meaningful communication (Jindal & Farley, 2021). Students who have grammatical competence can support the four skills in communicative competence in learning a second and foreign language (Richards & Schmidt, 1983). Grammatical competence enables the students to construct words into meaningful sentences or utterances in both speaking and writing skills. Meanwhile, the students are able to learn sentences or utterances in listening and reading skills. The aim of grammar mastery is, therefore, to help students in learning the target language for good communication.

Teaching English as a foreign language in Indonesia finds the challenges on how to extend grammar will be taught. The students still have common obstacles to constructing the correct sentences grammatically (Syafriza et al., 2021). They think that grammar is the most difficult subject for learning. Memorizing the sentence pattern in detail is quite difficult for those who want to apply it in daily activity (Hoi, 2022). There is a problem which faced by secondary school students at Simpang Pematang Indonesia in composing written text is in deciding comparison degrees of an adjective or adverb describing different levels of quality, quantity, or relation. Comparison degree is part of studying grammar that focuses on degrees or stages or levels of comparing something or someone with something or someone else (Hud, 2019). It showed that the students find the difficulties to comprehend and express the fact that two things or people are similar or different. Hence, teaching grammar needs some approaches, methods and techniques to learn a language as a target language to communicate both in writing and speaking.

Moreover, determine the views of persons who learn the target language to determine the way to be followed in many areas from establishing curricula to authoring textbooks to the method and technique utilized in the language teaching classroom (Boylu et al., 2022). In that kind of case, the appropriate technique in teaching grammar can help the students to be more interested in learning the target language. Tanimi, (2015) claims that learning occurs in understanding a text or using language for communicative purposes. Considering the importance of teaching grammar, there have been many techniques to its teaching and learning, one of which is the textual enhancement technique. Textual enhancement (TE) is identified as one of the techniques which focus on form techniques in teaching second language acquisition (SLA) (Doughty. & Williams, 1998). The techniques are assisting the students to increase the input's saliency in written or spoken texts to aid students in detecting certain forms and boosting their acquisition (Nassaji & Fotos, 2011).

Besides, some studies stated that textual enhancement is an effective technique for teaching second or foreign language forms (J. Lee & Benati, 2007). The technique is applied to change a text by visually marking the target items, e.g., highlighting, underlining, italicizing, bolding, enlarging (Han, Park, & Combs, 2008). Lee, (2020) investigated that textual enhancement technique is effective for teaching grammar in the English third-person singular form among 382 Japanese university students. Based on his research, TE can help the students in language proficiency on English grammar tests. Similarly, Fazlali & Shahini, (2019) found that input enhancement has a significant effect on increasing both lexical and grammatical collocation knowledge of Iranian EFL learners. However, textual enhancement technique draws the students' attention to the grammar mastery in enhanced reading and comprehending the texts (Kim, 2010).

This study, which aims to reveal whether textual enhancement techniques have an effect on the acquisition of comparison degrees for the secondary students in Indonesia who learn English as a foreign language. In this context, in line with the purpose of the research, the main questions which lead to the following study is: "Is there any positive and significant influence on the textual enhancement technique to teach comparison degrees?"

METHOD

Study Context

The design of the research is conducted by using quantitative research. Quantitative research is about explaining phenomena by collecting quantitative data which are analyzed using mathematically based methods (Muijs, 2004). The model of the experimental design of this study is quasi-experimental design.

Participants

There were 40 participants as a sample. They were selected out of 22 female and 18 male EFL students at secondary school of Simpang Pematang, Lampung in Indonesia. All of the participants were EFL learners of English whose ages ranged from 13 to 15 years old. They were randomly grouped in two equal-in-number, experimental classes (each group consists of 20 members).

Instrument

In the present study the researchers used tests for the instruments. The test was arranged as the pre-test and post-test. The pre-test had a function to evaluate the related knowledge of the participants on comparison degree and the post-test was to evaluate the influence of treatment and instructions among the participants on learning and producing comparison degree of the study. The test was also designed as a picture-cued production test type (Torki, 2017). Moreover, every picture contains a story to be narrated by the participants of the study that was intentionally chosen by the researchers. In addition to the picture, a list of 20 comparison degrees written in a table by using L1. Then, the learners were required to write into English about the picture through applying the provided comparison degree in the table. The degrees of comparison should be used both meaningfully and structurally appropriate in the written test.

Data Collection Procedure

The researcher had a four-week period of the current study. The participants were given the instructions and treatment, the first session, they got the pre-test in one hour. Then, two sessions a week and each session lasted for one hour as a post-test. After administering the pre-test before the instruction, the whole number of the comparison degrees were presented and taught to the learners in the first session. It was performed through the use of input enhancement techniques. To this end, some Sentences including blanks were presented for the learners with some key words underlined, highlighted, italicized, bold-faced, or Capitalized, as the clues to find the most appropriate comparison degree. On this basis, the learners could rewrite the sentences or fill in the blanks with the acceptable and suitable comparison degree. This procedure continued for both odd and even sessions during the eight sessions.

The researcher selected 20 participants via convenience sampling and randomly divided into control and experimental groups. Before the treatment a pretest comparison degree was administered to the groups. Each group of participants were exposed to comparison degrees each session. As to the experimental group the learners were exposed to write sentences in which they complete the sentence and their meaning were enhanced through some textual techniques (underlined, highlighted, italicized, bold-faced, or Capitalized). Participants were asked to write the correct structure in

comparison degree. Concerning the control group, the participants were exposed to the same test but they had different technique by using traditional technique in giving the treatment to write the sentence and infer the meaning of each comparison degree using contextual clues. Finally, a posttest, parallel to the pretest, was administered to the groups.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

The research question of the study was aimed at investigating the influence of the textual enhancement technique on the acquisition of comparison degree production. In order to deal with this research question, the participants were given a comparison degree test to know their knowledge of the comparison degree mastery. The result of the pre-test was illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1. The Result of Pre-test of Comparison Degree

		mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	PRETEST	61.33	20	12,459	3.217
	POSTTEST	80.00	20	12,536	3.237

The table 1 shows the experimental group's scores on pretest and posttest were distributed normally ($p > 0.05$).

Table 2. The Result of Normality Test

No	Data	No of Sample	L_o	L_t	A	Status
1	The group treated with Textual enhancement technique (A_1)	20	0,119	0.140	0.05	Normal
2	The group treated with Grammar Translation method (A_2)	20	0,131	0.140	0.05	Normal

The sample is in normal distribution if Lo (L obtained) is lower than Lt (L table) at the level significance $\alpha = 0.05$.

Table 3. The Result of Homogeneity Test

	1	2
$\sum X$	1530	1402
$\sum X^2$	117708	99228
S_i^2	34.89	49.88
s^2	43.00	
$\log s^2$	1.6335	
B	124.1457	
LN10	2.3026	
χ_o^2	4.73	
χ^2	7.81	

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Based on the above computation result, it can be seen that χo2 (4.73) is lower than χt2 at the level of significance α = 0.05 (7.81) or χo2 < χt2 (4.73< 7.81). Thus, it can be stated that the data are homogenous.

Table 4. Summary of Analysis of Variance

Paired Samples Test									
		Paired Differences							Sig. (2-tailed)
				Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
		mean	Std. Deviation		Lower	Upper	T	df	
Pair 1	PRETEST – POSTTEST	18,667	14,075	3,634	26,461	10,872	5.137	14	.000

Based on the SPSS result, it was investigated that the result of sig. 2 tailed in this research is 0.000 It is clear that if the probability or Sig. > (0.05), the alternative hypothesis (Ha) is accepted. It means that there is a positive and significant influence of variable X on variable Y. In the other words, Ha is accepted and Ho is rejected. Therefore, it is concluded that this research successfully proves that there is a positive and significant influence of textual enhancement technique through comparison degree mastery for EFL learners in the secondary school at Simpang Pematang Lampung, Indonesia.

Discussion
The results of this study indicate that there is a positive and significant effect of the application of textual enhancement on the comparison degree mastery. This is indicated by the value of sig 2 tail which is 0.000 and the t-observed value is 5.137. The effect of textual enhancement on students' comparison degree abilities, the researcher obtained from the pre-test and post-test scores in the experimental class because this study was a pre-experimental design. The results of this study indicate that through the use of textual enhancement students are able to distinguish objects, people, animals that have differences and similarities using the comparison degree correctly. In comparing the two objects using textual enhancement students are able to distinguish the use of comparison degree for one spelling and more than one spelling, for example students are able to distinguish when to use er+adjective and more+adjective. In addition, in using superlative level comparisons through the use of textual enhancement, students are able to distinguish when to use the+adjective+est or the most+adjective.

The research study presented here was focused on the investigation of textual enhancement technique and acquisition of comparison degrees. The results of the study showed that implementing input enhancement techniques in teaching comparison degrees has significantly influenced the secondary school students of Simpang Pematang, Lampung in Indonesia.They employed some comparison degrees during the second and third sessions that they had not used in the first data collection sessions. These findings highlight the significant role of input enhancement techniques in English language teaching. These results gave the benefits of instruction especially in EFL

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context and suggest that instruction facilitates noticing, raises students' awareness and their attention in development in the use of the target construction of comparison degrees knowledge (J. Lee & Benati, 2007).

This finding supports Han et al., (2008) which conducted the research on "Textual Enhancement of Input: Issues and Possibilities" with the results of using textual enhancement is capable of inducing learners noticing of externally enhanced forms in meaning bearing input, learners may automatically notice forms that are meaningful, textual enhancement of a meaningful form contributes to comprehension. In line with the finding of the study (Ellis, 1993) pointed out that input enhancement is an effective option in language teaching and learning. Besides, Sharwood Smith, (1993) found textual enhancement as a way to facilitate learners' noticing of targeted grammatical forms and enhance their acquisition.

CONCLUSION

The primary goal of the study was to master the comparison degree through textual enhancement technique. The overall findings of the study underlined the students' gradual attainment of a comparison degree. The achievement and enhancement of the students who learn the comparison degree material by using the textual enhancement technique were better than the students who learn the comparison degree material by using the traditional technique. Thus, textual enhancement techniques like bold-face and italicization help learners notice the targeted forms, which helps them learn more effectively. Continuous exposure to various comparison degrees can be thought of as a good trigger to facilitate the understanding of the input in the relevant context with textual enhancement techniques.

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