

# The Concurrent Contribution of Input Flooding, Visual Input Enhancement, and Consciousness-Raising Tasks to Noticing and Intake of Present Perfect Tense<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

The present research sought to explore the combined contribution of input flooding, visual input enhancement, and consciousness-raising tasks on noticing and intake of the present perfect tense among Iranian EFL learners. Using a nonrandomized control group pretest-posttest design, the researchers attempted to see if instruction could enhance the intake and noticing of the targeted form. To this end, through convenience sampling, 65 lower intermediate learners of English were selected. The subjects were divided into a control group (N=32) and an experimental group (N=33). The experimental subjects were exposed to the three pedagogical techniques while the control subjects did not receive the techniques. The results of the independent samples t-test showed that the experimental group who had received seven teaching interventions significantly outperformed the control group. Furthermore, the obtained results from a chi-square goodness of fit revealed that during the consciousness-raising phase of the study, the experimental participants paid attention the most to the targeted form. The pedagogical implication of the current investigation is that ESL/EFL teachers can simultaneously implement these three techniques in their classes for the learners to both notice and intake the targeted form. Another implication of this research is that material developers can apply the findings of this study in the materials they are going to develop in the future.

## Resumen

La presente investigación buscó explorar la contribución combinada de la anegación del input, el realce del input visual y las tareas de concientización sobre la percepción y la apropiación del tiempo verbal presente perfecto entre los estudiantes iraníes de inglés como lengua extranjera. Usando un diseño de pruebas previa y posterior de un grupo de control no aleatorio, los investigadores intentaron ver si la instrucción podría mejorar la apropiación y la percepción de la estructura gramatical específica. Para ello, a través de un muestreo por conveniencia, se seleccionaron 65 estudiantes de inglés de nivel intermedio bajo. Los sujetos se dividieron en un grupo de control (N=32) y un grupo experimental (N=33). Los sujetos experimentales fueron expuestos a las tres técnicas pedagógicas mientras que los sujetos control no recibieron las técnicas. Los resultados de la prueba t de muestras independientes mostraron que el grupo experimental que había recibido siete intervenciones de enseñanza superó significativamente al grupo de control. Además, los resultados obtenidos de una bondad de ajuste de chi-cuadrado revelaron que durante la fase de concientización del estudio, los participantes experimentales atendieron más a la forma específica. La implicación pedagógica de la investigación actual es que los profesores de ESL/EFL pueden implementar simultáneamente estas tres técnicas en sus clases para que los alumnos noten y se apropien de la estructura específica. Otra implicación de esta investigación es que los desarrolladores de materiales pueden aplicar los hallazgos de este estudio en los materiales que van a desarrollar en el futuro.

## Introduction

The question of whether or not grammar should be taught is likely to remain one of the most controversial issues in the field of language instruction. Traditional methods of language teaching assume that if you know the structural patterns of a language, you will develop some kind of competence to use it for the purpose of communication. Nevertheless, Krashen (1981, 1985) sees grammar instruction as unnecessary and argues for comprehensible input instead. Actually, Krashen (1985) believes that if one is massively exposed to language and has sufficient motivation, the criteria for language acquisition will be met. He sees explicit and implicit knowledge as two different sides of a coin and posits that explicit knowledge cannot turn into implicit knowledge, a position mostly referred to as a non-interface position. On the other hand, skill acquisition theorists draw heavily on the distinction between these two types of knowledge and between controlled and automatic processes (Ellis, 2015). These theorists believe that language learning is similar to any other kind of learning and hold the view that language learning starts with declarative knowledge which can be proceduralized through enough practice and then might become automatized, a position mostly referred to as the strong interface position (Ellis, 2015). Yet, another approach to teaching grammar has been proposed by Long (1991), who argues for a focus on form through which learners' attention is drawn to the linguistic form while they are in the middle of the communication process. He further believes that

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focus on form instruction, a non-interfering approach to teaching grammar, can indeed increase language learners' rate of learning. Long (as cited in Schmidt, 1990) argues that because there is a limit to what learners can pay attention to in the input, focusing on form instruction helps students to notice the structures that would otherwise escape their attention when they are in the process of communication.

Izumi (2002) sees input enhancement as one of the pedagogical attempts that have been used to facilitate learners' noticing to form. Doughty and Williams (1998) define visual enhancement as an unobtrusive and implicit vehicle through which learners might focus on the written input. By highlighting, capitalizing, and/or underlining, input can become more salient to the learners and chances are they pay more attention to them (Sharwood, 1993).

Input flood, a more implicit technique, is another way to draw students' attention to the linguistic structures in the input. The availability of a large number of instances of second language (L2) form in the input is called input flood (Lee & Huang, 2008). Wong (2005, p. 37) makes it clear that in input flood the form is not usually highlighted nor the instructors ask the learners to take notice of the form. In input flood, learners are exposed to the form in a saturated way and it is hoped that students notice the structure and possibly acquire the form to which they are exposed (Wong, 2005).

Rutherford and Sharwood (cited in Fotos, 1993) view consciousness raising as referring to the increased learners' awareness of a special form. The way Ellis (1990) sees it, once, through formal instruction, learners become conscious of a particular linguistic feature, they may notice the form they have become aware of in the subsequent input, and in this way, the necessary condition for the eventual acquisition is met.

A growing number of researchers have studied the effects of the above-mentioned techniques in the instruction of various grammatical structures. For example, in an experimental study on ESL relativization, Izumi (2002) investigated the allegedly advantageous effects of internal and external attention-attracting tools, output, and visual input enhancement (VIE), on the adult English language learners' acquisition of English relativization. Izumi discovered that subjects who participated in output-input activities performed better than those who just engaged in comprehension-focused activities while failing to demonstrate learning gains in subjects who only engaged in VIE.

Moreover, in a meta-analytic review of VIE and grammar learning, Lee and Huang (2008) came to know that L2 readers who received enhanced texts slightly surpassed those who encountered unenhanced texts with identical target forms inundated in them. ( $d = 0.22$ ). In addition to what went before, Finger and Vasques (2010) attempted to see whether explicit instruction could enhance the learning of present perfect among Brazilian students by using a lesson plan which was conceived through the lenses of the communicative approaches and the Noticing Hypothesis (Schmidt, 1990). They found that subjects in the experimental group showed remarkable improvement, providing support to the claim that clear instructions can facilitate foreign language learning. To date, no researcher has ever attempted to investigate the grammatical improvement of subjects' command of present perfect tense using input flooding, VIE, and consciousness raising tasks. Additionally, the mentioned grammatical form is an indispensable part of the *Vision 2* coursebook used in Iranian high schools throughout the country and subjects' upcoming university entrance exam (UEE).

In today's world English is considered an important lingua franca (Jenkins, 2009). To equip students with general English proficiency, in Iran its instruction begins in junior high schools (Grade 7) with three hours allocated per week (Fazilatfar & Kargar Behbahani, 2016; Jafari & Shokrpour, 2012). In combined English skills, as the EF English Proficiency Index (2021) indicates, Iran is ranked 56 in English skills. Also, the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) test scores (2019) reveal that Persian first language (L1) speakers' overall average band score mostly was found somewhere between 6 and 6.5. As can be inferred from above, Iranians' overall language proficiency is not satisfactory enough.

As English teachers working for the Iranian Ministry of Education, we frequently observe that our students' grammatical progress is not as expected, and they frequently perform poorly in our objective-referenced teacher-made tests. Additionally, when these learners graduate from senior high school, they must take Iran's University Entrance Examination (UEE) held annually should they wish to continue their education at the university level. English is an essential part of UEE. However, more often than not, these students perform poorly in the English part of UEE, grammar being a major part. One reason for the inadequate performance of the Iranian students in UEE can be traced back to the insufficient time allocated in the fixed curriculum in Iranian high schools.

As a result, given the importance of grammar especially in the Iranian high-stakes UEE exam, the present study is a vigorous attempt to investigate the combined effects of VIE, input flood, and consciousness-raising tasks on the intake of the present perfect tense among adolescent Iranian senior high school students and seeks to explore whether by combining these teaching techniques suggested by L2 researchers, Iranian senior high school students' performance on the targeted present perfect form will be improved.

### Literature Review

Whether we adopt a structural or a communicative approach to language teaching, grammar is and will probably remain an integral part of any language instruction course. Thus, the job of language researchers and language teachers is to test and measure the effectiveness of various techniques put forward for the better teaching of grammatical patterns necessary to make meaning in communication. Different L2 researchers have defined the term grammar differently. On the whole, grammar has been defined as the way words are put together to form sentences (Al-khresheh & Orak, 2021). Morenberg (1991) argued that grammar can help learners comprehend how words join together to create complex utterances. Additionally, grammar forms the basic framework of a language (Ellis, 2006; Lin, 2016). Consequently, the problem regarding grammar instruction is to explain how input is processed by L2 learners and how grammatical knowledge is acquired.

For instance, Schmidt (cited in Nassaji & Fotos, 2004) viewed noticing (i.e., conscious attention to form) as an obligatory condition for language learning. Other L2 researchers also pointed to the effectiveness of noticing and the facilitative role it plays in L2 learning (e.g., Bygate et al., 2001; DeKeyser, 1998; Ellis, 2001, 2002a; Nassaji & Swain, 2000; Skehan, 1998; Szudarski & Carter, 2016; Toomer & Elgort, 2019; Vu & Peters, 2020, 2021). Furthermore, Skehan (1998) argued that as learners cannot process the meaning and the form of input simultaneously, it is necessary for them to consciously focus on the form of the input, otherwise, they cannot acquire the form to which they are exposed, hence the beneficial role of noticing. Three proposed and widely investigated techniques used in the instruction of L2 grammar to help direct students' attention to form are Visual Input Enhancement (VIE), input flooding and consciousness-raising.

One of the pedagogical techniques utilized in L2 grammar instruction is Visual Input Enhancement (VIE) through which the target structure is made more salient to the learners. White et al. (1991) argued that although learners might be massively exposed to particular constructions, they are likely to have little interest in them. Accordingly, the input is not converted into intake (Corder, 1967). Thus, VIE has been proposed as one of the educational tools to facilitate noticing the linguistic form (Izumi, 2002; Park et al., 2012). By underlining, highlighting, italicizing, capitalizing, and color-coding input can be enhanced (Park et al., 2012).

Sharwood (1993) believed that VIE, a technique to draw learners' attention to form, can either be externally or internally driven. According to Sharwood, external input enhancement occurs when an instructor uses various techniques such as boldfacing, italicizing, or explicit explanation to draw learners' attention to a certain structure. When, due to the salience or the frequent occurrence of a structure, language learners themselves notice something, internal input enhancement has occurred (Sharwood, 1993). Numerous researchers have investigated the impact of VIE in one way or another (Alanen, 1992; Izumi, 2002; Kalanzadeh et al., 2018; Lee & Huang, 2008; Shook, 1994; White et al., 1991; White, 1998; Winke, 2013).

In an attempt to experimentally determine the potential effect of VIE, White et al. (1991) explored the impact of form-focused instruction and corrective feedback (i.e., 'input enhancement') on L2 question formation. They exposed three experimental groups of beginning level students aged 10 to 12 to a variety of enhanced input on question formation over a two-week period. They compared the experimental subjects' performance with that of the control group. They found that the experimental groups who were exposed to a variety of enhanced input significantly outperformed the control group. One of the key characteristics of this study which made it superior to previous ones (e.g., Ellis, 1984) was that there was explicit form-focused instruction, and instruction lasted for a longer period (i.e., two weeks). Furthermore, the participants were tested immediately after the end of instruction and again five weeks later to ensure that the impact was not lost.

In another study, Lee (2007) sought to explore the effects of textual enhancement and topic familiarity on Korean EFL students' reading comprehension and learning of passive form among 259 adult learners of English. It was found that textual enhancement can help learners acquire targeted L2 structures (i.e., passive form). However, it appeared to have negatively affected comprehension. In contrast, it was reported

that topic familiarity only aided reading comprehension and failed to have any effect on the acquisition of passive form. One conclusion we could draw from this study is that focus-on-form techniques such as VIE may reduce students' attention to meaning since learners' attentional resources are mostly allocated to form. Thus, the use of such techniques in meaning-oriented activities is not suggested, for they can seriously hinder the communication of meaning.

Two crucial questions regarding VIE are whether it is always effective, and can language teachers rely on VIE as a remedy for the myriad of grammatical errors they encounter in class. Nahavandi and Mukundan (2013) pointed out that a variety of factors may limit the impact of VIE on learning L2 forms. These factors include learner related variables like proficiency level, prior knowledge of target forms, the developmental stage, and the degree of readiness of the learner (Kalanzadeh et al., 2018). Accordingly, they recommend further exploration on the effect of VIE especially in EFL contexts.

In addition to VIE, input flooding is another pedagogical technique that has been widely used to teach new grammatical forms. Input flooding involves increasing the number of times learners come across a special grammatical structure in the input (Schmitt, 2002). The aim of this technique is to help learners pay attention to the targeted form. L2 learners employ input processing (IP) to build a connection between the grammatical structures and their functions or meanings (VanPatten, cited in Nassaji & Fotos, 2011).

Numerous Second Language Acquisition (SLA) researchers have highlighted the efficacy of input flooding and the role it plays in L2 learning (Krashen, 1985; Nemati & Motallebzadeh, 2013; Sökmen, 1997; Trahey & White, 1993). Krashen (1985) saw massive comprehensible input and input flood as prerequisites for learning any second language. Furthermore, Hedge (2000) claimed that input flooding can make forgetting less probable.

One experiment which tried to determine the possible impact of input flooding was that of Balcom and Bouffard (2015). These researchers examined the efficacy of oral input flooding and form-focused teaching on adverb placement. Whereas their experimental group was exposed to input flooding and form-focused teaching, their control group was not. They found that flooded oral input and form-focused instruction were effective. They concluded that flooded input together with form-focused teaching can promote learning in input impoverished environments. Unfortunately, the researchers did not administer a delayed posttest; as a result, it is not clear whether the efficacy of oral input flood and form-focused teaching was long lasting.

In an attempt to compare and contrast the effectiveness of input elaboration and flooded input, Kasgari (2018) conducted research on the learning of non-congruent collocations among intermediate-level students of English. The findings of her study revealed that both input flooding and input elaboration significantly facilitated the learning of the targeted non-congruent collocations. She further sought to see which of the two techniques was more effective. The results of the statistical analysis revealed no statistically significant difference between the two techniques, hence the efficacy of both input flooding and input elaboration.

Another study investigating the impact of input flooding is that of Rikhtegar and Gholami (2015). These researchers found that input flooding affected the grammatical knowledge of Iranian EFL learners. In a similar vein, Hernández (2008) and Zyzik and Marqués Pascal (2012) showed how input flooding affected grammatical awareness. However, not all L2 research indicates the positive impact of input flooding. For instance, Nemati and Motallebzadeh (2013) explored the influence of implicit focus on form through flooded input on structural accuracy. They found that flooded input did not have a significant influence on the structural accuracy of the targeted forms among Iranian pre-intermediate EFL learners.

Lastly, consciousness-raising is an inductive form of instruction during which learners are expected to utilize intellectual effort to understand the target feature. Rutherford and Sharwood (1985) referred to consciousness-raising as any deliberate attempt to draw learners' attention to the formal structures of the target language. Similarly, Ellis (1997) defined consciousness-raising tasks as one kind of instructional activity where L2 instructors provide their learners with L2 input in some forms and that L2 instructors press their learners to perform some operation with the data at hand, the objective of which is to arrive at a declarative knowledge of the structures of the target language.

Ellis (1997) made a distinction between consciousness-raising tasks and form-focused activities holding that in consciousness raising-tasks, as opposed to form-focused activities, learner production is seen as unnecessary. Actually, he believes that the objective of consciousness-raising tasks is to build an awareness of the targeted structure in the learner's mind while production of the targeted feature is kept at a minimum

level. Therefore, it seems that the main goal of consciousness raising tasks is to develop the declarative knowledge (i.e., explicit knowledge) of grammar in learners rather than procedural knowledge (i.e., implicit knowledge) of it. Nevertheless, Ellis (2002b) admitted that consciousness-raising tasks may not result in immediate acquisition. That is to say, these tasks might have a delayed effect on the acquisition of L2 rules.

A number of researchers have explored the efficacy of consciousness-raising tasks on L2 grammatical performance. For instance, Amirian and Sadeghi (2012) sought to examine the influence of such tasks on EFL learners' performance. They selected an experimental group who received the treatment (i.e., they were exposed to consciousness-raising tasks) and compared the experimental subjects' performance with a control group who were exposed to traditional instruction. Their findings revealed that consciousness raising tasks turned out to be more beneficial than the traditional teaching.

Fotos and Ellis (1991), in an attempt to explore the influence of consciousness raising tasks on grammar learning, compared the impacts of direct consciousness raising by means of grammar explanation and of indirect consciousness raising by means of a consciousness raising task on Japanese learners' capabilities to grammatically judge the acceptability of dative alternation (Sugiharto, 2006). These L2 researchers found that both types of consciousness raising significantly improved subjects' understanding of the targeted structures.

In another experiment, Amirian and Abbasi (2014) investigated whether consciousness-raising tasks can play a more beneficial role in the grammatical knowledge of Iranian EFL learners than the Presentation-Practice-Production (PPP) approach. They selected 62 female pre-intermediate students and divided them into experimental and control groups. The experimental group was exposed to grammar consciousness-raising tasks while the control group was exposed to the PPP approach of grammar teaching. The results showed a higher improvement of grammar knowledge in the experimental group.

A review of the studies which have investigated VIE, input flooding and consciousness-raising mostly confirms the benefits of these techniques in teaching grammatical forms in increasing language learners' accuracy. One of the grammatical structures that Iranian students grapple with in the 11<sup>th</sup> grade is the present perfect tense. Not only do students have to answer grammar questions about the present perfect in the final exam, but also, they have to master it for UEE. Since both tests are high-stakes, and the time allocated to grammar is limited in Iranian high schools (3 hours a week), there is a need to find rapid and effective solutions for grammar instruction. As a result, we formulated the following questions:

1. *Do the three combined techniques of visual input enhancement, input flooding, and consciousness-raising tasks have any distinguishing influence on intake of the targeted structure?*
2. *Which implemented technique is most successful in drawing learners' attention to the targeted form?*

## Methodology

### Design

A nonrandomized control group pretest posttest design, which is a variant of quasi-experimental designs, is used in the current study. Ellis (2012) enumerated three basic requirements of true experimental designs namely pretest, control group, and random assignment of the subjects to control and experimental groups. As randomization was absent in the present study, we opted to use a quasi-experimental design stated above.

### Participants

Two intact grade 11 EFL classes of a public senior high school in Behbahan, Iran were selected for the process of data gathering. There were 65 subjects in the two classes with an age range of 16 to 17. It must be noted that all the subjects were male. One of the groups served as the experimental group (N=33) while the other group served as the control group (N=32). All the subjects had studied English as an obligatory course four years prior to enrolling in grade 11. The participants in the present research shared the same L1 and L2, with Persian as their mother tongue and English as their target language.

### Instruments

Prior to the research, the subjects' English proficiency level was measured by an Oxford Quick Placement Tense (OQPT). According to the results of the OQPT, all the experimental and the control group had a lower

intermediate command of English as their correct responses ranged from 28 to 36. In addition to the OOPT, a pretest and a posttest were also used.

The pretest was a 20-item teacher-made objective-referenced test particularly assessing subjects' knowledge of present perfect tense. To check whether the instrument was reliable, before administering the pretest to the subjects of the study, it was pilot tested with 30 subjects with similar educational and demographic characteristics. The Cronbach's Alpha value was .82 substantiating the reliability of the test. The pretest was administered two weeks before the experiment began.

A procedure for gathering construct-related evidence is the known-groups technique in which the researcher compares the performance of two groups already known to differ on the construct being assessed (Ary et al., 2018). Thus, to check the construct-related evidence of the validity of the above-mentioned teacher-made test, the known-group technique was utilized in which the researchers asked a group of English literature students at the B.A. level to sit for the same test. As the performance of university level students differed significantly from both the experimental and the control groups prior to the experiment ( $p = 0.01$ ), the validity of the test was confirmed. Additionally, as the test had no item unrelated to the assessment of the present progressive test, and the test was actually built based on a previous blueprint, the content validity of the test was corroborated as well. The same test was administered to the participants when the treatment ended as the immediate posttest. As it was almost impossible for the researchers to access the above-mentioned university level students to check the construct-related evidence of a parallel test, the researchers had to resort to the previously-administered test whose construct validity had been corroborated. This is why the same test was administered to the participants in the posttest. Additionally, when the experiment ended, the subjects in the experimental group were asked to fill out a form indicating the technique during which their attention was drawn to the linguistic form they were exposed to.

#### *Treatment and material*

The treatment lasted seven teaching sessions (approximately four and a half weeks). The *Vision 2 English for Schools* book published by the Iranian Ministry of Education was utilized as the coursebook in the teaching sessions. The experimental group was first pretested and then received the intervention. Then, the experimental group was posttested. On the other hand, the participants in the control group were only pretested and posttested. To be more precise, the present perfect tense appears in the second lesson of the *Vision 2* book. This lesson was skipped for the participants in the control group. That is to say, they were taught in this order: Lesson 1, Lesson 3, and Lesson 2. Before embarking on discussing how the instruction went, it should be noted that in the *Vision* books, the grammar section comes after the conversation and reading comprehension sections.

#### *Procedure*

The treatment group received flooded input on the targeted structure (i.e., present perfect tense) repeatedly in seven teaching sessions as the targeted form was repeatedly apparent in the textbook. The data collector did not tell the experimental subjects what form they were to learn in the next sessions so that researchers could later realize in which activity the students in the treatment group noticed the targeted form. In the conversation and reading comprehension sections, the targeted present perfect tense was repeatedly used. Right before the grammar section, the targeted forms in vision books were boldfaced. The experimenters devoted one complete session to that particular page in which the structure of interest (i.e., present perfect tense) was used. These first two phases of the treatment lasted for 4 teaching sessions. The next 3 sessions were completely devoted to the consciousness-raising tasks. In this phase, the data collector gave the subjects some examples in which the main verb was highlighted and underlined. Then, the instructor asked the participants to silently read the sentences and detect the targeted form. In the following, some of these sentences are presented:

Have a look at the examples below. Can you explain the grammatical point?

I have lived in Iran since I was born.

He hasn't got a job yet.

Now compare these sentences with the following and point to their similarities and their differences.

I live in Iran.

He has a job now.

Afterward, the experimental subjects were asked to explain when the form is used and when not. On the whole, all the efforts were made to follow the questions suggested by Ellis (2002) in this consciousness-raising phase of the research.

**Results**

*The potential contribution of textual enhancement, input flooding, and consciousness-raising tasks on the intake of present perfect tense*

The first question deals with the combined effect of VIE, flooded input and consciousness-raising tasks on the intake of present perfect tense. In order to answer the first research question, a t-test was used to determine if there is a significant difference between the means of the two groups (Ary et al., 2018).

Before conducting the independent-samples t-test, using SPSS version 20, a Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was run to see whether the normality assumption is met.

The Kolmogorov-Smirnov results obtained for the pretest and posttest scores are 0.115 and 0.150 respectively verifying the normality assumption, hence there is room for conducting an independent samples t test.

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
pretest_score	experimental	33	4.8485	4.40079	.76608
	control	32	5.4688	3.72640	.65874
posttest_score	experimental	33	11.2121	5.31365	.92499
	control	32	5.3750	4.10939	.72644

Table 1: Group statistics

In the group statistics table, we can find the mean and standard deviation for groups in the pretest and posttest. As the above table reveals, the mean for experimental and control groups in the pretest are almost alike (4.84 and 5.46, respectively). Nevertheless, the mean of the experimental group is well above that of the control group in the posttest respectively (11.21 and 5.37).

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower		Upper
pretest_score	Equal variances assumed	.158	.692	-.612	63	.543	-.62027	1.01296	-2.64451	1.40398
	Equal variances not assumed			-.614	61.889	.542	-.62027	1.01036	-2.64001	1.39948
posttest_score	Equal variances assumed	3.699	.059	4.943	63	.000	5.83712	1.18078	3.47752	8.19672
	Equal variances not assumed			4.963	60.062	.000	5.83712	1.17615	3.48453	8.18972

Table 2: Independent samples test

Next, as Table 4 shows, the assumption of homogeneity of variance was checked. Looking at the Levene's test for equality of variance, we noticed that the p-value is above 0.05 (0.69 in the pretest and 0.059 in the posttest). Hence, the homogeneity of variance assumption is met.

An independent-samples t-test was run to see if the subjects in the two groups differed on their intake of the present perfect tense. An examination of the data demonstrated that there was no violation of the normality assumption. There was a statistically significant difference for the subjects in the experimental

group (M = 11.21, SD = 5.31) and the control group (M = 5.37, SD = 4.10) ( $t = 4.93, p = 0.001, df = 63$ ) in the posttest. Additionally, the magnitude of the difference in the means was large (eta squared = 0.27).

The first research question dealt with the potential contribution of VIE, input flooding, and consciousness-raising tasks on the intake of the targeted form. The statistical examination of the data pointed to the efficacy of the combined techniques on the intake of the form. The next research question deals with the technique which attracted subjects' attention the most. It is essential that we figure out which of the above pedagogical techniques can draw learners' attention to the form because, as Schmidt (1990, 1994, 2001) has concluded without attention no learning takes place.

*When do learners most pay attention to the linguistic form?*

The second research question deals with the technique during which the experimental subjects noticed most to the form to which they were exposed. To this end, in the last teaching session, the subjects in the experimental group were asked to fill out a form when they noticed the targeted form. In this regard, as there is only one nominal variable with three levels, the use of Chi-square for goodness of fit is warranted (Rezai, 2015).

	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
input flooding	5	11.0	-6.0
VIE	9	11.0	-2.0
consciousness raising task	19	11.0	8.0
Total	33		

Table 3: Technique

Table 4 deals with the frequency where the observed and expected numbers are displayed for each category. As there are 33 participants in our data file with three categories, the expected frequency is calculated by dividing 33 over 3 which would equal 11. Table 4 indicates that 19 subjects opted for the consciousness-raising task as the technique during which their attention was drawn to the targeted structure.

	technique
Chi-Square	9.455 <sup>a</sup>
Df	2
Asymp. Sig.	.009

Table 4: Test statistics

The results of the chi-square test are displayed in Table 5 in which the expected and observed frequencies are compared. Here, the chi-square value is 9.45 with 2 degrees of freedom. This value is significant from a statistical point of view ( $p = 0.001$ ).

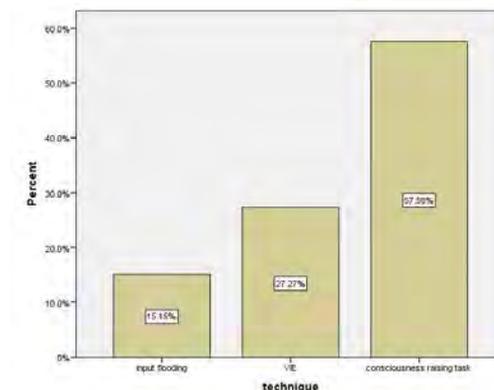


Figure 1. Bar chart displaying the technique that attracted subjects' attention

The above figure shows that the consciousness-raising task attracted experimental subjects' attention to the targeted form more than other techniques (57.58%).

A Chi-square goodness of fit was conducted to find out during what technique students' attention was drawn to the form. The results displayed a significant difference among the techniques  $\chi^2 (2, n= 33) = 9.45, p = 0.001$ ).

### Discussion

The first objective of this research was to explore whether the three combined techniques of VIE, input flooding, and consciousness raising tasks can help lower intermediate Iranian EFL learners' intake of present perfect tense. The findings suggest that combining the above-mentioned pedagogical techniques had a positive impact on the intake of the targeted structure among the experimental participants. Simply put, the results of the immediate posttest demonstrated that the experimental subjects who had received the treatment significantly outperformed the control group who had not received the intervention. Thus, the findings of the current investigation support the positive effect of the mixed techniques of VIE, input flooding, and consciousness-raising tasks on the intake of the targeted linguistic structure.

Another objective of this research was to understand what teaching technique contributed most to the noticing of the form. The results suggested that it was during the consciousness-raising phase of the study that the experimental subjects most noticed and paid attention to the form to which they were exposed. That is to say, consciousness-raising tasks can draw learners' attention to the form.

By and large, the results obtained from this investigation established the efficacy of combining VIE, input flooding and consciousness raising tasks on noticing and intake of present perfect tense among EFL students. The originality of this investigation lies in the combination of VIE, input flooding, and consciousness-raising tasks in an attempt to find a panacea for the impoverished grammatical capability of the learners who have high-stakes tests ahead which turned out to be effective.

That a combination of input flooding, textual enhancement and consciousness-raising tasks can enhance L2 learners' grammatical sensitivity is in line with Ellis' (2009, 2013) idea that in EFL contexts where learners have very limited, if any, opportunity to practice the L2 outside the classroom, substantially greater input should be provided for such learners inside the classroom and in textbooks. The result obtained also supports Mishan's (2005) argument that if learners are provided with enough exposure and opportunity in the consciousness- raising phase, they will discover the elements of the L2 grammar. Additionally, Moradkhan and Sohrabian (2009) found that in developing the grammatical knowledge of EFL learners, consciousness-raising tasks can be regarded as a very useful activity. This study also substantiated the claim made by Fotos and Ellis (1991) who argued that in the development of grammar, consciousness raising tasks are highly effective.

In helping learners develop explicit knowledge, consciousness-raising instruction has been shown to be quite effective (Ellis, 2015). Fotos (1993) noted that explicit knowledge gained from consciousness-raising tasks helped learners notice the subsequent linguistic forms. Several weeks after the completion of the tasks, the learners in her study completed a number of dictations that included exemplars of the targeted structures. They were then asked to underline any particular bit of language they had paid special attention to as they did the dictations. Fotos reported that they frequently underlined the structures that had been targeted in the consciousness-raising tasks.

Arguably, literature is replete with the useful effects of VIE and input flooding in numerous aspects of learning any second or foreign language (Afriz & Ebrahimi, 2014). For instance, Alanen (1995) found that if adults are provided with VIE in the classroom, they can learn Finnish locative suffixes at a faster rate. In another study, Rikhtegar and Gholami (2015) indicated the paramountcy of input flooding pedagogical technique in the learning of past tense linguistic form. These studies support the claim made by Schmidt (1990, 2001). According to the noticing hypothesis put forward and updated by Schmidt, if learners are aware of what targeted forms they are learning and noticing, the necessary condition for the conversion of input into intake is met.

The results of this exploration suggested the importance of consciousness-raising activities in drawing learners' attention to the structural form. That is to say, learners focused less to the form during VIE and input flooding phases. As mentioned earlier, Nahavandi and Mukundan (cited in Kalanzadeh et al., 2018) enumerated some factors that may impede learning L2 forms through VIE. These factors include learner-related variables like proficiency level, prior knowledge of target forms, the developmental stage, and the degree of readiness of the learner. It might be due to these factors that, compared to VIE and input flooding,

consciousness raising activities were found to draw the experimental subjects' attention to the targeted form.

In line with the Input Hypothesis, Krashen (1985) sought to show that acquisition takes place when the input is comprehensible. Nevertheless, comprehensible input alone may not be enough for acquisition to happen unless learners also pay conscious attention to the words and grammatical features in the input – as claimed by the Noticing Hypothesis. Perhaps, then, just as enhanced input induces noticing, it can also facilitate acquisition (Ellis, 2015).

In the case of grammar instruction, text enhancement is not always facilitative. Whereas it may help learners to see what is grammatically possible in the target language, it may not help them to eradicate an erroneous rule, especially if this rule corresponds to an L1 rule. In an interesting study, Trahey and White (1993) investigated the effects of input flooding on French-speaking learners' acquisition of adverb placement in English. English permits adverb placement between the subject and the verb – for example, "Mary hurriedly hid her book" – but French does not; whole English does not permit placement between the verb and object – for example, \*"Mary hid hurriedly her book" – and French does. Exposure to input containing adverbs was extensive in this study: one hour a day for ten days. The learners succeeded in learning the grammatical position for adverbs, but failed to "unlearn" the grammatical position.

Sometimes text enhancement can lead to overuse of the targeted forms. Han et al. (2008) suggested that this may be due to over-enhancement –i.e., a combination of typographical enhancement and flooding. They cite studies where overuse occurred and where in each case there was double-enhancement. Han et al. concluded that for text enhancement to be effective, there must be a proper balance between frequency and saliency of targeted forms.

Overall, then, the evidence is quite mixed. Clearly, input enhancement does not always have an effect. As Lyddon (2011) pointed out, "even the most deliberate attempts to modify a stimulus are no guarantee of its perception" (p.116) and – even if noticing occurs – acquisition may not. At best, input enhancement only increases the likelihood of acquisition and – in the case of over-enhancement – it can have a deleterious effect. By and large, these studies suggest that the researchers have been on the right track to have combined VIE, input flooding, and consciousness raising tasks to induce both noticing and intake of the targeted linguistic form in the learners.

## Conclusion

The main aim of this study was to provide beneficial instruction for Iranian EFL learners, so that they can notice and intake the present perfect tense. On the whole, based on the obtained results and the existing literature, it can be concluded that VIE, input flooding and consciousness-raising tasks simultaneously contribute to the intake of the form, with consciousness raising-tasks drawing learners' attention more than the other implemented techniques. Thus, the pedagogical implication of this study is that ESL/EFL teachers can simultaneously implement these three techniques in their classes in order for the learners to both notice and intake the targeted form. Another implication of this research is that material developers can apply the findings of this study in the materials they are going to develop in the future. These material developers can apply the findings of this study in their materials to foster the grammatical accuracy of their targeted learners.

Despite the intriguing results of the current research, this study encountered some limitations. One of the major limitations of the present study was that level of proficiency was not taken into account. Therefore, it is unclear whether subjects with different proficiency levels perform similarly if exposed to the same form using this intervention. Another limitation of this study was directly related to the notion of individual differences in SLA research. It is unclear whether individuals with different characteristics (e.g., different working memory capacity, field dependence/ field independence, anxiety tolerance, native language, and so forth) perform similarly or not. Another important shortcoming of this study was related to the design of the study. As it was not possible for the researchers to randomly select the subjects of the study or to randomly assign them into different groups, randomization, a necessary condition for experimental research (Bachman, 1990; Mackey & Gass, 2015), was absent in this investigation. Without a random assignment of subjects, we do not know if the groups were equivalent before the experiment began. Perhaps the class designated as the experimental group would have done better without the intervention. As a result, there is an initial selection bias (Ary et al., 2018) that can seriously threaten the internal validity of the design of this study. Obviously, future studies are needed to obviate the pitfalls of the present investigation and

provide the SLA community with a clearer picture on the concurrent contribution of VIE, input flooding, and consciousness-raising activities to the intake and noticing of the linguistic forms. Additionally, future studies are needed to see whether the positive effects of these combined techniques are durable over time or not.

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