

Investigating the effectiveness of input-based techniques on the acquisition of English passive: A comparative study of explicit instruction and input-based techniques

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Abstract

This study investigates the efficacy of various grammar instruction techniques, namely focus-on-form (FonF) and focus-on-forms (FonFs), on the acquisition and production of the English passive voice. A quasi-experimental pre-test and post-test design was employed across four treatment groups without a control group, involving 62 Turkish learners of English, enrolled in preparatory classes at a public university in Turkey, with a B1 (intermediate) proficiency level. The study assessed the effectiveness of input flood (IF), input flood coupled with textual enhancement (IF + TE), input flood with explicit grammar teaching (IF + EGT), and rule-based instruction (RBI). Authentic texts on global warming and climate change were used as materials, with passive sentences underlined for the IF + TE group and explicit grammar explanations provided to the IF + EGT group. Findings point to a clear superiority of RBI in the learners' grammatical acquisition and production, supporting the idea that explicit instruction, followed by controlled practice, significantly enhances learning outcomes. Contrary to RBI's success, the IF only approach did not yield a substantial impact, questioning the effectiveness of implicit teaching methods for complex grammatical structures. The study also examined the relationship between explicit knowledge and communicative practice, finding that explicit instruction is critical even within communicative frameworks. These outcomes align with the Noticing Hypothesis, emphasizing that conscious recognition of grammatical forms is necessary for effective language acquisition. The study contributes to the ongoing debate on the efficacy of explicit grammar instruction versus implicit learning, suggesting that a combination of instruction focusing on form within a communicative context can be beneficial for EFL learners.

Keywords implicit instruction, explicit instruction, grammar teaching, input flood, textual enhancement, rule-based instruction

1. Introduction

Over the past three decades, research findings have cast doubt on whether mere exposure to input is sufficient for successful second language (L2) acquisition. There is now a broad consensus among researchers in second language acquisition (SLA) that some level of attention to linguistic forms is crucial for learners to achieve advanced levels of L2 proficiency (VanPatten, 2002; Nassaji & Simard, 2010; Rassaei, 2015). This concern has sparked a resurgence of interest in the role of formal instruction in L2 acquisition. Numerous studies have highlighted the crucial role of explicit instruction (EI) in SLA (e.g., Carroll & Swain, 1993; Norris & Ortega, 2000; Hernández, 2008; de la Fuente, 2009). Some researchers argue that EI, which entails providing learners with information about target language structures during the learning process (DeKeyser, 1995), enhances SLA by promoting noticing (Schmidt, 1990, 1995, 2012) and facilitating the subsequent intake of target forms. However, in recent years, researchers have

adopted a wider perspective on the role of formal instruction. Rather than focusing solely on teaching grammatical items in isolation from communicative context, they have become more interested in how learners' attention can be drawn to formal language features during meaning-focused activities (e.g., Basturkmen et al., 2002; Nassaji & Fotos, 2004; Lee, 2007; Simard, 2009; Rassaei, 2012), a practice commonly known as focus on form (FonF) (Long, 1991). Long's original concept of FonF has since evolved and expanded to encompass proactive approaches, where learners' attention is directed toward predetermined linguistic targets during communicative or meaning-oriented tasks (e.g., Doughty & Williams, 1998).

Two ways to direct learners' attention to target linguistic features are visual input enhancement, also known as textual enhancement (TE), and input enrichment, also known as input flood (IF). While TE generally refers to the technique of highlighting certain elements of a text to make them more noticeable to learners through various modifications (Rassaei, 2015), IF

involves increasing the frequency of target language structures within the input. In other words, IF consists of language where the target features are presented repeatedly (Reinders & Ellis, 2009). These FonF techniques aim to increase the saliency of target forms, making them more visually prominent and thereby helping learners processing them. Schmidt's (2001) noticing hypothesis provides theoretical support for this approach: before input can be processed for acquisition, L2 learners must first notice it. By using typographical cues and creating a learning environment in which learners are exposed to many exemplars of target forms through meaning-centered activities, the likelihood of learners noticing the highlighted input is increased, which in turn helps create a lasting memory trace.

In studies examining TE, some have focused on it as the primary independent variable (e.g., Leow, 2001), while others have used it as one of several techniques to draw attention to form (e.g., Robinson, 1997; Loewen & Inceoglu, 2016). Additionally, various researchers have explored the influence of other moderating factors alongside TE, such as the unique nature of the target linguistic structures (Shook, 1994; Alanen, 1995; Park & Nassif, 2014; Della Putta, 2016; Révész et al., 2021), provision of explicit rule instruction prior to exposure to enhanced input (Alanen, 1995), manipulating text length (Leow, 1997), incorporating extensive reading and listening (Meguro, 2019), using output activities (Izumi, 2002), an input enrichment (Rassaei, 2015), the use of different typographical cues (Simard, 2009; LaBrozzi, 2016), saliency of the target forms (Leow et al., 2003), and topic familiarity (Lee, 2007; Overstreet, 1998).

2. Previous Research on the Effects of Input Enhancement on L2 Grammar Acquisition

Building on Sharwood Smith's (1993) suggestion to increase the salience of grammatical forms in the input, many studies have investigated the role of TE in promoting grammar acquisition. Sharwood Smith (1991) drew a clear line between two types of salience: externally induced and internally created. Externally created salience occurs when teachers manipulate input, for example through textual enhancement, to make certain linguistic elements stand out. In contrast, internally created salience happens naturally as learners become cognitively ready to process specific language features. However, Sharwood Smith cautioned that external salience does not automatically translate into internal salience, which is crucial for language acquisition. Learners might either overlook the externally highlighted input or, even if they notice it, may not engage with it further unless they are prepared to learn it. This suggests that TE will only be effective when the highlighted language features also become internally salient for the learner.

SLA researchers have frequently compared learners' acquisition of target linguistic constructions presented in enhanced versus unenhanced texts (for recent examples, see Leow, 2001; Izumi, 2002; Winke 2013; Jahan and

Kormos 2015; Alsadoon & Heift, 2015; Boers et al., 2017; Loewen & Inceoglu, 2016; LaBrozzi 2016; Meguro, 2019; Lee & Révész, 2020). However, the findings have been inconsistent, with Lee and Huang's (2008) meta-analysis indicating that the overall impact of textual enhancement on acquisition is generally small. Besides, most previous studies have employed comparison groups rather than true control groups. Typically, TE has been compared with the more implicit IF technique. Some studies have reported relatively positive effects of TE on the acquisition of grammatical forms compared to input flood (e.g., Lee, 2007; White, 1998), while others have found no such advantage (e.g., Izumi, 2002). TE has also frequently been compared with explicit grammar instruction, which has generally been shown to produce stronger effects than TE (Alanen, 1995; Doughty, 1991). Researchers have also disagreed on the effects of TE on learners' noticing. For instance, Alsadoon and Heift (2015) and Lee and Révész (2020) argued that TE helped promote noticing, even though it did not translate into actual learning gains. In contrast, studies by Leow (2001) and Leow et al. (2003) found that TE did not significantly enhance learners' noticing of target form.

As for the efficacy of TE on the acquisition of various grammatical structures differing in complexity, Shook (1994) investigated to what extent TE influences the acquisition of two distinct L2 grammatical forms: the Spanish present perfect tense and relative pronouns. The present perfect tense, he argued, involves more complex decision-making, while relative pronouns are syntactically driven and less meaningful. In a study with 125 participants, three groups were exposed to different conditions: unenhanced texts, enhanced texts without EI, and enhanced texts with EI. Results indicated that the group engaging with enhanced texts showed better acquisition of the present perfect tense, though no significant improvement was found for relative pronouns. Shook concluded that these differences may have resulted from the varying semantic significance of the targeted forms. Similarly, Jahan and Kormos (2015) explored the use of textual enhancement to aid Bangladeshi learners in noticing the distinctions between the English modals 'will' and 'be going to.' The researchers found that repeated encounters with enhanced texts improved the learners' recognition of 'be going to,' but 'will' saw no significant progress. The study highlighted the challenges of implicit instruction and suggested that prior linguistic knowledge played a crucial role in how effectively learners could acquire these structures.

In another study, Alanen (1995) focused on Finnish locative suffixes and consonant alternation, finding that while TE helped with the former, it was ineffective for the latter. Révész et al. (2021) observed similar results when testing the effects of repeated TE on children's acquisition of derivational morphology. While Swedish students showed slight improvement in learning the morpheme '-ion,' Romanian students did not demonstrate significant gains. Park and Nassif (2014) further explored the communicative value of targeted linguistic structures in Arabic, revealing that textual enhancement had a positive effect on more communicative forms but hindered comprehension when applied to less meaningful

structures. Similarly, Della Putta (2016) examined the role of textual enhancement in helping Spanish learners of Italian manage structures requiring new learning or the unlearning of native language habits. She concluded that EI was more effective than textual enhancement for learners facing greater cognitive challenges.

Building on the positive relationship established between TE and L2 grammar development, recent research has focused on uncovering the cognitive processes that may explain the benefits of exposure to enhanced materials. Specifically, researchers have shown growing interest in using eye-tracking technology to measure how effectively TE directs learners' attention to target lexical constructions. Eye-tracking is grounded in the idea that the duration, location, and sequence of eye movements reflect attentional processes as individuals interact with visual stimuli (Just & Carpenter, 1976). In the context of TE studies, this method allows researchers to assess whether learners notice highlighted linguistic features, how long they focus on them, and how frequently they return to those features. Loewen and Inceoglu (2016), Indrarathne and Kormos (2017), and Boers et al. (2017) found that while TE increased visual attention to enhanced forms, this did not always result in better acquisition outcomes. These findings support the notion that noticing alone may not be sufficient for learning; it must be accompanied by deeper cognitive engagement with the form.

The effectiveness of TE on L2 grammar acquisition was also explored along with the mediating role of text length and topic familiarity. Leow (1997) and Overstreet (1998) examined how these variables influenced learning outcomes, finding that shorter texts with familiar content were more effective in promoting comprehension, though their impact on form acquisition was less clear. Meanwhile, Lee (2007) and Overstreet (1998) observed mixed results regarding the relationship between textual enhancement and topic familiarity. While Lee reported positive effects on learners' focus on grammatical forms, Overstreet did not find a similar benefit. Overstreet noted that TE negatively affected learners' comprehension of less familiar content, highlighting the potential trade-off between focusing on form and meaning. Similarly, Wong (2003) investigated how TE and simplified input affected the acquisition of past participle agreement in French, ultimately finding no significant effect.

Another key factor influencing the effectiveness of TE is the presence of EI. Several studies suggested that TE alone may not be sufficient for meaningful language acquisition. Indrarathne and Kormos (2017) and Rassaei (2015) found that combining EI with TE was more effective than using TE alone. These findings indicate that TE is most effective when coupled with explicit grammar instruction.

Meguro (2019) and Park and Nassif (2014) showed that the efficacy of TE also depends on the communicative value of the target forms. They showed that TE is more effective for forms with higher communicative value (e.g., frequently used verb forms) but less so for forms with lower communicative relevance, such as grammatical markers that do not carry significant meaning.

In the literature there are also some studies examining

the effect of various typographical cues on L2 grammar acquisition (Simard, 2009; LaBrozzi, 2016). Simard (2009) investigated the differential effects of various textual enhancement formats (e.g., bolding, italicizing, underlining) on the intake of English plural markers among French-speaking learners. The study found that the use of capital letters and multiple typographical cues yielded better results than single-cue formats, suggesting that the choice and combination of enhancement cues can significantly affect learners' attention to form, with more salient cues being more effective. In a similar study, LaBrozzi (2016) explored the impact of different types of textual enhancement on the acquisition of the Spanish preterite and imperfect tenses among English-speaking learners of Spanish. The study employed several TE formats to determine which methods most effectively facilitated the acquisition of the target verb forms. The results showed that certain formats, particularly increased font size, had a more significant effect on learners' ability to recognize and use the target forms. Interestingly, the study found that more subtle cues, such as italics, were less effective in drawing attention to the forms. This suggests that the saliency of the TE format plays a critical role in determining its impact on language learning. However, the study demonstrated that learners' ability to apply the forms in communicative contexts remained relatively low, suggesting that while TE can aid in noticing and comprehension, it may not be sufficient on its own to foster deeper, long-term acquisition. In conclusion, the aforementioned studies revealed that while TE can be useful for drawing learners' attention to target forms, its effectiveness in promoting L2 acquisition is not guaranteed. The success of TE appears to depend on several factors, including the nature of the target forms, and whether TE is combined with EI. Additionally, different TE formats may have varying levels of effectiveness, with more salient cues showing greater efficacy than subtler cues like italics.

Building on the Noticing Hypothesis (Schmidt, 2001), researchers have also explored the effectiveness of IF in SLA. These studies showed that IF positively affects language learning outcomes (Hernández, 2011; Zyzik & Pascual, 2012; Balcom & Bouffard, 2015; Benati, 2016; Indrarathne & Kormos, 2017). The studies indicated that IF has a mixed impact on the acquisition of L2 grammatical structures, often proving effective but not always sufficient when used in isolation. For instance, Zyzik and Pascual (2012) found that IF raised learners' awareness of Spanish differential object marking (DOM), yet EI led to significantly stronger learning outcomes. The modest gains made by the IF groups suggest that while increased exposure to the target forms helps with noticing, deeper learning requires more explicit guidance. Similarly, Hernández (2011) found that IF positively influenced learners' use of discourse markers in Spanish when narrating past events. Although both the IF-only group and the group that received EI plus IF made gains, there were no significant differences between the two, suggesting that IF can facilitate learning independently.

Indrarathne and Kormos (2017) provided further evidence of IF's limitations, noting that while IF improved learners' attention to target forms, it did not consistently

lead to better acquisition outcomes. This aligns with findings from other studies indicating that IF, as a purely implicit technique, might not be effective for complex or less frequent structures. However, Balcom and Bouffard (2015) offered a more optimistic view of IF when paired with form-focused instruction. Their study on adverb placement in French showed that combining IF with EI yielded significantly better results than IF alone, emphasizing that integrating explicit teaching with increased exposure to target forms enhances learning, particularly for structures resistant to acquisition through exposure alone. In sum, while IF increases the frequency of target forms in the input and can support L2 grammar acquisition, its effectiveness is generally enhanced when combined with more explicit instructional techniques. This approach seems especially necessary for more complex grammatical structures, where mere exposure may not suffice for meaningful acquisition.

3. Research Questions

Empirical studies have long focused on input-based techniques to assess the effectiveness of implicit instruction, particularly through combinations like IF and TE, which aim to facilitate learners' noticing of target forms (Leow, 2001; Wong, 2003). These studies have underscored the importance of the volume of input in transforming input into intake (Ellis, 1994), suggesting that increasing classroom exposure to specific linguistic structures can be advantageous for learners (Schmidt, 1990). However, a substantial body of research has consistently shown that explicit grammar instruction may be more effective, as it enhances learners' understanding of grammatical structures (Norris & Ortega, 2000). Meta-analyses have revealed that explicit instruction often outperforms implicit modes of teaching (Spada & Tomita, 2010). Given these insights, the current study seeks to build on previous research by examining the relative effectiveness of different instructional approaches: input flood only (IF), input flood with textual enhancement (IF + TE), input flood combined with explicit grammar teaching (IF + EGT), and rule-based instruction (RBI). By comparing these varied methods, the study aims to determine how each impacts learners' acquisition of L2 grammar and contribute to a more nuanced understanding of how input-based and rule-based approaches can best support language learning.

Additionally, there is a lack of substantial research on how novice L2 learners acquire the passive voice, which is acquired late even by L1 learners of English (Kirby, 2010), and how different pedagogical strategies might influence their ability to learn it. A key concern in SLA studies is whether input enhancement can effectively support the learning of linguistically challenging forms. The effectiveness of input enhancement requires empirical investigation to determine when and under what conditions it might be most beneficial. In particular, it is crucial to explore whether these enhancement techniques can aid in the acquisition of L2 structures that are typically acquired later in the learning process. Since forming the passive voice involves understanding syntax and a high

number of grammatical operations (Hinkel, 2004), it is often perceived as a difficult structure for learners to master (Yalçın & Spada, 2016). Consequently, this study aims to investigate whether input enhancement, in the form of input flood (IF) and textual enhancement (TE), along with explicit grammar instruction, has any effect on the learning of the passive voice.

The objective of this study is to address the questions outlined below:

1. To what extent are various types of input-based techniques, namely IF, IF + TE, IF + EGT, and RBI, effective in facilitating EFL students' acquisition of the English passive voice?
2. To what extent does the effectiveness of these four pedagogical interventions differ in terms of the acquisition of the target linguistic structure?
3. To what extent do the four pedagogical interventions differ in their effectiveness for the production of the target linguistic structure?

4. Methods

4.1. Research Design

This study adopted a quasi-experimental design, incorporating pre-tests and post-tests, to tackle its research questions. This approach was selected as it guarantees the comparability of groups prior to the intervention, thus bolstering the study's internal validity and reducing the impact of extraneous variables on the outcomes. Consequently, notable changes in test scores are likely attributable to the treatment administered. Participant selection was conducted via convenience sampling, chosen for its efficiency compared to other sampling methods. Nonetheless, it is important to acknowledge that this technique may not provide strong generalizability to a broader population.

The research was conducted in four intact classrooms without the inclusion of a control group. The study utilized specially developed pre-tests and post-tests, comprising three types of tasks to evaluate both comprehension and production of the target grammatical structure, which in this case was the English passive voice. To determine the efficacy of different teaching methodologies on learning the passive structure, the researcher created a grammaticality judgment task with distractors. In this task, participants were required to identify grammatical errors in incorrect sentences, thus improving the task's validity. Additionally, sentence completion and translation tasks were devised to test production abilities. As shown in Figure 1, the research design facilitated a comparison between the pre-intervention and post-intervention results, offering insights into the impact of varied instructional strategies on the learning and usage of the English passive form.

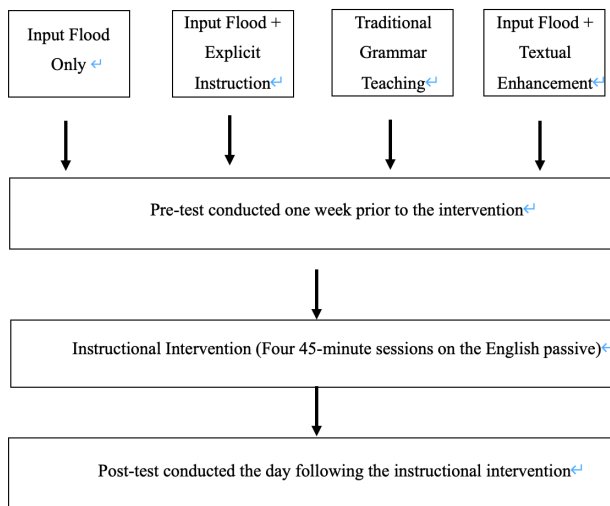


Figure 1. Structure of the research

4.2. Participants

The initial group of participants comprised 82 intermediate (B1-CEFR) proficiency level students enrolled in an English preparatory program at a state university in Turkey during the spring term of 2018. They were part of four pre-existing classes within an English preparatory program at a public university in the northern region of Turkey. It's worth mentioning that such state-funded educational institutions are mandated to create preparatory divisions aimed at enhancing foreign language skills for postgraduate studies. The School of Foreign Languages was specifically selected to ease the process of participant sampling. The study focused on individuals who had attained a B1 intermediate English skill level,

given the intricate nature of the treatment materials and assessment tools employed in both the pre-test and post-test phases. The language proficiency of the participants had been assessed by the institution every ten weeks to allocate learners to appropriate modules. A proficiency exam had been conducted five weeks before the study through its own non-standardized exam and the results were sourced from the institution to ensure class homogeneity in language levels. No significant differences were found in the language placement test scores among the four experimental groups—rule-based instruction (M=58, SD=7.81), IF only (M=61.07, SD=8.45), IF + TE (M=62.41, SD=9.11), and IF + EGT (M=56.85, SD=7.14).

Attendance registers were obtained from the school to identify the diversity of the participants. To verify that the participants had limited interaction with English outside an academic environment, a questionnaire assessing their language history was given before the pre-test (Appendix 1). The vast majority of participants had not spent time in countries where English is the native language. A mere two members of the IF + TE group had brief stays in English-speaking countries—one for seven days and the other for one month. None were English bilinguals, and their main language for daily communication was Turkish. In order to minimize variations due to linguistic backgrounds, nine students of international origin were omitted from the study. Additionally, only those who were present for all the assessment and treatment sessions were counted in the final dataset, narrowing it down to 62 Turkish EFL students. This group was then divided into four treatment groups: 17 in RBI, 15 in IF + TE, 15 in IF + EGT, and 15 in the IF-Only. The demographic and linguistic details of the four experiment groups are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Demographic and Linguistic Profiles of Treatment Groups

	Rule-Based Inst. <i>n</i> =17	IF Only <i>n</i> =15	IF + IE <i>n</i> =15	IF + EI <i>n</i> =15
Gender	12 males 5 females	8 males 6 females	10 males 4 females	9 males 5 females
Age in years	19.70 <i>SD</i> = 1.57	19.07 <i>SD</i> = 0.82	18.74 <i>SD</i> = 0.65	19.13 <i>SD</i> = 1.14
Years of instruction	8.94 <i>SD</i> = 3.21	8.35 <i>SD</i> = 2.49	8.41 <i>SD</i> = 0.75	8.17 <i>SD</i> = 2.58

4.3. Treatment Materials

4.3.1. Input-Based Instructions

Materials used for input-based teaching were adapted from Author (2018) and applied across experimental groups that received input-based instructions. These groups included those with both textual enhancement and explicit grammar instruction (see Appendix 2). In the IF + TE group, a key difference was that the researcher highlighted all sentences in passive voice. Conversely, the IF + EGT group received a grammar handout that clearly explained the structure, meaning, and usage of passive voice.

To ensure that each activity aligned with the goal of emphasizing the functional aspects of the target form (passive voice), a topic-based syllabus was employed in the materials' development. The central themes of global warming and climate change were embedded within the materials for the experimental groups that received

implicit instruction: IF Only, IF + TE, and IF + EGT.

The use of authentic texts in the study aimed to foster the communicative aspects of language use. Each text was obtained from different websites featuring academic texts on global warming since they often incorporate numerous instances of the passive voice. The passages were thoroughly revised by the researcher to include a greater number of passive sentences. The choice of these topics was motivated by the expectation that they could stimulate classroom debates, considering that learners from diverse socio-economic backgrounds might have varying perspectives on global warming. This diversity could lead to distinct answers to questions and the exchange of opinions among classmates.

With the aim of avoiding direct metalinguistic explanations, as is the focus of implicit instruction, every activity was specifically developed to direct the learners' focus toward the overall meaning conveyed in the text,

rather than isolating specific grammar rules or sets of words. Both comprehension questions and instructions were constructed to prompt participants to recognize the functional role of the target form within communicative tasks. Within the writing activity of the material, visual aids in the form of photos were introduced to encourage learners to incorporate the target form. These photos were selected based on three key criteria, as outlined below. Of these criteria, the second one held particular significance for the activity, serving as a deterrent to avoidance in language production.

To confirm the texts' lexical appropriateness for an intermediate-level learners, Vocabprofile (Heatley et al., 2002) was employed for lexical analysis. The texts were manipulated to prioritize K1 words, which are the top 1,000 most frequent English words, over K2 words, the next 1,000 in frequency. According to criteria outlined by Indrarathne and Kormos (2017), a text would align with the learners' vocabulary level if over 90% of the words fell under the K1 and K2 categories. Table 3 displays the proportional breakdown of K1, K2, and off-list words for each unit. Although the texts are predominantly populated by K1 words, they failed to meet the 90% criterion for K1 and K2 words due to the inclusion of several proper nouns, which are categorized as off-list words. Consequently, no additional modifications were applied.

Table 3. Percentage of K1, K2, and Off-List Words Used in the Texts.

	K1 words	K2 words	Off-list words
Unit 1	78.53%	6.24%	9.15%
Unit 2	77.45%	5.15%	11.51%
Unit 3	70.78%	8.56%	10.68%
Unit 4	69.85%	6.64%	12.54%

From a theoretical perspective, certain sentences in the original text versions were transformed into passive voice to augment the number of passive constructions. Participants encountered a total of 103 passive sentences within the reading texts. These sentences were distributed as follows: simple present (n=21), simple past (n=29), present continuous (n=9), past continuous (n=5), present perfect (n=17), past perfect (n=2), future (n=9), and modal verbs (n=11). Two English instructors, each holding a master's degree, scrutinized the final drafts of the texts to confirm their grammatical correctness and semantic consistency.

4.3.2. Rule-Based Instruction

The RBI group underwent a series of four 45-minute sessions that began with an explicit focus on the passive voice, guided by a PowerPoint presentation developed by the researcher. This presentation utilized explanations and examples from "English File Intermediate Student's Book (Third Edition)" and the additional resource "Cambridge English Grammar in Use (Fourth Edition)" (Appendix 4).

Subsequently, participants engaged with a brief text about "Highclere Castle near Newbury in Berkshire, UK," sourced from the course book, during which they pinpointed different instances of the passive voice.

For practice with the target grammatical structure, participants were given a grammar handout containing controlled exercises that originated from the course book. Moreover, a narrative exercise using pictures, the same as those used in the other experimental groups, was conducted to encourage the creation of new sentences using the passive voice. Uniquely in the RBI group, participants were instructed explicitly to construct at least three sentences in the passive voice to describe the pictures. The teacher provided metalinguistic feedback on any grammatical mistakes made by the participants.

4.4. Instructional Treatment

The study took place over a three-week period, commencing with a 40-minute pre-test administered one week before the instructional phase. The treatment itself was condensed into a single day of regular English classes, comprising four 45-minute sessions. Post-tests were conducted the following day during the participants' usual English classes. Prior to the treatment phase, the researcher conducted brief training sessions with the instructors to acquaint them with input-based teaching techniques. Given the intricate pedagogical aspects of input-based theories, only instructors with a minimum of five years of teaching experience were selected. For the IF Only and IF + TE groups, teachers were explicitly instructed not to provide explanations of the target form, even if learners inquired.

Teachers were provided with lesson plans and materials, including both physical resources and PowerPoint presentations, well in advance of the instruction. These materials underwent a thorough review to ensure clear instructions and appropriate time allocation for each activity. Some adjustments were made to enhance participant understanding and to ensure that the class duration allowed for effective material implementation. Instructors were also furnished with written guidelines outlining the steps to be followed during the instruction.

Before the treatment phase, teachers in all experimental groups received physical materials for their students. Table 4 provides an overview of the key characteristics of each instructional approach. Importantly, all experimental groups had the opportunity for target form production, and various corrective feedback methods were employed. Participants in input-based groups received recasts as a form of implicit feedback. The notable distinction was in the IF Only, IF + TE, and IF + EGT groups, where participants encountered a considerably greater number of passive sentence examples compared to the RBI group."

Table 4. Characteristics of Instructional Treatment

Learning goal	IF Only	IF + TE	IF + EGT	RBI
Exploring the functions of the passive voice with FonF	Functions of the Passive (FonF)	Functions of the Passive (FonF)	Functions of the Passive (FonF)	The passive voice (FonFs)
Purposes of the tasks	Engaging in communicative tasks that use functions of the passive voice without explicitly mentioning the passive voice.	Exposure to input demonstrating the functions of the passive voice, without explicit grammar instruction.	Exploration of the passive voice's functions combined with grammatical explanations and demonstration of sample sentences using the passive in texts.	Delivery of information and controlled exercises for practice
Inclusion of metalinguistic knowledge	-	-	Yes	Yes
Rule search	-	-	Yes	-
Instructional intervention	Materials created by the researcher, which consist of approximately 110 passive sentences were utilized for the groups			Grammar presentation / controlled practice
L2 production	Yes			Structured
Opportunities for producing language output	(Participants engaged in a picture narration activity where they described the actions depicted in a picture)			exercises where learners applied the target language forms.
The form of feedback	Recasts	Recasts	Recasts	Metalinguistic clues

4.5. Testing Measures

To assess the efficacy of both implicit and explicit modes of instruction, three measurement tools were designed, focusing on both the comprehension and production of the English passive form (Appendix 5). Each test item was checked for grammaticality, content validity, and appropriateness for the language level, reviewed by two experienced English instructors from a state university. The assessment tools comprised three tasks: a grammaticality judgment task (GJT), a sentence completion task, and a translation task (as shown in Figure 2). The GJT was developed to gauge comprehension of the passive form, while the others aimed at evaluating the participants' ability to produce it. These production-focused tasks were adapted from Qin (2008).

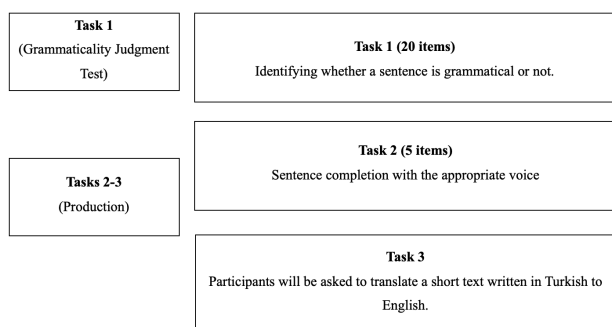


Figure 2. Testing Instruments

4.5.1. Untimed Grammaticality Judgment Task

In the first task, participants were required to assess the grammatical correctness of sentences and mark the appropriate option, "grammatical" or "ungrammatical." They were also instructed to provide a written explanation, in either English or Turkish, for any ungrammatical sentences to demonstrate their understanding of the passive voice. This task consisted of 20 items, with 12

involving the passive voice. Of these, six were grammatically incorrect. Errors in the test focused on three aspects of the passive voice: (1) the use of the preposition "by," (2) the past participle form of verbs, and (3) the selection of the correct auxiliary verb. Eight distractor sentences were also included, four of which contained grammatical errors related to issues such as pluralization, word order, incorrect preposition use, and inappropriate vocabulary. Participants who were unable to identify at least one ungrammatical distractor sentence and its associated error were removed from the study due to either task incompetence or inattention. To control for confounding variables such as order effects or fatigue, a counterbalanced design was employed, randomizing question and option order for each participant.

4.5.2. Sentence Completion Task

The second task, adapted from Qin (2008), consisted of five sentence-completion items designed to evaluate participants' ability to produce passive voice. Similar to Qin, each gapped sentence was presented within a meaningful context, obliging students to focus on semantics while filling in the missing elements. For greater clarity, particularly concerning terms like "voice," the labels "active" and "passive" were added in brackets next to the term. Unlike Qin's methodology, the tense was also specified within the brackets to lessen the task's linguistic demands. To ensure appropriateness, the language complexity and word levels were reviewed by two English instructors, considering the participants' proficiency and language-learning experience. All verbs used for sentence completion were at a minimum pre-intermediate (A2) in difficulty.

4.5.3. Translation Task

For the last task, participants were asked to translate a brief text from Turkish to English. The text consisted of three sentences, all formed in the passive voice and adding

up to a word count of twenty-five. Main verbs selected for these sentences were among those frequently used, and given the proficiency and experience of the participants, their English equivalents were anticipated to be straightforward. Dictionary use was not permitted during this exercise; however, translations for certain Turkish terms were made available beneath the text. The linguistic complexity of the task was reviewed by two university-based English instructors.

4.6. Scoring

The scoring procedure for the GJT was simple. A single point was awarded to participants for accurately identifying the grammaticality of each sentence. However, to receive the full point, participants also had to provide a rationale, in either Turkish or English, for why they labelled a sentence as ungrammatical. In the context of the sentence completion task, a point was given for each question if participants employed the correct auxiliary and main verb forms. While issues like improper past participles in irregular verbs—often seen as an erroneous -ed addition—were acknowledged, they were not penalized. The third task used the same scoring criteria as the sentence completion task, offering a single point for each accurate translation. Alternate verbs that successfully conveyed the same meaning were also considered correct. For instance, 'print' was accepted in place of 'publish.' Finally, minor spelling mistakes and incorrect suffixation with -ed on irregular verbs were ignored.

4.7. Data Analysis

All test data were imported into SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences), version 28, for analysis. The first research question focused on evaluating the impact of various instructional methods on acquiring English passive constructions. To achieve this, pre- and post-test results for each group were individually analysed using a paired-samples t-test. Effect sizes for these t-tests were reported using Cohen's *d*, with a significance level (α) set at .05 for all statistical analyses. Regarding the second and third research questions, a two-way ANOVA was performed to evaluate any significant group differences in both the acquisition and production of the target form. Should any significant differences arise, a one-way ANOVA, followed by a Scheffe post-hoc test, was conducted to identify the specific areas of statistical difference.

4.8. Research Ethics

Before the study commenced, the institution where it was conducted was duly informed. The research proposal, along with all supplementary materials like instructional content and testing tools, were submitted to the school's board for approval, which was granted (Appendix 6). The teachers of the relevant classes were briefed about the study by the researcher, who used an information form to convey details and gathered their consent through signed forms (Appendix 7).

The researcher personally approached potential participants a week before the study began. After introducing the researcher to the students, the teachers

exited the classroom. During a regular English class, participants were briefed about the study for 45 minutes. They received an information and consent form, crafted by the researcher to comprehensively explain the research while being mindful of the participants' language proficiency (Appendix 8). For the two classes where implicit instructions (solely input flood and input flood with input enhancement) were to be implemented, the study's purpose was not disclosed to maintain natural responses. To alleviate any anxiety, the form's contents were explained in Turkish, the participants' native language. A 15-minute Q&A session concluded the briefing, and volunteers provided their informed consent in the class. Each consenting participant was assigned a unique identifier to ensure confidentiality. These identifiers were used throughout the experiment for data collection. The hard-copy pre-tests and post-tests included a cover sheet for participants to fill in their identifiable information. All hard-copy documents, like signed consent forms and language background questionnaires, were securely stored in locked cabinets, separate from other research data. The researcher later detached identifiable information from these forms after matching participants with their study codes. All electronic data, including identifiable details, were encrypted and saved on the researcher's password-protected laptop.

5. Results

5.1. Research Question 1

5.1.1. Rule-Based Instruction Group

A paired-samples t-test was executed to analyze the difference in participants' performance between the pre- and post-tests. There was a significant statistical difference, with the pre-test showing a mean of 3.76 (SD = 2.02) and the post-test displaying a mean of 6.41 (SD = 2.67), yielding $t = -3.71$ and $p < .05$. As demonstrated in Figure 3, the central 50% of post-test scores encompasses the majority of participants, with the median scores on both tests indicating a considerable effectiveness of the instructional treatment in facilitating the acquisition of the English passive.

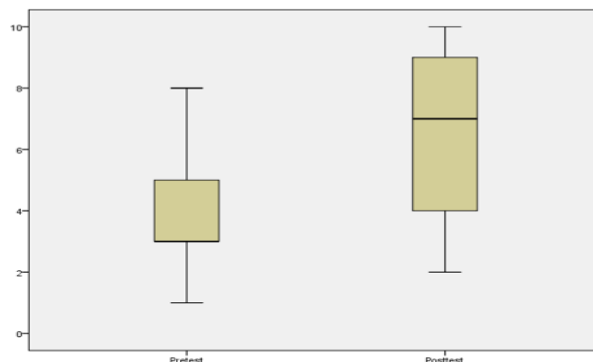


Figure 2. Comparison of pre-test and post-test scores of RBI group

5.1.2. Input Flood Only

A paired-samples t-test was conducted to compare pre-test and post-test scores, yielding no statistically

significant difference: pre-test ($M = 5.57$, $SD = 1.94$) and post-test ($M = 4.92$, $SD = 1.59$), $t = 0.85$, $p = 0.40$. The Cohen's d effect size was 0.36 , suggesting a modest impact of the instruction on the acquisition of the target language feature. Interestingly, the mean score was higher in the pre-test ($M = 5.57$) than in the post-test ($M = 4.92$). Figure 4 reveals that the median scores for both assessments were similar. The range of scores in the pre-test was greater than in the post-test, and this was also reflected in a taller box plot. Despite the instructional period, the upper quartile and the maximum scores for the pre-test exceeded those of the post-test.

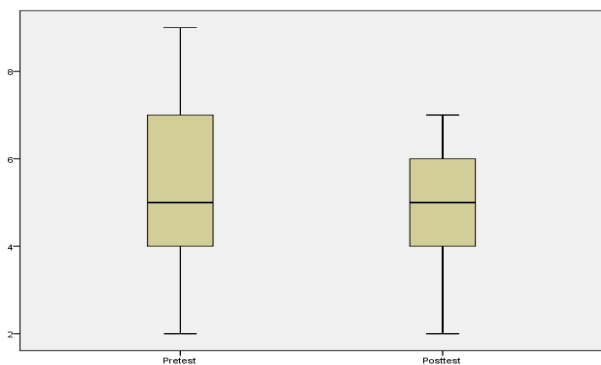


Figure 4. Comparison of pre-test and post-test scores of IF Only group

5.1.3. Input Flood + Textual Enhancement

The paired-samples t -test analysis showed no statistically significant improvement between the pre-test ($M = 5.50$, $SD = 2.38$) and post-test ($M = 5.43$, $SD = 2.28$) scores, with $t = 0.12$ and $p = 0.90$. The effect size, measured using Cohen's d , was exceptionally small at 0.030 . As shown in Figure 5, the median score for the pre-test was marginally higher than for the post-test. Similar to observations in the IF Only group, the maximum score for the pre-test surpassed that of the post-test. The extended height of the box plot for the pre-test scores suggests a broad dispersion of results, indicating substantial variability among participants. Additionally, the presence of outliers in the post-test scores suggests the occurrence of extreme values.

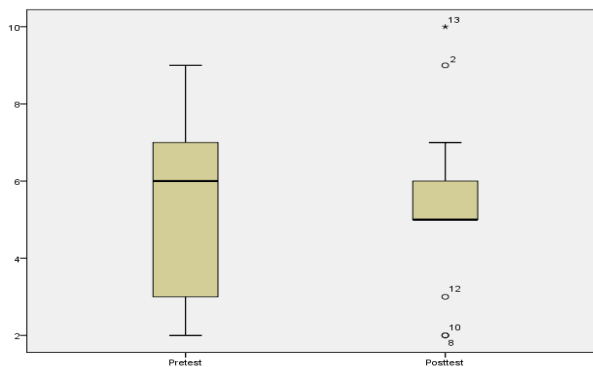


Figure 5. Comparison of pre-test and post-test scores of IF + TE group

5.1.4. Input Flood + Explicit Grammar Teaching

A paired-samples t -test was administered to evaluate the pre-test and post-test scores of the group. The analysis did not show any statistically significant difference between the pre-test scores ($M = 5.07$, $SD = 1.90$) and the post-test scores ($M = 5.86$, $SD = 1.99$), with a t -value of 1.26 and a p -value of 0.22 . The effect size, measured using Cohen's d , was found to be small at 0.40 . As illustrated in Figure 6, the median score for the post-test was higher than for the pre-test. The pre-test score range spanned 6 points, while the post-test range expanded to 9 due to an outlier. When this outlier is excluded, the post-test score range shrinks to 5, aligning closely with the pre-test range.

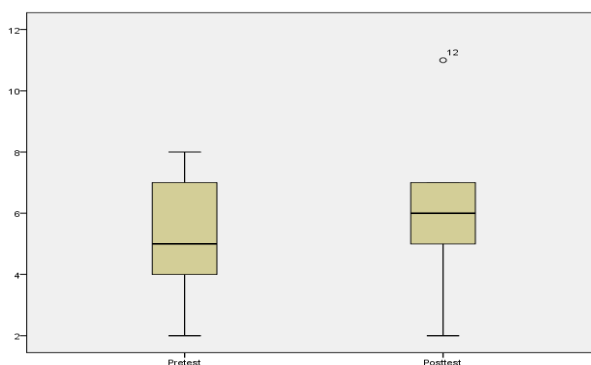


Figure 6. Comparison of pre-test and post-test scores of IF + EGT

Table 5. Tests of Within-Subject Effects

	Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
test * Group	Sphericity Assumed	48.877	3	16.292	4.78	.005
	Greenhouse-Geisser	48.877	3.00	16.292	4.78	.005
	Huynh-Feldt	48.877	3.00	16.292	4.78	.005
	Lower-bound	48.877	3.00	16.292	4.78	.005

5.2. Research Question 2

To address the second research question and ascertain which of the four instructional methods was the most effective for passive acquisition, a two-way ANOVA was used to analyze pre-test and post-test scores. The primary results of the Within-Between ANOVA are presented in Table 5. The analysis revealed a significant interaction between the tests and the treatment groups, with a p -value of 0.005 . This indicates that there was significant score changes in the experimental groups from the pre-test to

the post-test. However, determining which group performed better from the figure alone isn't immediately obvious. Figure 7 visually presents the average scores for each combination of treatment group and test, depicting the performance of each group on both the pre-test and post-test using different lines. This graph clearly shows that RBI group and IF + EGT group performed better than the other experimental groups (IF Only and IF + TE).

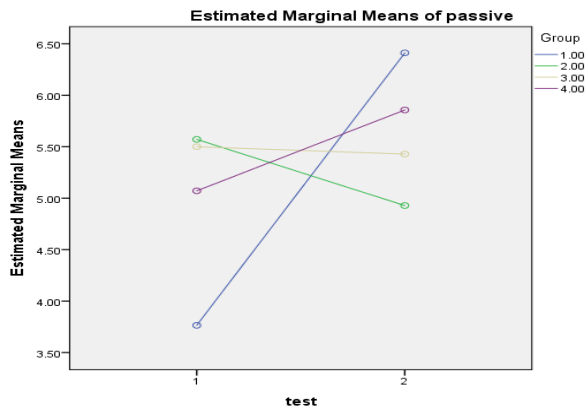


Figure 7. Comparisons of mean scores of experiment groups between tests

Moreover, a one-way between-factor ANOVA was carried out, followed by Scheffe post hoc tests, to identify specific statistically significant differences. These multiple comparisons among the four treatment groups are summarized in Table 6. The table reveals that RBI group exhibited significant improvement compared to both IF Only and IF + TE. Additionally, when RBI group is compared to IF + EGT, there is no significant difference in the rates of improvement between these two groups. In statistical terms, both of these groups performed better than those who received input-based instruction.

Table 6. One-Way Between ANOVA and Scheffe Post-hoc Test

Group		Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
RBI	IF Only	3.28992*	.941	.011	.5743	6.0055
	IF + TE	2.71849*	.941	.050	.0029	5.4341
	IF + EGT	1.86134	.941	.283	-.8543	4.5770
IF Only	RBI	-3.289*	.941	.011	-6.0055	-.5743
	IF+ TE	-.571	.986	.953	-3.4154	2.2726
	IF + EGT	-1.428	.986	.556	-4.2726	1.4154
IF + TE	RBI	-2.718*	.941	.050	-5.4341	-.0029
	IF Only	.571	.98611	.953	-2.2726	3.4154
	IF + EGT	-.857	.98611	.860	-3.7011	1.9868
IF + EGT	RBI	-1.861	.941	.283	-4.5770	.8543
	IF Only	1.428	.986	.556	-1.4154	4.2726
	IF + TE	.857	.986	.860	-1.9868	3.7011

5.3. Research Question 3

The final research question focused on the efficacy of instructional methods in the production of the target linguistic form. Paired-samples t-tests were conducted for each treatment group, and the scores were statistically

analyzed using a one-way between-factor ANOVA. Scheffe post hoc tests were subsequently carried out to emphasize the relative effectiveness of each instructional method. Table 7 presents the descriptive statistics for each experimental group.

Table 7. Descriptive Statistics for Each Experiment Group

	Group	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Pre-Test	TGT	1.5294	1.66274	17
	IF Only	3.1429	1.99450	15
	IF + IE	1.9286	1.97929	15
	IF + EI	2.2857	2.09132	15
	Total	2.1864	1.96937	62
Post-Test	TGT	4.0588	1.47778	17
	IF Only	2.7857	1.47693	15
	IF + IE	3.0714	1.43925	15
	IF + EI	4.0000	1.30089	15
	Total	3.5085	1.50141	62

To compare the scores of participants in RBI group (n=17), a paired-samples t-test was used. The analysis revealed a significant difference between the pre-test (M = 1.52, SD = 1.66) and post-test (M = 4.05, SD = 1.47), with a t-value of -5.66 and p < .05. The same analysis was conducted for the IF + TE group (n=14), showing a significant difference between the pre-test (M = 1.92, SD = 1.97) and post-test (M = 3.07, SD = 1.43), with a t-value of -2.38 and p < .05. Similarly, the IF + EGT group (n=14) exhibited a significant difference between the pre-test (M = 2.28, SD = 2.09) and post-test (M = 4.00, SD = 1.30),

with a t-value of -2.70 and p < .05. Conversely, the analysis for the IF Only group showed no significant difference between the pre-test (M = 3.14, SD = 1.99) and post-test (M = 2.78, SD = 1.47), with a t-value of 0.717 and p = .486. Unlike the acquisition, the IF + TE group benefited from the instruction in terms of production. According to the paired-samples t-test analyses, the IF Only group was the only one that did not exhibit a significant change in performance in the production of the passive, as depicted in the figure below.

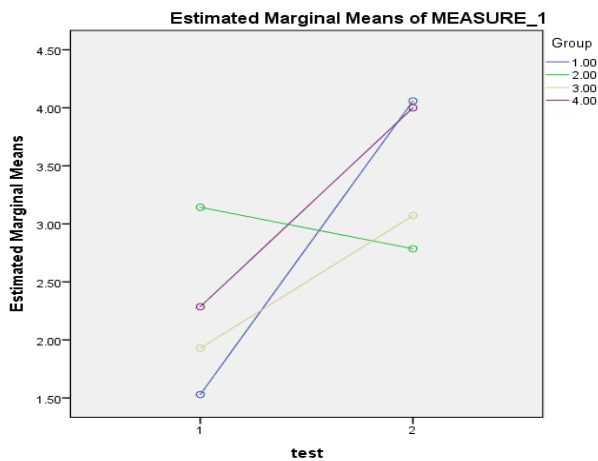


Figure 8. Comparisons of mean scores of experiment groups between tests

Figure 8 offers insights into test score variations among the groups. A one-way between-factor ANOVA was performed to identify which group showed the most improvement in producing the target form. The difference between pre-test and post-test scores served as the dependent variable.

As outlined in Table 8, RBI group exhibited significant progress compared to the IF Only group. Nevertheless, it's worth noting that it was not as effective as the other three groups.

Table 8. One-Way Between ANOVA and Scheffe Post-Hoc Test

Groups		Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
RBI	IF Only	2.88655*	.71193	.002	.8333	4.9398
	IF + TE	1.38655	.71193	.296	-.6667	3.4398
	IF + EGT	.81513	.71193	.727	-1.2381	2.8684
IF Only	RBI	-2.88655*	.71193	.002	-4.9398	-.8333
	IF + TE	-1.50000	.74559	.268	-3.6503	.6503
	IF + EGT	-2.07143	.74559	.063	-4.2217	.0789
IF + TE	RBI	-1.38655	.71193	.296	-3.4398	.6667
	IF Only	1.50000	.74559	.268	-.6503	3.6503
	IF + EI	-.57143	.74559	.899	-2.7217	1.5789
IF + EGT	RBI	-.81513	.71193	.727	-2.8684	1.2381
	IF Only	2.07143	.74559	.063	-.0789	4.2217
	IF + TE	.57143	.74559	.899	-1.5789	2.7217

6. Discussion

The study's primary objective was to explore the impacts of various instructional approaches, namely RBI, IF only, IF + TE, and IF + EGT, on the acquisition and production of the English passive. Unlike comparing input flood as an implicit teaching method with other input-based techniques, this study focused on investigating diverse combinations of input flooding integrated with rule-based instruction. Explicit grammar instruction was incorporated into the study based on the hypothesis that explicit instruction facilitates the transformation of input into intake.

As for research question 1, the analysis revealed critical insights into the efficacy of different types of instruction on the acquisition of the English passive voice, particularly when measured through a grammaticality judgment test, which primarily taps into learners' explicit knowledge. The significant improvement observed only in the RBI group, as shown by the pretest-posttest design, suggests that explicit, form-focused instruction is more effective than implicit techniques for fostering explicit knowledge of grammatical structures. This aligns with the broader literature, which has consistently highlighted the advantages of explicit instruction in SLA. As Norris and

Ortega (2000) noted, explicit instruction generally leads to more robust learning outcomes compared to more implicit approaches, as it provides learners with clear, metalinguistic information about the target language structures, facilitating the noticing and processing of these forms during language learning activities.

In contrast, the lack of significant language gains in the groups exposed to IF only, IF+TE, and IF + EGT highlights the limitations of input-based approaches when it comes to developing explicit knowledge. While previous research has documented the potential of TE to draw learners' attention to grammatical forms (e.g., Lee & Révész, 2020; Simard, 2009), the results of the current research seem to align with previous studies that reported null findings for TE. One possible reason for the limited improvement could be that, despite participants being repeatedly exposed to the target linguistic features, the overall duration of the treatment was relatively brief (a total of 4 class hours). A longer treatment period may have been necessary for IF and TE to produce more favourable outcomes, especially since implicit exposure to target forms typically requires more time to be effective compared to explicit instructional methods (e.g., Mackey & Goo, 2007)

The limited impact of IF + EGT further indicates that simply combining IF with EGT does not necessarily lead to

better outcomes, particularly if the explicit teaching does not involve the same level of metalinguistic clarity and focus as RBI. These findings underscore the complexity of instructional efficacy in SLA and suggest that for learners to develop explicit knowledge of complex grammatical structures such as the English passive, direct, rule-based instruction may be necessary.

Regarding the second research question, the findings are consistent with VanPatten and Benati (2010), positing that declarative knowledge serves as the starting point for language mastery. Yet, the importance of such knowledge in the current study is open to scrutiny. The test scores for the IF + EGT group, who were given a grammar handout, did not exhibit any significant improvement. Tasks designed for this group were meaning-focused and did not demand an overt understanding of grammatical rules for successful completion. This indicates that the participants largely ignored the grammar guide, possibly because it wasn't integrated into the instructional activities. Therefore, instructional methods rooted in rule application seem to be more effective in structured learning environments, echoing the perspectives that rule acquisition, and application should be promoted through practice.

As for the third research question, the findings are consistent with previous research that has emphasized the limitations of input flood when used in isolation. While input flood can increase the frequency of encounters with target forms, it does not necessarily provide the explicit focus or practice needed for learners to internalize and actively produce these forms (Hernández, 2011; Zyzik & Pascual, 2012). The lack of significant improvement in the IF only group supports this view, suggesting that without additional instructional support, learners may notice the target forms but fail to fully acquire the ability to use them in production. This aligns with Schmidt's (2001) noticing hypothesis, which posits that noticing is necessary but not sufficient for language acquisition; deeper processing and practice are required for learners to be able to produce the target forms effectively.

7. Conclusions and Pedagogical Implications

This research has demonstrated that language acquisition is particularly effective when learners are given metalinguistic explanations about new grammatical structures, such as the passive voice, which is vital for complex structures. Given the diverse language learning backgrounds of learners, it is essential to offer explicit grammatical explanations to those who favour explicit forms of instruction. While some learners may prefer understanding the fundamental rules behind complex structures, others might find instance-based learning methods more beneficial. Notably, the passive voice is frequently used in academic contexts, and learners in academic preparatory courses for undergraduate programs are often expected to proficiently employ it in their writing. Hence, language learners should be provided with explicit instruction accompanied by numerous examples in the passive voice. This study has indicated that

combining input flooding with explicit instruction can be as effective as traditional methods of grammar teaching. Therefore, practitioners should incorporate a variety of authentic texts that use the passive voice to illustrate its application in context. Using corpora for this purpose can be helpful, and educators can enhance the frequency of passive sentences in their teaching materials. It is important to engage learners with the passive voice through meaning-focused activities, as mere exposure to input does not guarantee that learners will notice and process the form. Additionally, opportunities for learners to use the passive voice are essential, and they should receive corrective feedback, including prompts, recasts, or metalinguistic hints.

8. Limitations and Directions for Further Research

The study faced certain limitations related to participant sampling, participant characteristics, and testing instruments. First, the limited number of participants restricts the ability to generalize the study's findings to a broader population. The research was conducted in intact classes with no more than twenty students each, making it difficult to alter this aspect of the study. Future studies should involve a larger participant pool to enhance the generalizability of the findings. Another limitation concerns the participants' language learning backgrounds. Most participants came from environments where explicit instruction was prevalent, which could have influenced the observed effectiveness of traditional grammar teaching compared to input-based instruction. This factor might have impacted the internal validity of the research as a potential confounding variable. However, due to time constraints, it wasn't possible to assign participants to experimental groups based on their language learning history. Future research could better account for this factor in its design, perhaps by including a more diverse range of participants or by controlling for prior exposure to explicit instruction.

Additionally, the study measured learning outcomes through an untimed grammaticality judgment test (GJT), which is hypothesized to tap into explicit knowledge. However, since the learners received input-based instructions—such as input flood and textual enhancement, which are considered types of implicit instruction—the choice of an untimed GJT may not have fully captured the implicit knowledge of the target form. Future research should consider employing a timed GJT to measure the implicit knowledge of learners more accurately, providing a more comprehensive assessment of the instructional methods' effectiveness. Moreover, the absence of a true control group in the study further limits the ability to draw definitive conclusions about the instructional methods' impact. Incorporating a true control group in future studies would allow for a clearer comparison of the effects of different instructional approaches.

The study's instructional treatments also presented certain limitations. All materials were delivered by the regular teachers of the classes to enhance research validity. Despite these teachers having over five years of experience,

there is no certainty that they adhered strictly to the lesson plans provided. To mitigate this issue, future studies could develop instructional packages to be delivered via computer, ensuring greater consistency and adherence to the research design. Finally, rather than explicit instruction, future research could explore the use of Structured Input (SI) as an independent variable, comparing its effectiveness on syntactic structures with other types of input-based instruction to gain a more nuanced understanding of instructional impacts.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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