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Scaffolded Textual Input Enhancement and Teaching Stress Patterns to EFL Learners

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ABSTRACT

The present study investigated the influence of scaffolded textual input enhancement on the learning of word stress patterns in EFL learners. In so doing, one experimental and one control group were selected with 10 participants assigned to each group who were recruited through convenient sampling technique. The participants in the experimental group received the scaffolded instruction of enhanced texts, while the participants in the control group were given the unscaffolded instruction of the same enhanced texts. The treatment for the two groups was different in a single aspect in that the instruction of the experimental group was scaffolded through models presented by Walqui (2006). In other words, the participants were provided with additional support in pronouncing the words with correct stress pattern through *modeling*, *exemplification* and *explanation* techniques performed by the instructor. The results from the paired samples test indicated that both groups had statistically significant progress rates after the treatment. However, the results from the independent samples test revealed that there is a statistically significant difference between the average progress rate of the control and the experimental group. In other words, it was found that the mean of the posttest scores in the experimental group was statistically higher than that of the control group. Therefore, the results confirmed that scaffolded textual input enhancement had a fairly significant impact on the learning rate of English word stress patterns among EFL learners.

Keywords: Textual Input Enhancement, Scaffolding, Stress Patterns, EFL Learners

Introduction

One aspect of English language which plays a key role in the overall oral performance of the learners is the learning of stress patterns of English words. This is particularly influential in the speaking skill of both EFL and ESL learners, and would probably affect the quality of communication as well. In this respect, a wide variety of English textbooks include a section to address word pronunciation and stress patterns (e.g. Smith & Margolis, 2007; Hancock, 2003) and in most cases a certain period of class time is also devoted to the instruction of this section. However, sometimes both the nature and the place of stress in English words can turn into a major problem for learners (Couper, 2011), and is further believed to affect students' pronunciation intelligibility, their perception skills and accuracy (Derwing et al., 2006; Celce–Murcia et al., 1996, 2000). In this regard, *textual input enhancement* and *scaffolding* strategies are likely to be influential in increasing the chances of learning the right stress patterns in learners when faced with new vocabulary in a text or elsewhere.

Textual input enhancement is mainly grounded on the theories of attention and consciousness raising most of which come from the work of Schmidt such as his well-known 'noticing hypothesis' (1990) and Sharwood Smith (1981). Schmitt (2001) claimed that 'attention' is necessary for learning to take place; the more attention given, the greater the

learning. Likewise, textual input enhancement, introduced by Sharwood Smith (1991), contends that learners are more likely to pick up language components by being exposed to highlighted features of the target language. Thus, it is considered as an important concept in line with the explicit language instruction model which relies basically on the practice of attention and consciousness raising in a formally instructed context such as a language classroom. This technique is employed to enhance degrees of attention and noticing (Izumi, 2003) of the specific features of language through a number of strategies such as highlighting, italicizing and boldfacing. To date, textual input enhancement has proved effective in the instruction of various aspects of English language, e.g. grammar (Lee, 2007) and vocabulary (Petchko, 2011), yet scant attention has been given to its likely impact on the acquisition of the phonological features of a second language.

In a similar vein, the use of assistance and 'scaffolding' techniques could play an important role in improving the quality of language instruction. The idea of scaffolding was primarily introduced by Wood et al. (1976) and more specifically by Bruner (1983). The underlying idea was that learning occurs in *one-on-one interactions* in which a *more knowledgeable person* guides a learner's emerging understanding. This approach was in accordance with and inspired by Vygotsky (1978)'s theory of Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and the socio-constructivist model of learning. Scaffolding claims that mediation and assistance from a more capable peer are positively effective in teaching different aspects of a second language. This assistance is typically provided in diverse forms, such as hints, prompts and simplification (Ronen & Langley, 2004) modeling and bridging (Walqui, 2006), or even in more concrete forms, e.g. books, the internet and phone (Holton &Clarke, 2006). Also, a more recent classification of scaffolding techniques was developed by Reingold et al. (2008), including technical, content, procedural and meta-cognitive scaffolding. Scaffolding in these forms is likely to prove useful in many aspect of language learning including word pronunciations and stress patterns.

Considering the above-mentioned notions, the present study has made an effort to make use of the combination of scaffolding and textual input enhancement techniques in order to facilitate and increase the efficiency of teaching and, thereby learning of word stress patterns to EFL learners. In this analysis we are interested in how a mixture of these two SLA concepts may create conditions under which, the learning of word stress patterns is noticeably improved and promoted. Moreover, it is speculated that scaffolded textual input enhancement may bring about considerable improvement with regard to the EFL learners' acquisition of the right stress patterns for newly presented vocabulary in a text.

The present study has made an effort to address the following questions:

1. Does scaffolded textual input enhancement facilitate the acquisition of word stress patterns among EFL learners?
2. Does scaffolded textual input enhancement facilitate the acquisition of word stress patterns more than textual input enhancement alone?

Review of Literature

Scaffolding

The two central concepts in socio-cultural theory are the ZPD and scaffolding. These concepts have been studied and investigated from different perspectives by many socio-cultural scholars. For example, Lantolf (2000), one of the leading scholars in this area, described ZPD as the 'difference in performance on a task' between what learners are capable of doing on their own and what they can do with the help of an expert or a more able peer. While the definition for ZPD is clear cut, the implications of scaffolding has been a matter of controversy for many years.

Scaffolding was primarily coined by Jerome Bruner, a cognitive psychologist in the late 1950s and was further explicated by different experts of the field. Firstly, Donato (1994), explained scaffolding as a "situation where a knowledgeable participant can create supportive conditions in which the novice can participate, and extend his or her current skills and knowledge to higher levels of competence" (p. 40), and Schumm (2006) elaborated the term scaffolding as "providing support for students in their language, and then gradually diminishing the support as students become more independent" (p. 530). Similarly, Verity (2005) defined it as "the cognitive support given to a novice learner to reduce the cognitive load of the task" (p.4). Moreover, Verity explained this metaphor further and pointed out that "successful scaffolding depends upon precise judgments as to what pieces of the task the expert can take over without pushing the learner from the center of the activity" (2005, p. 4). In a similar attempt yet from a different perspective, Van Lier (2004) talked of scaffolding as a form of 'assisted performance' which comprises three levels of macro, meso, and micro.

Scaffolding is also closely linked with the idea of 'mediation' defined as an indirect activity which "is not limited to assistance by other human beings but may come in the form of socially constructed semiotic artifacts, such as books, maps, and diagrams" (Well, 1999, p.319). In support of this view, Lantolf and Thorne (2006) stated that "speaking (and writing) activity can function as a meditational artifact to control thinking because of what Vygotsky called the reversibility of the linguistic sign" (p. 60). Mediation as such, can be provided by people (William & Burden, 2009), concrete form such as books, the internet and phone (Holton &Clarke, 2006) or even dialogues or verbalization (Swian, 2000). When scaffolding takes place through people, the notion of 'more knowledgeable (or capable) other' (MKO), is commonly used. This term, according to Baleghizadeh et al. (2011) refers to an expert or higher level peer who often directly helps students achieve their potentials. However, as Ellis (2003) stated, the presence of an expert or MKO is not always necessarily in the process of scaffolding.

Types and Models of Scaffolds

Under real instructional conditions, scaffolding may come in different forms and models. Among these models some are more common and well-known such as: *simplification*, *modelling*, *using realia visuals*, *bridging*, *contextualisation*, *building schema*, *re-presenting text* and developing *metacognition* (Walqui, 2006). Additionally, there exist other classifications and models which may not be as popular and practical as the above mentioned; yet they provide useful insights into varied and diverse types of educational scaffolds in real world learning experiences.

In this respect, one classification is provided by Silliman and Wilkinson (1994) who explained scaffolds under two broader categories of *supportive scaffolding* and *directive scaffolding*. While the former characterizes the IRF (Initiation-Response-Follow-up) pattern the latter is closely associated with IRE (Initiation-Response-Evaluation). Moreover, *reciprocal scaffolding* by Holton & Clarke (2006) is practiced when a group of two or more learners work together collaboratively and the scaffolds are shared by each member and change continuously as the group works on different tasks. In this case, according to Holton & Clarke (2006), the group members are likely to learn from each other's experiences.

More recently, Saye and Brush (2001) introduced two levels of scaffolding: *soft* and *hard*. The soft type is also referred to as *contingent* scaffolding by Van Lier (1996). At this level, the type and the required degree of support varies based on the learners' needs at the time of instruction (Van Lier, 1996). On other hand, *embedded* or hard scaffolding is a planned program in order to help students with a given learning task which is believed to be difficult for them (Saye & Brush, 2001). And finally, 'technical scaffolding' is of the latest approaches in which computers and the internet substitute the instructors, and students are

aided through web links, online tutorials, or help pages (Yelland & Masters, 2007; Reingold et al., 2008). For example these days, various educational softwares and online programs are of great advantage to all learners across different disciplines

Input Enhancement and Consciousness-Raising

As with the history and origins of these concepts, Sharwood Smith (1981) coined the concept of 'consciousness-raising'. This term was referred to as raising learners' conscious awareness of some certain structures, and thus according to him 'all input is intake' (1981). In his view, intake could be 'internalized' by being exposed to input. Later in 1991, Sharwood Smith proposed the so called 'input enhancement' as an alternative term. He defined input enhancement as 'the process by which language input becomes salient to learners' (1991, p.118). In this respect, Sharwood Smith (1991,1993) provided a set of practical techniques, such as bold-facing and underlining (most commonly referred to as visual or textual enhancement), color coding, stressing, intonation, gestures, using error flags, and metalinguistic explanation. For instance, if you are teaching the English morpheme '*ed'* to form regular past tense, it could be bolded, or underlined in the texts.

Speaking of input enhancement, we should not ignore the role of *attention*. SLA is by far affected by what learners attend to and notice in target language input (Schmidt, 1990). Furthermore, according to Schmidt (1995) learning without attention is almost impossible or at least far-fetched. In this respect, attention and consciousness can be viewed as two sides of the same coin. Having said that, Carr and Curran (1994) held that "if you are conscious of something, then you are attending to it… and if you are attending to something, then you are conscious of it" (p. 219).

Studies on the Effectiveness of Input Enhancement

One primary study conducted on visual enhancement is that of White (1998), which was meant to determine the extent to which input enhancement was helpful in highlighting the target form for leaners. In this study, the four techniques of underlining, italicizing, bolding and text enlargement were used to enhance the text. The findings revealed that the participants who were given the enhanced texts scored higher than those who received the unenhanced texts. These results were also corroborated by the scores from the delayed post-tests five weeks later.

To date, a large body of research findings is non-deterministic about the effects of input enhancement. According to a fairly recent meta-analysis by Lee and Huang (2008), all the research on this subject, except Jourdenais's (1998) study, made use of comparison groups instead of true control groups. A number of these studies (e.g, Lee, 2007; White, 1998) confirmed positive effects of input enhancement in the instruction of grammatical features. Others (e.g., Izumi, 2002, 2003; Jourdenais, 1998), however, did not support this positive impact of VIE in their studies. On the other hand, Explicit instruction of grammar especially with VIE techniques, was found to be far more effective in comparison with its implicit version of instruction (e.g, Alanen, 1995; Doughty, 1991, cited in Lee & Huang, 2008).

Likewise, other researchers have shown disagreement on the effects of VIE on learners' noticing. For example, two empirical studies by Izumi (2002, 2003) and another study by Waring and Takaki (2003) reported fairly similar results on the positive impacts of VIE in enhancing learners' noticing and learning of different language items, whereas, other studies (Leow, 2001; Leow et al., 2003) concluded that VIE does not aid learners' enhanced degree of noticing. In the same vein, a more recent study by Vaez Dalili et al. (2011) cast further doubt on the effectiveness of TIE (textual input enhancement) in comparison with explicit meta-linguistic explanation. Also, Petchko (2011) found that TIE was not influential in

learning or noticing the new vocabulary in a text. Likewise, Erturk (2013) demonstrated that IE fails to improve degrees of attention to linguistic items in a given text.

However, from a different perspective, Abadikhah and Shahriyarpour (2012) suggested that input enhancement, on its own, cannot be considered as an effective technique in the learning of English passive forms, yet it can draw learners' attention to form. Finally, the literature in this field demonstrated that there exist a few recent studies whose findings on the concept of IE are rigorous.

Pronunciation and Stress Pattern Acquisition

A large number of studies have so far highlighted the possible impacts of factors such as native language, age, exposure, innate phonetic ability, identity and language ego, and motivation and concern for good pronunciation ability on the teaching and learning of pronunciation and its prosodic features (Brown, 1994; Celce-Murcia et al., 2000; Gillette, 1994; Kenworthy, 1987).

To facilitate the acquisition of stress pattern, explicit instruction might be needed. According to Khamkhien (2010) Classroom instructor of English can assist their students to become more conscious of stress patterns through various techniques. In this regard, 'teaching methods' and 'class activities' play key roles in informing leaners about their pronunciation deficiencies and the ability to correct them (Khamkhien, 2010). In the same vein, Sadeghi (2013) concluded that teaching phonology through input enhancement techniques of 'interaction' and 'explanation' can be highly advantageous and facilitative. Moreover, the study indicated that the progress rate of the input enhancement group was much higher than those of the other groups in terms of 'elision, assimilation, linking and rhythm' (2010). In a different study, Jarusan (1997) found that the learner's prior English learning experience and 'exposure' may have positive effects on the 'perception' and the 'production' of word stress patterns in English. However, he maintained that the listening ability requires permanent exposure to the language and is mainly 'individualistic' (1997). In a more recent study by Mirzaei, et al. (2012), the results pointed to noticeable progress in both 'noticing groups' after the treatment stage. According to this study, noticing and 'awareness-raising' can influence the acquisition of intonation patterns in different types of statements.

Finally, the review of the related studies indicated that very few or perhaps no empirical study has so far investigated the possible impact of textual input enhancement in a scaffolded form on the teaching and learning of stress patterns in English words. The present gap in the literature of IE and stress pattern acquisition created the primary incentive to conduct this research in this way. Studies done in this particular area are either mediocre or scarce; thus, further research can shed light on some of the murky point of this area of SLA.

Method

Participants

The participants in the present study were 20 EFL learners. They were all studying English at the intermediate level in different private language schools in the city of Mashhad, Iran. The age of the respondents in this sample ranged from 22 to 30, denoting a fairly young sample group. They speak Persian as their first language and English as a foreign language. Moreover, these participants held either a bachelor or master degree in majors other than English. Regarding the socio-economic characteristics, the participants came from the middle and upper-class sector of the society.

Instruments

The researchers in this study made use of convenient sampling technique to facilitate the procedures. The main instrument used in this experiment was a short text of about 300 words adopted from a reading textbook series called "Inside reading 3" (2007) and this was utilized for the treatment stage as well as the pretest and posttest. The passage was prepared in two different forms: (1) the one that included new items of vocabulary with the stressed syllables in **bold** and underlined (textually enhanced) used for the treatment, and (2) the same text without any highlights or underline for the stressed syllables in the specified words (unenhanced), used for the pretest and posttest. (See appendix A & B)

Procedures

To begin with, the respondents in this study were randomly divided into a control group and an experimental group. Each group included 10 participants both male and female. The two groups were given the specified reading text before and after the treatment stage. This text contained 20 specified vocabulary items whose pronunciations and stress patterns were the main focus of the assessment.

As for the pretest, the participants in both groups were asked to attend a session in which they were supposed to read out the prepared text (appendix A) carefully, slowly and with the correct stress patterns they already know. Besides, they were asked to underline the stressed syllable in each specified word. Their performances were then recorded and scored. For each correct placing of the stress pattern, the participants were given one positive point (+1) and for every wrong stress pattern, zero point (0). Therefore, each participant was given an overall score out of 20. This reading session lasted only about 5 to 10 minutes for each participant.

During the treatment stage, all the participants attended two sessions of 1 hour instruction on how to pronounce the specified set of words in the text, in 2 different but consecutive days. For both groups, the correct pronunciation and the correct stress patterns were written on the board, and were further explained orally (meta-linguistic explanations) by referring to the standard phonetics in Longman Dictionary of contemporary English (2007). This was followed by some oral repetition practices accompanied with textually enhanced words (appendix B). However, the instruction for the two groups differed in only one aspect, and that is, the instruction of the experimental group was scaffolded through models presented by Walqui (2006). In so doing, the participants were given extra support in pronouncing the words with the right stress pattern through *modeling*, *exemplification* and *explanation* techniques performed by the instructor. All the other aspects and features of the instruction such as the time, place and the instructor, were kept identical for the two groups in order to control the possible effects of any intervening variable.

During the posttest stage, the same procedures as in the pretest were applied. At this point, the performance of the learners were again recorded and assessed so as to explore any possible degree of progress in their stress pattern learning after the treatment. The pretest, treatment and posttest took place in four different days (1 day for pretest, 2 days for treatment, and 1 day for posttest).

Once the results of the pretest and posttest were ready, *paired samples test* was run to compare the means of the pretest and posttest in both groups separately. This was done in order to detect any possible progress after the treatment period and to determine whether the instructions have been effective or not. Finally, the mean scores of the posttests in both control and experimental groups were compared using an *independent samples test* to see if there was a statistical difference between them, and thus to decide which treatment has been more effective. Then, the effect size was calculated by employing Cohen *d* test in order to figure out whether the size of the difference was small, medium or large.

Results and Discussions

Regarding the descriptive statistics, Table 1 and 2 provide the mean scores and the standard deviations for the two groups separately in the pretest and posttest.

Table 1
The Mean And The Standard Deviations Of The Pretest And Posttest Scores In The Control Group

	group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pre.test	control	10	10.9	3.14	.99
Posttest	control	10	12	3.12	.98

Table 2
The Mean and the Standard Deviations of the Pretest and Posttest Scores in the Experimental Group

	group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pre.test	experimental	10	11.3	3.59	1.13
Posttest	experimental	10	14.9	2.13	.67

As with the statistical analysis, Table 3 shows the statistical difference between the mean scores of the pretests in the control and experimental group. Tables 4, 5 and 6 present the statistical differences between the mean scores of the pretest and posttest in the two groups separately as well as the comparison between them; and finally, Table 7 provides the statistical difference between the mean scores of the posttests in the these two groups.

As is indicated in Table 1 and 2, the mean scores of the pretests in the experimental and the control group are very close, that of 10.9 and 11.3. However, it should be noted here that at the very beginning, the researchers tried to divide the participants based on their scores and in a way that the mean scores of the two groups would not range far from one other and so as to begin with two fairly homogeneous groups. To see whether these differences are statistically significant or not, the independent-samples t test was run. First, appropriate *t* and *df* were selected based on Levene's test for equality of variances. As Table 3 shows, there is no statistically significant difference between the control and experimental groups ($t= -0.265$, $df= 18$, $p>.05$). Therefore, it can be implied that the two groups are homogeneous at the beginning of the experiment.

Table 3
The Statistical Difference between the Mean Scores of Control and the Experimental Groups in the Pretest

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means			
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Equal variances assumed	.698	.414	-.265	18	.794	-.40
Equal variances not assumed			-.265	17.6	.794	-.40

Moreover, comparing the mean scores of the pretest and posttests in the two groups, a noticeable increase is evident. While the mean score of the control group has risen up by around 1.1 score, the experimental group has seen a rather larger increase of about 3.6 scores. In order to confirm whether these increases from the pretest to posttest is statistically significant and thus the treatment has been effective, paired samples test was run as shown in Tables 4, 5 and 6. The results suggested that both groups have undergone noticeable changes, since there is a meaningful difference between the mean scores of the pretests and posttest of the control group ($t= -3.498$, $df= 9$, $p<.05$) as well as the experimental group ($t= -5.245$, $df= 9$, $p<.05$). Therefore, based on these statistics, it can be concluded that the instruction in both groups have been effective and the stress pattern learning of the participants has improved over the treatment period. In other words, the answer to the first question of the study is positive, meaning that scaffolded textual input enhancement has been *effective* in facilitating the acquisition of the word stress patterns.

Table 4
The Statistical Difference between the Mean Scores of the Pretest and Posttest in The Control Group

Variable	df	t	Mean Difference	Sig. (2-tailed)
The control group Pretest-posttest (A)	9	- 3.498	- 1.1	0.007

Table 5
The Statistical Difference between the Mean Scores of the Pretest and Posttest in the Experimental Group

Variable	df	t	Mean Difference	Sig. (2-tailed)
The experimental group Pretest-posttest (B)	9	- 5.245	- 3.60	0.001

Table 6
Comparing the Statistical Differences of the Two Groups (SPSS Output)

		Paired Differences					
			95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
		Std. Deviation	Lower	Upper	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pair 1	Pretest A – posttest A	.994	-1.81137	-.38863	-3.498	9	.007
Pair 2	Pretest B – posttest B	2.17	-5.15269	-2.04731	-5.245	9	.001

The fact that even the participants in the control group have showed some degree of progress, does not appear to be illogical since they have had the same period of instruction with the same enhanced texts but only not scaffolded. Therefore, the main point here would be the extent to which each group has improved, and thus to determine which group has enjoyed a higher degree of progress in learning the right stress patterns of the given words. This way, we would be able to see whether our treatment (scaffolded textual input enhancement) in the experimental group has exerted more influence on the progress rate of the participants, compared to that of the control group.

Now in order to see which group has had a higher improvement in their learning of the target forms, we need to compare the mean scores of the posttests in both groups. As Table 1 and 2 indicate, the mean score of the posttest in the control group is 12 and in the experimental group is 14.9. To see whether this difference is statistically significant, independent samples test was run. Firstly, appropriate *t* and *df* were selected based on *Levene's test* for equality of variances. As shown in Table 7, there is a statistically significant difference between the control and the experimental groups (t= -2.423, df= 18 , p<.05, Cohen's *d= 1.08,* large ES). Therefore, since the mean of the experimental group (M= 14.90) is higher than that of the control group (M= 12), it can be concluded that the treatment has had a larger positive effect on the participants' learning of the right stress pattern in the experimental group. Hence, with regard to the second question of the study, it could be claimed that scaffolded textual input enhancement is evidently *more effective* than textual input enhancement alone, in the process of word stress learning.

Table 7
The Statistical Difference between the Mean Scores of Control and the Experimental Groups in The Posttest

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means			
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
posttest	Equal variances assumed	1.040	.321	-2.42	18	.026	-2.90
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.423	15.8	.028	-2.90

Therefore, based on the given statistical analysis it can be deduced that the treatment for the experimental group has been more influential compared to the instruction of the control group. Even though the control group also showed some degree of progress as a result of their textually enhanced but unscaffolded instruction, the instruction of word stress patterns via the scaffolded textual input enhancement produced a more significant effect on the learning abilities of the participants in this regard. Put another way, the learners showed a better acquisition of the stress patterns of the enhanced vocabulary items when it was scaffolded.

The significant degree of progress evident in both groups' performance could be partly associated with a greater degree of noticing and attention provided through textual input enhancement techniques. This is obviously in line with the findings of Schmidt in his noticing hypothesis (1990), according to which, a certain degree of attention is required for any learning to take place. On the other hand, the observed higher rate of progress in the experimental group could be attributed to the extra support that the instructors provided for the participants in the experimental group in the form of scaffolds. This can be justified by considering the fact that all the other aspects of the instruction were kept uniform in both groups. It is further justified by referring to works of Van Lier (2004) and Lantolf (2000) in which scaffolding is considered highly effective in activating the learners' potential capacities in different areas of language learning.

More specifically, the results are parallel to what was found in a recent study by Abdollahian et al. (2012), according to which, 'noticing' and 'awareness-raising' can be influential in learning intonation patterns in various questions types and statements. In addition to this, the results from other studies support the findings of this experiment, for example in another study by Hoda Bakori (2013), the author concluded that visual enhancement might lead to a better result in second language production of the target form. On the contrary, there exist other studies which point to the fact that results of research into other areas of language learning through input enhancement, such as vocabulary and grammar, is either inconclusive or undetermined (e.g. Lee & Huang, 2008; Petchko, 2011). Furthermore, the results are in contrast to Abadikhah and Shahriyarpour (2012)'s findings which confirmed that input enhancement cannot be considered as an effective technique by itself.

However, the nature of the findings in the present study is different from almost all the other ones in two ways. On the one hand the idea of scaffolding is combined with textual input enhancement, and further the focus of the study, that is stress pattern instruction, is rather new and fairly under researched to the best knowledge of the researchers. The results of this study clearly suggest that the combination of input enhancement and scaffolding can bring about positive changes in the ability to pronounce words with the right stress patterns.

Conclusion

The present study was meant to answer two main questions regarding the effectiveness of the scaffolded textual enhancement in the learning of English word stress patterns among Iranian EFL learners. The findings from the experiment indicated that when textual input enhancement is delivered in a scaffolded form, it can improve the level of the learning for stress patterns of the English words. In other words, when the instruction of word stress patterns is both textually enhanced and scaffolded by the tutor at the same time, the chances of learning and acquisition of the correct stress patterns are increased compared to ordinary instruction conditions, where textual enhancement is available but scaffolds are not.

More specifically, regarding the first question on whether scaffolded textual input enhancement is effective in improving the level of word stress pattern acquisition, the results demonstrated that, both 'scaffolded' and 'unscaffolded' textual input enhancement increase

the rate of progress on the part of EFL learners; yet the former is proved to produce better results. This means that scaffolding can increase the efficiency of learning through enhanced texts. Thus, the answer for the second question of the study is again positive, meaning that scaffolded textual input enhancement is more effective than textual input enhancement alone. Put differently, if for the instruction of word stress patterns, learners are provided with texts in which the stressed syllables of certain vocabulary items are highlighted, italicized, underlined, written in bold or enhanced in any other way, the learners are more likely to notice and retain the right pattern of the stress in each word. In addition, once this textual enhancement is accompanied with extra support and help (e.g. through modeling, exemplification) from their more capable peers (e.g. parents or teachers) in practicing the correct stress patterns, the learning possibilities are raised even more significantly, and thus can unlock and realize learners' oral language potentials to a certain extent. In this regard, one implication is that noticing and attention are not the single sufficient condition for learning different aspect of a second language, and that mediation and assistance can be considered as an appropriate supplement in this matter.

To sum up, the findings indicated that the combination of scaffolding and textual input enhancement techniques can create a new pattern of instruction in connection with learning and teaching stress patterns to Iranian (or perhaps other countries') EFL learners; and from a broader perspective, it could affect the quality of SLA positively.

However, concerning the limitations of the study, two main issues should be considered. For one thing this study was only concerned with adult intermediate EFL leaners, and the results may vary across other proficiency levels and age groups. For another, the treatment period was limited to only two sessions of instruction; later studies could extend the instruction period so as to make it more effective.

The findings of the present study can be directly applied by all language instructors when trying to teach pronunciations and stress patterns to their students by applying the textual input enhancement in a scaffolded form. Moreover, textbook writers and educational supervisors can benefit enormously from the promotion of the idea of assistance and scaffolding in any part of the language instruction, and in particular word stress patterns and pronunciations.

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