

## **Processing Instruction for Input and Output Enrichment in Language Classrooms**

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**Abstract:** With the onset of intense theoretical and empirical interests in the field of language teaching and learning, there has been an anticipated shift in language professionals' opinions towards the understandings of further effectual language instruction. As the outcome of such instruction, language learners are expected to have a rich repertoire of competency in internalized second language (L2) knowledge, whether rule-based or practice-based or both- for having proficiency in the L2. Despite the traditional language instruction for teaching specific language rules through rote-learning, in the recent models suggested for processing instruction, the attempt has been made to change the ways of giving input through focused practice and to turn the input into intake coherently by promoting form and meaning correspondence. Accordingly, in the process, a range of occurrences between the input and output channel can be expected to flow through various manipulations of instruction, particularly grammar teaching, in many instances.

Teachers, teacher trainers, and student teachers, -as professionals of language teaching-, are aware of both the multifaceted value of grammar teaching and the troubles with teaching grammar; we may even feel unsatisfied when we exclude grammar teaching from the classroom. Therefore, satisfied answers are sought to the questions: Does grammar teaching really work? Does grammar teaching mean language teaching? Which approaches have been suggested, discussed, and criticized in the field? Do we have past negative or positive experiences in grammar learning/teaching? The present study intends to discuss these issues once again to address the challenges in grammar teaching.

**Key words:** processing instruction, input, output, language classroom, teaching, learning.

### **Introduction**

#### **Grammar learning does not develop overnight**

Over the years, various approaches to language teaching have been used by language teaching scholars for either analyzing the language or using the language. Students are directed to learn the elements of the target language and are encouraged to use the language from the start for communication (Larsen-Freeman, 2003). In recent years, there has been a shift from cognitive-code approaches, in which analyzing structures and applying rules are common practices, to the rise of more

communicative approaches that emphasize language usage over language rules. Such approaches to language teaching have been put into practice for developing communicative competence: focusing on grammatical form during communicative interaction rather than forms in isolation (Long, 1991). One way to teach the form is to teach students the language rules. Does grammar teaching mean teaching forms in isolation? Or is it much more than forms?

Larsen-Freeman (2003) draws attention to three dimensions of grammar framework: 1) form/structure (morphosyntactic and lexical pattern) and how is it formed?; 2) meaning/semantics (lexical and grammatical meaning) and what does it mean?; 3) use/pragmatics (social context, linguistic context, discourse context) and when/why is it used? By exploring these three dimensions of grammar and how to teach them, teachers will continue to develop their professional knowledge base, which will benefit their students as they strive to enhance their grammatical proficiency (Larsen-Freeman, 2003).

### **Pedagogical Grammar**

Pedagogical grammar is defined as the types of grammatical analysis and instruction designed for the needs of second language students (Odlin, 1994). Pedagogical grammar is a functional approach to grammar teaching. In the process, considering the language functions that students will encounter, teachers select grammar points on the basis of their students' needs by using authentic materials to provide samples of various discourse functions. Two theoretical areas comprise pedagogical grammar: description and methodology which have been focus of arguments. The main arguments are the aim of grammar teaching (knowing about grammar that is declarative knowledge and knowing how to use grammar which is procedural knowledge); the categorization of grammar (form, meaning, use) for designing teaching objectives; the use of rules; the type of grammar exercises and activities to prompt automaticity (Newby, 1989). Research on grammar teaching, either explicitly or implicitly, has shown that debates about effectual grammar teaching suggest

various aspects on how to teach grammar: deductive versus inductive learning, focus on forms versus focus on form, and etc.

### **Deductive and inductive grammar teaching/learning**

In deductive approach, the rule is given by the teacher and students apply it; in inductive approach students notice, detect, and infer the rule from a set of input context. Both are used in language education settings. Inductive approach has learner-centered nature, while deductive one is teacher-centered. In inductive approach, though may be more demanding, learners are expected to be active members in learning process through discovery activities for being aware of how to use rules by developing autonomous behavior (Hinkel & Fotos, 2002). But no definite answer has been suggested to claim which one is better due to the diverse nature of learners. For instance, if it is assumed that inductive approach may be applicable for adult learners and deductive one is for young learners, their linguistic level can still be problematic to decide on which one is better.

### **Form focused Instruction: Focus on Forms vs Focus on Form**

Discussions on contemporary language teaching suggest that formal instruction, of which main focus should be on meaningful communication, needs to take place in language teaching settings; although teachers of foreign language may be in the common view that they teach language rules for communicative purposes, to what extent communicative activities are carried out in language classrooms? In form focused instruction, learners' attention is attracted to the form. Form focused instruction is realized in two procedures: Focus on Forms (FoFs) and Focus on Form (FoF). In FoFs, sequentially, grammatical structure is presented and practiced through controlled activities for encouraging students to produce in the target language- PPP. In FoF, either planned or incidental grammar instruction is implemented when necessary in order to take students' attention to form and encourage them for discovering rules. In planned FoF (also called as proactive Focus on Form), previously selected forms are introduced through various procedures such as enriched input, enhanced input for allowing students to discover the language

rule. In incidental FoF (also called as reactive Focus on Form), focusing on form is implemented incidentally, not previously selected forms are focused. Whatever the form of the instruction is, in form focused instruction, it has been suggested that formal instruction should crucially take place in language education settings.

### **The Teaching Process of Grammar**

The second half of the 20th century witnessed various paradigm shifts in the field of second language acquisition (SLA) and foreign language learning. With the increased of intense theoretical and empirical interests in language teaching, language learners have also been expected to have a rich repertoire of competency of internalized L2 knowledge, whether rule-based or practice focused. In traditional language instruction, the objective is to teach language specific rules through pre-selected structure which shape the notion of focus-on-forms through rote learning and internalizing (Brown, 2007; Celce-Murcia & et.al., 2013). In this type of instruction, learners are exposed to focused practice after they have developed interlanguage, not as soon as the input is given. Contrary to the traditional language teaching, a recent model of language teaching, processing instruction, has been recommended for L2 teaching. In processing instruction, an attempt is made to change the way the input is perceived and processed (Gass & Selinker, 2008) so that learners can process the information of language in their minds by turning the input into intake coherently to develop the desired system (Williams, 2004) by stimulating both form and meaning correspondence for better intake. In processing instruction the main goal is to question the drawbacks of traditional explicit instruction and to suggest a novel perspective to language teaching implemented throughout input processing and focused practice (Benati & Lee 2008; VanPatten & Borst, 2012).

Teaching grammar means enabling language students to use linguistic forms accurately, meaningfully, and appropriately. For realizing such goals, various teaching strategies are suggested. Traditional grammar teaching has employed a structural syllabus in which lesson stages are composed of three phases: presentation, practice, and production (the PPP approach). The challenge made to the

PPP approach is that grammar teaching should not be scheduled in advance with a structural syllabus; instead students should be supported in their completion of the communicative tasks; thus putting communication first for its use in context. But the research shows that the level of accuracy of students who are exposed to only communicative lessons with no grammar points suffers (Ellis, 1997); therefore, students need to develop accurate grammar skills as well as successful development of fluency and accuracy.

A variety of suggestions have been offered for teaching grammar process; and a teacher should choose how to address it. Among the suggestions, noticing, input enhancement, enriched input, raising consciousness, providing positive and negative transfer, input and output processing, self-generated tasks, stimulated recall, giving corrective feedback, and etc. are assumed to be effective tools for prompting success in grammar learning. Noticing is a conscious registration of attended specific instances of language by registering formal features in the given input learners' own generated output (Schmidt, 2010; Ortega, 2009; Swain, 2000). Schmidt (2001) also distinguishes noticing from metalinguistic awareness which is the formation of abstract language rules. The instruction for increasing noticing is initiated with enhanced input, enriched input, consciousness raising tasks, negative/positive evidence, and etc. for supporting and enhancing noticing (Gass & Selinker, 2008). Input enhancement is purposefully used in processing instruction for integrating the structured input (Farley, 2005) in order to take the learner's attention to the form within a context by highlighting the structure through textual manipulation in written form and through using oral repetition, intonation, stress or pitch in the oral (Winke, 2013). Similarly in enriched input, the frequency of the input (input flooding) through manipulation with the purpose of directing learners' attention to relevant linguistic features in the input for better intake (Gass & Selinker, 2008). In order to take the learner's attention to the input, consciousness-raising activities are used in an attempt to increase learners' ability to perceive the given input consciously by noticing information for turning into knowledge (Mackey, 2006). The emphasis is on drawing learners' attention receptively to linguistic features through consciousness

raising; thus, the learner is assumed to control and reflect on what s/he is doing with eventual goals instead of immediate mastery (Ellis, 1993). In this process, learners are expected to gain deeper insights into both meaning-based and form-based linguistic features by noticing the targeted salient input (Walsh, 2005). In processing instruction learners may be exposed to both positive and negative evidence the aim of drawing learners' attention to language form: positive evidence is based on forms that actually occur, negative evidence deals with the information provided to a learner concerning the incorrectness of a form (Gass & Selinker, 2008). In addition to those abovementioned suggestions, some other recommendations are offered for pushing learners to gain consciousness about the properties of the language: among the mentioned suggestions, input/output processing activities are implemented in order to generate better intake and output. Interrelated with input processing, output provides the learner with input, namely input provided by their own productions (Ellis, 2003). The predictable result is creating opportunities for successful instruction and learning (Skehan, 1998). Such created opportunities also lead to occasions where the learner is stretched to express messages clearly and explicitly which is pushed output (Swain, 2000). At this stages of processing instruction, learners are exposed to self-generated or self-confronted tasks in which they are encouraged to make planning, monitoring, and assessing their own performances by heightening the awareness levels of learners (Ellis, 2003). While planning, monitoring, or evaluating the learning process, the learner is also encouraged to some sorts of introspective methods such as stimulated recall. Through stimulated recall, learners' recall of their mental processes during activities is prompted and determined what and how learners notice the given input, understanding of feedback, and produced output (Egi, 2010).

### **Corrective feedback**

In processing instruction, learners need to be provided with corrective feedback so as to monitor their own productions and get scaffolding. Corrective feedback is any indication to the learners that their use of the target language is incorrect (Lightbown & Spada, 2013). Through corrective feedback, learners find the opportunities to

compare their own products with the given feedback and to reformulate any possible misusage (Long, 1996). Implicit feedback/recasts; explicit feedback; metalinguistic feedback; clarification requests; elicitation; repetition are the common types of corrective feedback (Ellis, Loewen & Erlam, 2006; Mackey, 2006; Ellis, 2009; Bahrami, 2010; Sadeghi & Heidaryan, 2012; Rahi, 2013).

*Recasting or reformulating:* Recasts are the implicit feedback types that are used during interaction. Learners are given feedback without being interrupted through restating or rephrasing a learner's incorrect utterance (Lightbown & Spada, 2013; Loewen, 2009). For Gass (1997) recasts are reformulation of all or part of the learners' utterance or answer subtracting their errors or reformulation of an incorrect utterance that maintains the original meaning.

*Explicit feedback:* Explicit feedback is a way to provide the correct form to the learner explicitly by taking the attention of the learner to his or her own error and by pointing out the correct form explicitly (Ortega, 2009; Shirazi & Sadighi, 2012). Such kind of feedback is operationalized through explicit correction.

*Metalinguistic feedback:* Metalinguistic feedback is given by providing various comments, information, or questions relevant to the learner's utterance (Lyster & Ranta, 1997). In doing so, it is expected that learners will notice the error and repair it in the direction of metalinguistic labeling.

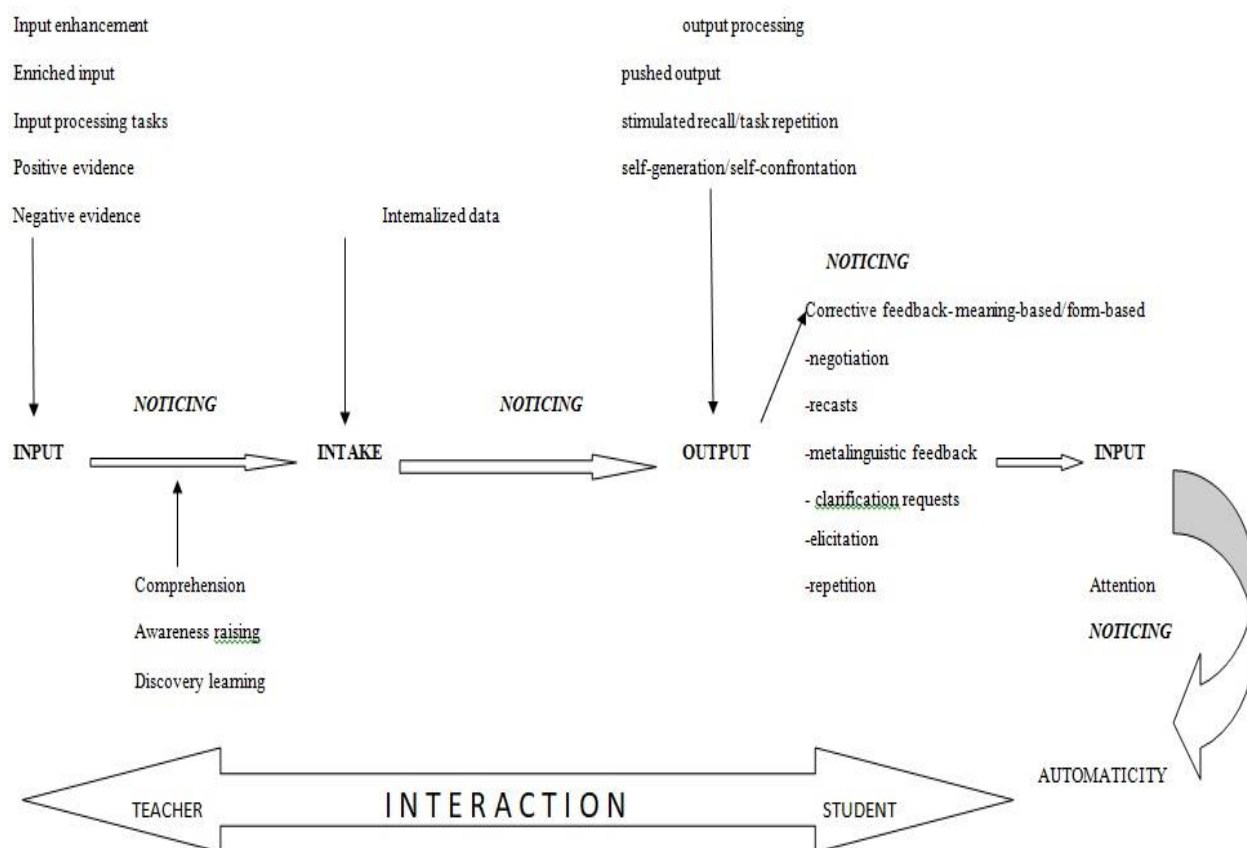
*Clarification requests:* In this type of feedback, the teacher or interlocutor makes requests for learners to make clarification by making them notice the ill-formed utterance(s) (Gass & Selinker, 2008). Thus, they try to reformulate their utterances.

*Elicitation:* Learners' attention is taken to the error by using some questions to evoke learners' attention and to elicit the correct form; and thus, they are expected to be provided with the opportunity for correcting the incorrect form(s) (Lyster & Ranta, 1997).

*Repetition:* Teachers repeat the erroneous utterance by using appropriate intonation to attract the learners' attention to the error (Ellis, 2009; Bahrami, 2010).

The stages for processing the noticed input are realized through top-down (understanding the implications, context, and pragmatic meaning of input) and

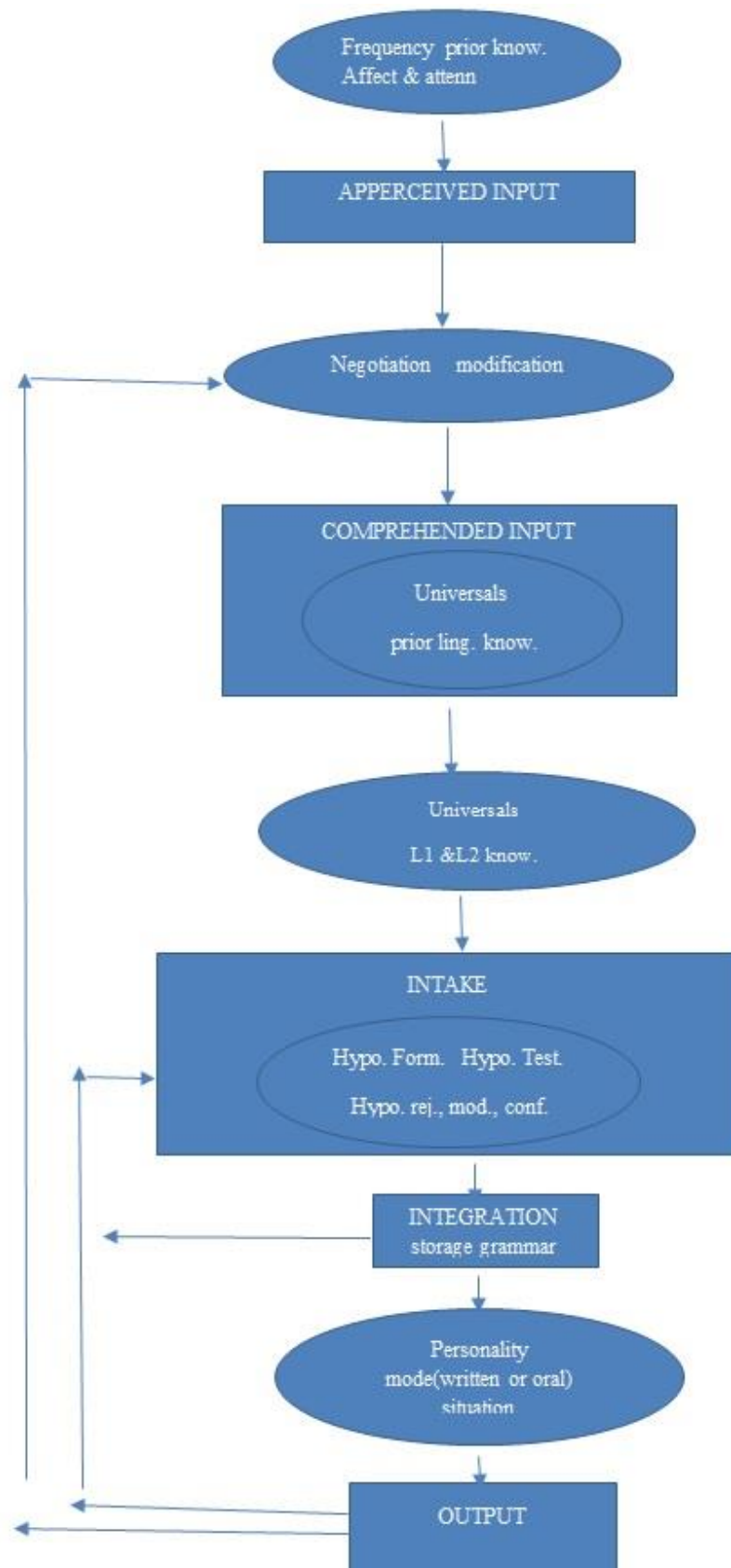
bottom-up (decoding specific bits of information from input) processing that happens via mental transformations between input and output, namely information processing. Coşgun Ögeyik (2017) schematized all these stages in the following figure.



**Figure 1.** Treatments for fostering noticing

Information processing has become very important in foreign language pedagogy to explain the development of knowledge whether declarative/explicit (factual information which is conscious, e.g., remembering grammar rules is drawn from declarative knowledge) and procedural/implicit knowledge (knowing how to do something unconsciously, e.g., the ability to speak in L2 fluently). Figure 1 summarizes the stages of information processing in which various treatment approaches are applied by the teacher in order to foster noticing level of learners. During Input, Intake, and Output stages, some other mechanisms also influence learners' learning ability. Gass (1988) schematizes the stages and the effective mechanisms within a framework. Figure 2 displays each stage in detail.





**Figure 2.** A model of second language learning/acquisition by S. Gass (1988). Integrating research areas: a framework for second language studies. *Applied Linguistics*, 9, 92-106.

In the framework designed by Gass (1988), the stages in the rectangular areas are expected ones during the learning process; the ones in the circular areas are effective mechanisms of each stage in the rectangular areas. Apperceived input comes about by noticing the given data and is effected by the past and new experiences of the learner. It prepares the learner for the later stages. Apperceived input may differ from learner to learner due to the prior knowledge of the learner such as first language, language knowledge, world knowledge, language universals, existing L2 knowledge, etc. as well as attention level and the affective domains such as motivation, attitude self-esteem, self-efficacy, self-confidence, social distance level, etc. Comprehended input is also learner-controlled input comes about as a result of negotiation and modifications and is effected by universals and prior linguistic knowledge. All given input is not transferred in the same way into intake. During the intake process, the learner may develop hypothesis, test it, and confirm, reject, or modify it. Then, in the next stage, the learner integrates the input and stores it. While giving the output, the learner is effected by his or her own personality. Personality factors such as confidence in one's ability to produce correct target language sentences may influence whether or not a learner produces target language material (Gass & Selinker, 2008). Good performance of the learner is also shaped how the learner notices the rules.

### **Challenges of implicit and explicit treatments in grammar teaching**

In both explicit and implicit learning and teaching processes, numerous problems may appear for teachers as well as learners. Main problem lies in the fact that a student, for instance, can easily list irregular forms of verbs but cannot ask for a cup of tea or cannot decide on when and how to use the Present Perfect Tense appropriately within a context out of structure (Coşgun Ögeyik, 2017). Since most of the teacher must adhere to prescribed syllabus or textbooks, they may not decide on when and how to design language courses implicitly or explicitly. Moreover, diverse features of students, the formal curriculum designed by schools, institutions, or policy makers, the previously implemented teaching models, and etc. may also

restrict teachers' decisions on the type of instruction they would implement in language classrooms.

In language teaching and learning processes, the expected outcome is increasing learners' consciousness level and developing autonomous behaviors at the end of the process. In the process the attempt to increase consciousness level of the learner is to prompt noticing and to enable the learner to gain the new L2 knowledge; but measuring the level of consciousness is a difficult issue, though verbal data from learners are still susceptible due to the fact that verbalizing each item may be difficult for some learners (Tomline & Villa, 1994; Jourdenais, 2001). Another objection is about the strength of attention and awareness for some kinds of learning but not for all (Schmidt, 2010). Additionally it is claimed that such attempts to prompt consciousness levels of learners and discovery learning may require ample time for learners to process the knowledge and internalize it for producing satisfactory output.

### **Discussion**

In language teaching and learning, the main goal is to provide students with communicative competence and to encourage them to be efficient users of four skills, reading, writing, speaking, and listening. In addition to these four skills, Larsen-Freeman (2003:13) suggests that grammaring is the fifth skill: "When we view grammar as a skill, we are much more inclined to create learning situations that overcome the inert knowledge problem. We will not ask our students to merely memorize rules and then wonder why they do not apply them in communication". She adds that practice makes perfect the skills development, for example, learning grammar. But the questions are what kind of practice? What kind of teaching strategies teachers themselves regard as successful are clearly linked to their personal thoughts about grammar teaching and their decisions on grammar teaching methods. In language teaching, the research has demonstrated that gaining higher level of competence needs to be achieved through focusing on form. Therefore,

drawing students' attention to grammar should be among the language teaching goals.

Whether grammar should be taught explicitly or implicitly should be taken into account by the teacher. Some type of grammar instruction is required for students to accomplish high level of accuracy and fluency in communication. Students should be given feedback for producing output. Students should be introduced to a grammar topic, whether deductively or inductively or both by distinguishing the route. Students should be exposed to discovery process by providing them various input and feedback types.

Ur (2011:511) proclaims that: "in second-language teaching and learning in formal contexts it is very likely that an explicit component within a basically communicative or task-based methodology will make a substantial contribution to the achievement of grammatical accuracy. According to Ur (2011), in the case of the learners, grammatical rules enable them to know and apply how such sentence patterns should be put together. The teaching of grammar should also ultimately center attention on the way grammatical items or sentence patterns are correctly used. In other words, teaching grammar should encompass language structure or sentence patterns, meaning and use. Nassaji and Fotos (2011) emphasize that in the production stage of learning stage, learners are given more freedom to use their imagination and decide on where and how to use the newly learned structures. In order to increase students' awareness on the taught grammar points, students should be aware of the notion that grammar has a global structure, as a system of signs, in which all items are interrelated; students have recognition device to remember things and make associations.

## **Conclusion**

Grammar teaching is among the chief concerns of language teaching scholars. The goal is to encourage students to make accurate productions during or at the end of either implicit or explicit grammar instruction process. When students make

production in L2, it should be rewarded, retrieved, reported, recycled, and recorded for feeding the learning process with its possibilities. Therefore, the aspects of grammar should be discussed within a context; students should be given time to discover grammar for themselves; students should be given opportunities to practice grammar in a meaningful way; and rule-giving teaching should be avoided. It is reasonable to regard grammar as a mechanism and collocation of interdependent items, since language is itself a dynamic phenomenon. And finally, students should be instructed on how to use strategies effectively; if they are using avoidance strategies, measurement about grammar knowledge should be made relatively.

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